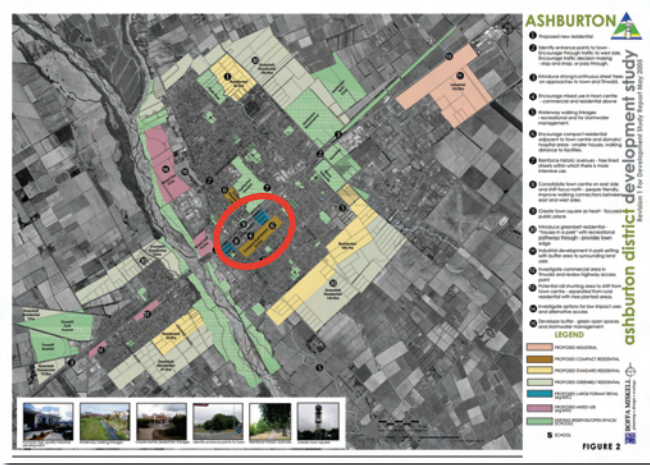


introduction

Background

The Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan has been initiated as part of delivering the Ashburton Development Plan (adopted by Council in 2005). The Ashburton District Council has been assisted with developing the Concept Plan by Boffa Miskell - specialist planners, urban designers and landscape architects.



Ashburton District Development Study (2005)

Purpose

The Concept Plan sets a broad framework for improvement, building on the good foundations of the existing town centre. This framework will take effect over many years and will have the flexibility to accommodate a range of new initiatives (only some of which are known today).

The Concept Plan aims to co-ordinate many of the individual actions and changes that can take place within the town centre, to create a strong focus for the social, civic, business, entertainment and living activities of the District and create a safer and more pleasant place for the future.

The Concept Plan provides a basis for Council investment in public land (squares, streets, parks); clear direction for private investment in new developments and business opportunities; and interest groups and resident can have some certainty as to the future shape and quality of the town centre's features they may value.

Study area

The aerial photo below identifies the general area of Ashburton town considered by the project team. The existing retail core is contained within this area, but an important aim of the project was to identify what other elements could contribute to the wider appeal of the town centre and where it could expand to as community needs grow with the town.



Structure of document

The report initially outlines the methodology, key objectives, heritage context and urban design analysis. Design proposals have then been divided into two parts;

1. **Concept Plan** - This describes the growth options considered and broad design proposals. It then indicates possible implementation phases and other projects beyond the town centre that may improve its success.
2. **Preliminary Design Options** - This develops design options for two of the key projects from the Concept Plan, the 'Green Corridor' and 'Baring Square'. They provide an indication on how other key projects could be progressed in the next stage towards implementation.

process and implementation

Methodology

The Concept Plan process initially developed a brief and a list of key objectives in association with the Environmental Services team within Ashburton District Council. Urban design analysis of the town centre and its immediate context was then undertaken with the aid of GIS information sources and on-site surveys.

This was followed by a period of design development where a draft Concept Plan was prepared, which integrated a range of suggested land use changes with proposals for key public space projects. A series of Preliminary Design Options were also developed for some core areas of the town centre. These assisted in visualising how some of the key projects identified in the Concept Plan might look like if implemented on the ground.

Regular Town Centre Sub-committee workshops were held throughout the Concept Plan project to guide councillors through the process and agree on the consultation material. Interest groups, property owners and occupiers of the town centre were initially consulted on the Concept Plan proposals and Preliminary Design Options. This was then closely followed by wider engagement with the general public.

The consultation feedback was reviewed by the project team and the town centre proposals refined to achieve a reasonable balance between the expert advice provided and the preferences of the community. The final report has then been compiled and presented to the Sub-committee for final approval.

Implementation

Once an overall Concept Plan is accepted, the Council can then proceed to design specific parts of the town centre in greater detail, where more technical issues can be resolved and implemented over time through its Community Plan. Where land use changes are proposed, the District Plan review process, currently running in parallel, can give effect to these changes through new zonings and development controls.



key objectives

We have the 'chance of a lifetime to 'stitch' together a range of future town centre initiatives and make them all work together in an efficient and economically beneficial way.

In planning for the future of the Town Centre, it is important to consider both the objectives for the wider town and of the town centre itself. The key objectives of the Concept Plan are to enhance and/ or provide for:



a. **Identity and character** – by making Ashburton town centre distinctive and reinforcing its special qualities (eg. historic buildings, green spaces and trees) and make it attractive to passers by and a source of pride for the local community.



b. **A central public space** – a place within the town that will act as the 'heart' – where main events take place and daily life occurs. It should have a social and civic function.



c. **Connections between places (physically and visually)** – improving walking and cycling convenience and encouraging movement between common destinations, from east to west and other parts of the town.



d. **Activation of public space** – by encouraging new development and activities on the edges of existing squares and parks that attract people and make places safer.



e. **Existing and emerging precincts** – consolidate successful parts of the town centre and build on areas where changes are occurring in a way that are complementary to each other.



f. **Opportunities for higher density residential living** – by changing development controls and providing a context within which people may want to live in close proximity to the amenities provided by the town centre.



g. **Investment** - in privately owned land that can benefit from the certainty of co-ordinated Council investment in the quality of public spaces and other infrastructure (eg. parking).



h. **Managing traffic and parking demand** – by improving the pleasantness of busy streets and slowing traffic through the core of the town centre. Providing parking in convenient locations for visitors and commuters, while prioritising street design to encourage people to walk and cycle within the town centre.



i. **Significant community projects (eg. Art Galley/ Museum)** – key community landmarks can activate and generate positive change in the areas around them. The town centre should accommodate or link to these facilities for mutual benefit.