

NOVEMBER 8TH, 2023

BEFORE THE PC14 INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL IN CHRISTCHURCH

IN THE MATTER OF the hearing of submissions on Plan Change 14 (Housing and Business Choice) to the Christchurch District Plan

STATEMENT OF

Timothy Preston, member of RICCARTON BUSH KILMARNOCK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
(Submitter #188)

IN SUPPORT OF ITS SUBMISSION AND RELATED TO OTHER MATTERS ARISING

I am a Senior Civil Consulting Engineer, having practised extensively in urban three waters engineering. I was born in Christchurch and have lived here for 35 of my 53 years. I've been married for 20 years. My wife is a teacher and we have three children aged 9, 11 and 13. We have recently moved into the RBK area, but I have lived in the vicinity for most of my years in Christchurch, went to CBHS and University here and I have friends who lived in this area.

In early 2011 my wife and I were living in Palmerston North in our first house and with our first child who was six months old. On 18 February 2011, I visited Christchurch for what was supposed to be a long weekend, but since the earthquake on 22 February I have remained in Christchurch, working in a senior role with the emergency recovery of our wastewater collection system, moving here permanently and never returning to Palmerston North.

I oppose the proposed changes because they are contrary to democracy. They will enable changes that would steal quality of life from residents in this area, obtained through hard work and who now must fight again to defend them. The Government approach to nationally blanket change is overly simplistic and clumsy in the extreme. This experiment is in essence abandoning reasonable caution, disbanding our urban planning and turning over the future of our urban areas to the whims of developers. This demands analogy with randomly conceived junior high school chemistry experiments and the only reasonable expectation on urban planning outcomes is predictably poor.

I do not oppose intensification conceptually. I have had the good fortune to live in overseas cities with intensive living, where walking distance was a reality. I appreciated some of the positives of this but they were relatively trivial in relation to the vastly greater positives I enjoy in Christchurch.

As a daily and committed cyclist, I would like to make the point that 'walking distances' of at least 500m, probably up to 1km for most people, are vastly different to cycling distances of 3-5km and different again to reasonable e-bike and scootering distances of 6-10km. While 'walkable Cities' conceptually have some merits, especially in our CBD, I believe that the merits of 'bike-able Cities' are both more compelling and more achievable, and quite distinct from walkable ones. The point is that most of Christchurch is already a very bikeable City. Accordingly, there will only ever be minor demand for walkable city style development. And so, enabling large swaths of such development in huge surplus to any reasonably assessed demand is absurd.

As a lay person, my knowledge of the urban planning rules around Christchurch is limited, but as I understand it, intensive development is already permitted and supported in Christchurch in our CBD. The CBD is the obviously appropriate, desirable and democratically popular location for further intensification. There is ample capacity for intensification and development in our CBD and no obvious reasons why it

should not be practicable. My observation though is that such development does not occur or at best occurs slowly. This leads me to conclude that there is limited demand for such lifestyle and that such development is not commercially attractive or even viable. To promote intensification in Christchurch we must start by getting the CBD right and perhaps this may need tools to support success here beyond the easy relaxation of planning controls to do so.

In the absence of successful intensification in our CBD, the approach of blanket relaxation of planning controls across our suburbs, in the hope that some intensification will occur somewhere and anywhere, with about as much deliberation as a lolly scramble (or perhaps a hand grenade), is a folly that much be obvious to most people.

Enabling intensification 'everywhere' is enabling piecemeal unplanned blotches of intensification and ignoring reasonable democratic considerations of the negative impacts on our suburbs. It is also seriously undermining the prospects for our CBD to become a 'proper' City and to live up to its potential and expectations from Christchurch's ratepayers.

Focusing on my neighbourhood and the RBK area of interest, I support all aspects of the RBK submission. I specially wish to reinforce the undesirability of the 'ribbon development' that would result all along Riccarton Road and the impact of Riccarton competing with the CBD. Ribbon development is widely and rightly criticised for aesthetic and access reasons and should not be promoted. As previously mentioned, the developments in our CBD over the coming decades will largely define our success as a City. The present state of our CBD barely supports deliberate competing intensification anywhere including remote commercial centres such as Hornby, but the CBD must take clear priority well ahead of close neighbouring commercial centres like Riccarton.

As a resident of Christchurch, I take great value from my visual connections with the Port Hills and Southern Alps, and closer horizons dominated by tree tops and open skies and my ability to live well as a regular cyclist with occasional intermittent use of our car. Having lived in various standards of housing in Chch, including my student years, I also place great value on the physical and psychological benefits of regular access to sunlight at home, given Christchurch's climate and relatively high frequency of sunny days. This enables a relatively high degree of living comfort with minor heating energy inputs in addition to the improved wellbeing through feeling of connection to our natural environment.

This proposal seems to be the result of green living principals being advocated from Wellington and being hastily forced on the national population without any degree of reasonable care or assessment as to what might be expected to be the result and without adequate options (or time) for planning response or public engagement. It has to be viewed as tantamount to vandalism in urban planning.

Our recent government has just been given a lesson in democracy when policies contrary to public interests are foisted on the population. The only reasonable course of action now is to freeze progress until our new government provides proper direction, given the lack of merit in the current (past) direction and now that the compulsion for this direction is lost.

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