



RICCARTON HOUSE & BUSH PŪTARINGAMOTU

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Good Morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Shona Willis and I am the Manager of Riccarton House and Bush. I have been in the role since 2016 and come from a background in local government, not for profit management and education.

First off I would like to provide the context for why David, Andrew and I are here today.

The Mayor of Christchurch accepted the gift of Riccarton Bush in 1914 to the people of Canterbury with the condition that the property shall be used and kept for all time for the preservation and cultivation of trees and plants indigenous to New Zealand. The Riccarton Bush Act was enacted in 1914 is extant and there is no statute of limitations on the Mayor's obligations.

There is no other similar combination of indigenous trees and shrubs in any inner city in New Zealand let alone anywhere else of the earth. This was encapsulated by Dr Leonard Cockayne in 1906 *"But do those to whom it belongs- not the people of the district alone but all New Zealanders-recognise how beyond price is this piece of ancient forest. Do they understand it is the last tree-association of the kind in the whole world. Do they know if destroyed it can never be replaced....."*

Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush is the largest remnant of alluvial podocarp forest on the lower Canterbury Plains and Banks Peninsula, a forest type that today only covers a tiny fraction of its former extent. It is a key mahinga kai site for Ngāi Tūāhuriri, and the place of first permanent European settlement in Ōtautahi. The Riccarton Bush Trust was established in 1914 and its key roles is to *Protect and enhance the indigenous flora, fauna and ecology of Pūtaringamotu /Riccarton Bush, including mahinga kai and taonga species.*

Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush has exceptionally high ecological and cultural values that housing intensification will adversely impact. These values are clearly recognised through the site having its own Act of Parliament, the site meeting Section 6(b), 6(c) and 6(e) criteria in the RMA, the site being mapped as a Site of Ecological Significance in the Christchurch District Plan and also the Mahaanui Iwi Management Plan.

The Riccarton Bush Trust is a Council Controlled Organisation and the Council funds, in part, the operational costs to manage the Riccarton House Grounds and Bush. The makeup of the Trust Board is detailed by statute. Since 2018 there has been a place on the Board for Ngai Tūāhuriri representation.

The Trust initially commented on the draft Housing and Business Choice Plan Change, and the impact the proposed enabling of more intensive development rights on properties directly adjacent to Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush may have. The Trust was very concerned that the significance and importance of Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush were not being sufficiently protected under the proposed plan change. Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush was not to be considered as a “Qualifying Matter” as it was seen there was sufficient protection afforded in the current zoning and within the existing property boundaries. It is noted that subsequent to the initial draft CCC staff are proposing a Riccarton Bush Interface that will go a long way to ensuring the ongoing protection of Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush.

The Trust is laser focussed on the health and longevity of the Bush. Its management practices and future plans **begin** and **end** with protecting and enhancing the indigenous flora, fauna and ecology of the Bush. The Trust is highly concerned that the significance and importance of Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush are not being sufficiently considered under the proposed plan change leading to a gradual and inevitable diminution of the values of the bush.

The Trust initially requested that prior to any decision being made on housing intensification that the Council provided evidence that the increased intensification proposed will have no detrimental impact on Riccarton Bush. If it is unable to do that there is clearly a breach of the undertaking, of the Mayor of Christchurch in accepting the gifting of the Bush as enshrined in the Riccarton Bush Act 1914, that Riccarton Bush will be kept for all time for the preservation and cultivation of trees and plants indigenous to New Zealand. To date Council reports have detailed the Cultural Significance of Pūtaringamotu Riccarton Bush and its contribution to the visual landscape of the area¹ but any reports on the impact of intensification on the health and longevity of the Bush have been at the Trust’s instigation and cost.

Pūtaringamotu is a taonga for the people of Canterbury and is simply too unique and fragile to authorise adjacent intensification without robust evidence that adverse effects will be avoided or, at worst, mitigated. The protection offered by the status quo in the Christchurch District Plan, is the minimum that should be maintained, even if it cannot be enhanced.

Shona Willis

¹ Such as the evidence and supporting reports of Wendy Hoddinott dated 11 August 2023 and 9 October 2023 on behalf of the Christchurch City Council.