



The Lower Avon Heritage Recovery Trail

“The Avon is a catalyst to narrate the underlying heritage values of the Avon - Otakaro River corridor.”

Acknowledgements:

Concept Creator:

Diana Madgin

Project & Visualisation Producers:

Alison Baxter - The University of Sheffield ,UK, under office at Lucas Associates

Kabir Singh - The University of Lincoln, under office at Lucas Associates

Leicester Murray - The University of Lincoln, under office at Robert Watson Landscape Architects

Project Co-ordinators:

Diana Madgin

Di Lucas

Robert Watson

The Lower Avon Heritage Team:

Diana Madgin & Bill Willmott,

Di Lucas,

Robert Watson,

Alison Baxter,

Kabir Singh,

Leicester Murray,

Ken & Gayleen Sharplin,

Stevan Eldred-Grigg,

Juliet Nicholas,

Robyn Kilty,

Craig Pauling,

Gary Moore,

Nicky Wagner,

Hillary Wilson,

Dr John Clemens,

Peggy Kelly & Bill Sykes,

Michael King

Rhys Taylor

Zoe Roland

Graeme Stanley

Bob Crowder

Cathy Sweet

Matt Morris

Katherine O'Neil

Mike Vincent

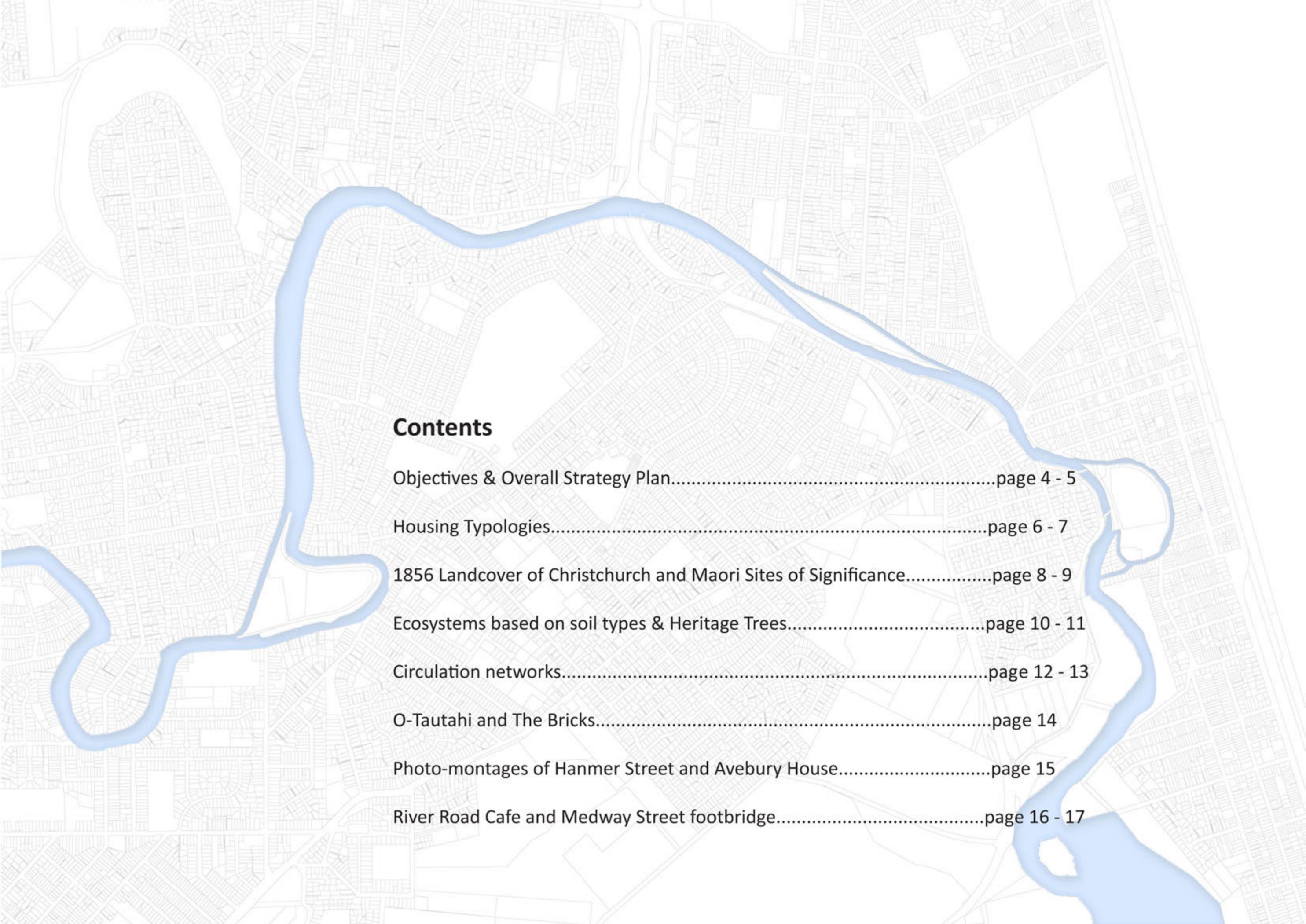
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Original Submission- Diana Madgin

SUBMISSION ON DRAFT Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy,
25 October 2011

TITLE: Christchurch East Garden City Heritage Trail

SUBMITTED BY: Diana Madgin

PERSONAL INSPIRATION: I have been a garden guide for 17 years. I have travelled extensively and take garden tours to China. In the reconstruction of eastern Christchurch, I have been asking what Christchurch can offer tourists to this city, once famous for its neo-Gothic heritage and for its magnificent gardens.

