



Information Report
Application # MM – 35445
[deferred portion only]
Applicant: City of Abbotsford

DATE RECEIVED: June 2, 2004

DATE PREPARED: April 3, 2008

TO: Chair and Commissioners – South Coast Panel

FROM: Tony Pellett, Regional Planner

PROPOSAL: Exclusion of 72.3 ha of land from the ALR adjacent to the Abbotsford International Airport to facilitate new airport-related job creation and economic growth, and to enable more efficient aviation activities.

This application was made pursuant to section 29(1) of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Through a 'block' application submitted in 2004, the City of Abbotsford proposed the conditional exclusion of 8 discrete blocks of land (totalling 372 ha) from the ALR to facilitate new job creation and economic growth. By Resolution #384/2005 (dated July 28, 2005), the Commission rendered its decision on 7 of the 8 discrete blocks but deferred its decision on one (72.3 ha) area pending discussion with the Abbotsford Airport Authority as to its long range plans for airport expansion and a review of a detailed plan from the Authority. Those plans were never completed.

In 2002, while the City of Abbotsford was preparing its 'block' application and undertaking a lengthy process of public involvement, two applications were made pursuant to section 30(1) of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

- Application #MM-34530 proposed exclusion of three parcels totalling 10.6 ha for future development related to airport expansion. All three parcels were in active agricultural use, but in at least one case the owner needed to decide whether to invest in new poultry barns or continue to make do with the existing barns until it was time to convert the land to airport-industrial or aviation-related development.
- Application #MM-34578 proposed exclusion of one 2.1 ha parcel for the purpose of developing an International Heliport/Office complex to add to the services of the Abbotsford Airport. The parcel was not in agricultural development. Unlike the more speculative #MM-34530, this application proposed immediate development of a service not available within the airport lands.

Because the City's proposal involved a process to establish a fund for agricultural improvements, the City did not wish to encourage a proliferation of individual applications aimed at achieving exclusion of land separate from the City's process (and thereby escaping any requirement to participate in the agricultural fund). The City therefore asked that the Commission hold any new 'individual' applications in abeyance pending the 'block' application. By Resolutions #646/ and #647/2002, the Commission tabled the two applications "pending receipt of additional information referred to by City staff at the November 15, 2002 hearing [i.e. the meetings with the applicants]

as well as specific information addressing the issues of the City of Abbotsford's industrial land policies in the context of the Fraser Valley Regional Growth Strategy". In 2005, when the Commission resolved to defer its decision on the airport lands, that decision also specified deferral of any decision on Applications #MM-34530 and 34578.

Subsequently there were several meetings with the City and airport officials involving staff and the former panel, but the City and its airport authority did not arrive at a plan for airport expansion which could be justified in relation to loss of agricultural opportunities on the dominantly Class (1) lands surrounding the airport. City staff have recently met with senior Commission staff and have acknowledged that the deferred portion of the application is no longer actionable, and that if they wish to raise the matter of airport expansion, it must be in the context of a new application. In effect that also means that Applications #MM-34530 and #MM-34578 are no longer deferred.

On 11 March 2008, we received a letter from owners of all three parcels involved in Application #MM-34530 asking that the Commission now review that application independently from the block application. That letter is attached to the TAB 4 staff report supplement on Application #MM-34530.

In relation to the helicopter application (#MM-34578), the previous panel discussed the possibility of making a separate decision in view of the locational circumstances and of the fact that the application proposed a specific and immediate airport-related development (as distinct from the speculative nature of #MM-34530). Nevertheless, that panel considered that it would be in a difficult position if it were to allow the helicopter application when no decision could be made on the other application pending a long term plan for that side of the airport.

It is intended that the Commission will have an opportunity to meet with the applicants and consider Applications #MM-34530 and 34578 later in this April 2008 meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. ALC Context Map
2. ALC Aerial Photo
3. Agricultural Capability Map

END OF REPORT

Signature

Date