

# Draft Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) 2009-2019

## From the Port Hills Park Trust Board

**Attendance:** We wish to attend and discuss the main points in the written submission and answer any questions at the hearings in May.

**Submission** This submission is on behalf of the Port Hills Park Trust Board and others.

**Contact Names:** Mr Oscar Alpers (PHPTB) and Mr Martin Hadlee. (CFPCT)

**Organisation name:** Port Hills Park Trust Board.

**Organisation Role:** The PHPTB is a charitable trust with representation from government, local government and the public of Christchurch. It owns and manages Mt Vernon Farm Park on behalf of the public of Christchurch. The PHPTB is also involved with the Christchurch City Council and community groups, e.g. the Summit Road Society, with facilitating the existing and future open space and reserves system and for the enhancement of the recreation and open space on the Port Hills. The PHPTB has, since 2003, and through its standing committee the Cashmere Forest Park Campaign Team, been facilitating an investigation of the feasibility of a future Cashmere Forest Park.

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**Signature :**



**Signature:**



**The submission** of 5 pages follows.

**A Summary Pamphlet** of 12 pages is also attached to this email.

This 'Cashmere Forest Park - Summary 2009' is also available as a separate printed pamphlet.

## Submission April 2009 to the Christchurch City Council on

### “CHRISTCHURCH LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN 2009-2019”

#### **1. The Port Hills Park Trust Board (“PHPTB”)**

The PHPTB was established in 1985 with the support of the City Council and other councils for the *‘preservation and conservation of resources offered by the Port Hills as an area for active and passive recreation, sport and education, to be enjoyed as far as is practicable by the people of Canterbury, in particular, and by visitors from beyond Canterbury in general’* and also *‘other charitable undertakings or undertakings as may be selected by the Trustees’*.

The PHPTB Trustees include the Mayor (or his/her nominee), a representative of Lincoln University, a representative of the local Member of Parliament, a representative of the Christchurch Civic Trust and three others representing the people of Canterbury. The current Trustees include:

Oscar Alpers - (Chairman, People of Canterbury)

Gwyn Rogers – (MPs Nominee)

Prof. Kevin O’Connor – (Lincoln University Nominee).

Lindsay Carson – (Civic Trust Nominee).

Bill Woods – (Summit Road Society Rep)

Ivan Thompson - ( People of Canterbury)

Alistair Cory-Wright - ( People of Canterbury)

The Trust was created as the title holding owner, in perpetuity, of the Mt Vernon Farm Park. In addition its Trust Deed envisages the Trust facilitating and extending areas to be protected for conservation, recreation and the rural open space network above the edge of urban development on the Port Hills.

In keeping with its Trust Deed the PHPTB has since 2003 been investigating the proposed creation of the Cashmere Forest Park from the McVicar’s forest. This is a 380 hectare property of steep Port Hills terrain with existing production forest covering the upper Cashmere and Worsleys Valleys. (this proposal is described in the Summary Pamphlet attached).

#### **2. LTCCP Strategic Issues and Highlights and the Port Hills**

The *Christchurch Long Term Community Plan 2009-19* identifies ‘Strategic Issues’ and ‘Highlights’ but, in respect of the Port Hills, there is a reduced explanation and emphasis in the Councils preferred Outcomes compared with those of the 2006 LTCCP.

This year there appears to be less emphasis on the Council’s active engagement, along with other partner organisations such as the PHPTB, in respect of ‘extending’ the Port Hills and Banks Peninsula reserves and open space system. The ‘protection’ of existing reserves and special areas are mentioned (ref ‘Protecting our natural and cultural heritage’ - pp25). But in terms of funding for strategic property purchases and the expansion of the open space reserve system on the Port Hills and Banks Peninsula there is only one reference to a new Banks Peninsula reserve area (‘Te Oka Farm’ - pp 29). This proposal seems to be in isolation from the major Port Hills Recreation Reserve Strategy.

There is no reference in the LTCCP to the importance of extending the Port Hills open space park corridors and property purchases as part of the Regional Reserve system. Such extensions also serve as a positive planning tool to reinforce the zoning and the definition of the boundary of the metropolitan urban area.

### 3. Capital Property Purchase

In 2006, in response to the PHPTB LTCCP submissions on the first LTCCP, the Council gave strong support for using some capital funding for the extension of reserves on the Port Hills. At that time the 2006 LTCCP allowed for a Loan of \$60.0M of which \$37.6M would be for strategic land purchases as 'Discretionary' projects. The Council, in its response to the PHPTB submission in May 2006, indicated that there seemed to be a 'good case' for capital funding to be available to assist in the purchase of the Cashmere Forest Park. At the time the mayor observed that *'This is just the sort of project the fund is intended for'*. The PHPTB requested a provisional figure of \$1.0M to be set aside by the CCC to be available in the 2007-2009 period. Due to the extent of investigation the PHPTB has had to undertake, no such request has been made so far.

In contrast the 2009-2019 LTCCP has no 'general Strategic (property) Purchase Fund'. For Regional Parks (pp 130) there is reference to managing regional parks including the Port Hills and 'Land may be purchased to add to the regional park system' ( pp142). However the Capital Programme ( pp 253) refers to an annual capital expenditure for ALL the 'Regional park renewals and replacements'(pp 253) over the 10 years 2009-2019 which varies from only \$1.0M to \$1.4M pa (We therefore assume this does not include any allowance for the Cashmere Forest Park purchase). As already noted the only reference to extending the Port Hills/Banks Peninsula open space and reserve system is the \$3.3M for the purchase of Te Oka Farm (pp 29 and pp 253) to be made in the present year 2009/2010.

The regional reserves appear, therefore to have a reduced capital programme for funding property purchases in the 2009-10 LTCCP contrasted with the allocations of the LTCCP in 2006.

### 4. General Conclusion on LTCCP Recognition of the Port Hills

The Port Hills Park Trust Board requests, on its own behalf and also on behalf of other organisations, voluntary groups who use and enjoy the environment of the Port Hills, that more explicit references and funding provisions be made in the LTCCP to reflect the value of the Port Hills/Banks Peninsula reserve system. This can be done conveniently by minor additions (shown underlined) at the following places:

- Page 25 last column amend first line to read **'the protection and extension of significant areas of land on Banks Peninsula and the Port Hills summit, hill and valley open space system'**
- Page 58 under 3 Environment amend last bullet point to **'number and area of ecological, open space reserves and selected heritage sites'**
- Page 60 add another bullet point **' numbers of people visiting selected regional recreation and open space reserves'**

It is assumed that the selected sites in both items pp58 and pp60 would include Victoria Park and a sample of Port Hills reserves including the Cashmere Forest Park in the future.

- Page 253 add after 'Regional parks renewal and replacements' **'Port Hills land purchase'** and include the **'Cashmere Forest Park \$750,000 over each of four years 2010-2011, 2012, 2013 & 2014 (i.e. \$3 Million).'**

Note; this sum is proposed as being a part contribution parallel with other funding to be raised and the owners contribution toward the programmed purchase of the Park.

## 5. Proposed Port Hills Forest Park

A Pamphlet outlining the objectives and development of the Cashmere Forest Park is attached.

The PHPT Board has been undertaking feasibility studies over the past six years in relation to the conversion of the present commercial pine forest in the Cashmere and Worsley Valleys with a view to them being managed as open space recreation reserves and subject to an integrated forest and recreation management plan which would make this 380 ha area accessible for public enjoyment. This has been supported by a Campaign Team of very experienced financiers, planners, engineers, recreation experts, developer's agent, land resources and forest scientists.

These professional people have volunteered much time over the six years undertaking research and considering an array of technical and planning matters leading to the preparation of a Draft Forest Park Management Plan which was prepared in 2008. This information is now available and has effectively saved the Council many years of extensive research and reporting already. These studies are essential to the preparation of the necessary zone Change to the City Plan and they give confidence to the Campaign Team and the Trust Board that the area has immense potential as a unique bio-diverse forest and recreation area and that the City Plan Change should proceed as the next step in this project.

The proposed Park's environment and uses contrasts with other regional reserves both on the Port Hills and the major 'regional scale' reserves such as:

- Hagley Park with its grassed and formal planted areas,
- McLeans Island with its varied group of interests in an isolated riverside area,
- Bottle Lake with its flat forest, its level walkways and seaward dunes,
- Coastal, rivers and estuary areas with their water, dunes and ceaseless sea breezes and tidal movement.

The challenge is now to provide this forest park, with its rugged wilderness and forested type character, for the enjoyment of the people of Christchurch, Canterbury and visitors.

The Cashmere Forest Park has a contrasting character, style and attraction with the other regional reserves. It has steep forested hillsides suited to active recreation and is of a scale that enables a great variety of alternative activities abutting the city and urban area. It is proposed that it remain with a permanent forest canopy capturing the atmosphere of a remote wilderness area. The park will form a link at the higher levels between Victoria Park, Coronation Hill and Marleys Hill Reserves. At the lower levels it will merge into the new Council Reserves proposed in the Cashmere and Worsleys valley flood plain management area.

The Cashmere Forest park project is a unique and extraordinarily fortunate situation. The whole 380 hectare area is still in one ownership and can all be made available for such a forward looking plan. The Port Hills Park Trust Board believes that, at this time, there is no other area on the Port Hills or Banks Peninsula which is of such importance as the Cashmere Forest Park.

The four values which are the basis of the Cashmere Forest Park Draft Management Plan are landscape, recreation, biodiversity and catchment/conservation. These all together support the outcomes set out in the LTCCP and also the City Plan zoning for the area. This proposal is a neat match to the purposes and the 2009-2019 LTCCP Community Outcomes of (2) Community, (3) Environment, (6) Health, (7) Recreation, (8) Knowledge and (9) Development.

## 6. LTCCP Support for Cashmere Forest Park

The Trust is working closely with other groups and the present owners to establish a programme for re-zoning and development of facilities. This venture is proposed as a joint private /public investment package providing facilities efficiently and at lesser cost to the rate payers. The programmed purchase is envisaged to incrementally transfer the land to the Trust over a period of several years.

The PHPT Board has resolved to pursue this programme as an independent Trust and to initiate the necessary Changes to the City Plan as a 'private change' commencing hopefully in the latter part of 2009. The area is to be planned in a unique, environmentally sensitive manner, as a public reserve with a variety of sustainable functions some being self funding activities.

The PHPTB strategy is to achieve public access to a managed recreation area. This could be achieved by the Council, or the PHPTB, or an arrangement of a joint public and private ownership through a joint venture. The latter arrangement is preferred and the PHPTB, as an independent charitable trust, is able to attract funding for this purchase from sources not necessarily available to the Council and also it is in a good position to facilitate a joint venture management structure.

Obviously funding will involve a mix of private sponsorship, public subscription and a contribution by the Christchurch City Council toward this capital investment, the total package to be negotiated in the immediate future. This is assisted by the present owner's willingness to consider an involvement in some of the activities and forestry management of the park. It will be necessary to establish a suitable Charitable Company to develop and run the park. The PHPTB would ultimately hold the title and lease the land to the company to develop and manage it in terms of the proposed Conservation Zone and the agreed Cashmere Forest Park Management Plan.

Although a firm arrangement for purchase has yet to be finalised, the Board is confident that a suitable formula will be agreed shortly to be put in place over a period of several years. At this stage an indicative figure covering the Council's contribution is proposed at \$3.0M. This is a preliminary estimate pending the completion of the more detailed Business Plan which is now in hand. There is also the possibility of part of the park becoming an extension of the City Council's Victoria Park.

Once the purchase has been completed it is expected that the project will be self funding and the annual maintenance and operation costs, initially estimated in the range of \$250,000-\$350,000 pa, is intended to be covered by the Cashmere Forest Park's own annual revenues from forestry, licenses and some charges for special activities. The Park is proposed to operate without having to call on annual grants for annual operating costs from Council rates.

There is here a window of opportunity which makes this feasible. In the LTCCP this proposal must be given the highest priority as the next key area to be added to the Port Hills open space and park system.

## 7. LTCCP Support for Mount Vernon

Regarding the PHPTB other responsibilities for Mt Vernon Farm Park. The park is managed by a Standing Committee chaired by Howard Keene and including Dave Bates, Anne Kennedy, David Drayton and Paul Devlin (CCC Ranger). It is intended to keep the funding mechanisms for these two PHPT Board responsibilities (i.e. the parks of Mt Vernon and Cashmere Forest) separate.

The Port Hills Park Trust Board appreciates the continued grants from the City Council's Strengthening Communities Fund for the operation, maintenance, planning and research of the Mount Vernon farm park. In recent years the Council has made annual grants of \$20,000 to \$25,000 pa toward Mount Vernon and that is acknowledged and appreciated. It is assumed this funding will continue to be provided from the provisions included in the draft LTCCP.

Continued support is obviously a good investment for the City for the management and operation of this successful major public reserve. Continued grants for Mt Vernon at the past level is again requested.

### **8. Conclusion**

The PHPT Board considers it is imperative to the public confidence in the major undertaking of developing the 380 ha Cashmere Forest Park, that the City Council recognise the Cashmere Forest Park in the LTCCP 2009-19 as part of its Strategic land purchases programme.

The Council is asked to support the establishment of the Cashmere Forest Park with its hill and valley environment for forestry, conservation and public recreation activities. In particular:

1. The Council is asked to include greater recognition and emphasis in the Council's LTCCP 2009-2019 for the proposed Cashmere Forest Park and other capital land purchases on the Port Hills. It is recommended that the amendments set out in Clauses 4 above (or their equivalent) be added to the LTCCP.
2. The Council is asked to support the development of this Park jointly with the PHPTB and the present owner.
3. The Council is requested to include in its LTCCP a capital item of \$750,000 pa over the four years of 2010, 2011, 2012 & 2013 (i.e a total of \$3.0M) as its contribution to the purchase of the Cashmere Forest Park.
4. The Council is also asked to continue its support for the management of Mt Vernon Park from the Community Grants Fund at the same level as in the past three years.

Recognition of the Cashmere Forest Park in the LTCCP will indicate a commitment from the City Council to this very significant and City-enhancing project. The purchase is proposed to be accomplished through a mix of Council, grant (\$3M), plus public subscription and identified sponsors over the next four or five years.



On behalf of the Port Hills Park Trust Board  
Oscar Alpers  
Chairman  
16 April 2009