SUPPORT FROM SPECIALISTS:

A group of garden and heritage specialists support the project. They have circulated it far and wide, and it has received much positive response:

Dr John Clemens, Curator Christchurch Botanic Gardens

Juliet Nicholas, Senior Garden and Architecture Photographer Robert Watson, Senior Landscape Architect, Canterbury

Robyn Kilty, Garden of National Significance, Hanmer Street Heritage Precinct

Rhys Taylor, Greening the Rubble

Zoe Roland, NZ Historic Places Trust, Canterbury/West Coast Area Coordinator

Graeme Stanley, Christchurch Walks Specialist, Local Historian

Bob Crowder, National Patron, NZ Soil Health Association

Senior Members, Christchurch Community Gardens Association:

- Cathy Sweet
- Matt Morris
- Katherine O'Neil
- Peggy Kelly

INTRODUCTION:

There is little evidence thus far of garden planning for the new Garden City. Concern is widespread amongst those of our community who identify personally with the name 'Garden City' and who work both in their own gardens and on numerous committees to uphold the name.

There are some who consider heritage should be put aside for a new start: "It's gone, we need to move on." Many of those were out on ANZAC morning, celebrating lives of men and women who fought before they were born, unconsciously demonstrating their link with history. Our heritage is inescapable, but to some it is invisible, not known.

Long before the title Garden City was mooted, our earliest settlers, local Waitaha and Ngati Mamoe, later Ngai Tahu, gathered their food on the fringe swamplands along the coast and further inland at Otautahi. Three Ngai Tahu pou now stand on the sacred site of Tautahi at the eastern end of Salisbury Street, just fifty yards from Brick's Landing at today's Madras Street bridge.

Ngai Tahu women came up the Avon in small flax canoes to trade vegetables at Market Square. They tended gardens at Tuahiwi and Kaiapohia, growing peas and corn, pumpkin and potatoes since the whalers came to shore in need of food supplies.

Upon arrival, the earliest colonial settlers adopted Otautahi for their first nursery. In fact, nurseryman "Cabbage" Wilson grew a wide variety of shelter trees, broom, gorse and eucalyptus, for the new settlement. He also grew fruit and vegetables with seeds sent from earlier settlements in New Zealand and from New South Wales. Newly arrived Pakehas had a place to plant cuttings and seeds that had survived their long ocean voyage. Cabbage Wilson got rich and eventually became mayor of Christchurch.

French warships had a supply garden at French Farm, so named, and they also brought willow slips from St. Helena in the south Atlantic whilst visiting Napoléon en route to New Zealand. Willows came to France from China via the Silk Road eons before and now weep over the Avon and Heathcote Rivers.

VISION: That Christchurch have a garden heritage tourist attraction that can be marketed for both domestic use-- school visits, community organisation bus tours--and as a major commodity for in-bound tourist companies.

PROPOSAL: That the Avon River serve as both a time-line and a frame of reference for a series of protected heritage sites extending from the city's original Ngai Tahu food-gathering place, now the Avon Loop, to the city's estuary. Sites are selected to demonstrate the development of gardens, both Maori and Pakeha. Four of these sites will require the city's commitment to restore and protect architecture relating to the gardens and their history on the sites along the Avon.

Each site would have an information panel recording the local provenance and significance of the site.

HERITAGE TRAIL

SITE 1: Avon Loop/Otutahi and The Bricks: Information panels to include:

- Otutahi sacred site: totem poles on river bank at end of Salisbury Street.
- Important food-gathering place for Ngai Tahu.
- Maori traded vegetables here from their gardens at Tuahiwi and Kaiapoi, where they were growing European corn, potatoes, wheat and cabbages prior to the Christchurch settlement in 1850. Seeds were received from earlier flax-trading and whaling ships to assure fresh food provisions for their ships.
- References to Waitaha and Ngati Mamoe long before Ngai Tahu.
- The Bricks, already marked by a small cairn and information panel. This was where the first settlers, having crossed the bar at Sumner, disembarked.
- This area became the first plant nursery for English settlers.
- William "Cabbage" Wilson, nurseryman, growing vegetables, pasture grasses, shelter belts.
- Wilson became first mayor of Christchurch in 1868.

SITE 2: Englefield Farm, corner Avonside Drive and Fitzgerald Avenue. Info to include:

- The farm between Stanmore Road, Armagh Street and the river, all swamp and tussock.
- Englefield Lodge is the oldest house in Christchurch, 1852.
- It was built by William Guise-Britten (First Four Ships), the first farm outside the Four Avenues in the new Borough of Linwood.
- The villa espoused an upper-class colonial life: cricket, sailing on the river, planting the first willows.
- A modern memorial garden to Guise-Britten stands on the corner.

SITE 3: Hanmer Street. Info to include:

- Hanmer Street workers' cottages precinct, 1865-80. These historic homes were pre-fabricated in England, and some are still extant. Christchurch was developing quickly and in need of more labour and skilled artisans.
- Charming neighbourhood for a guided walk. Visit community heritage rose garden in adjacent Beverley Park.
- 11 Hanmer Street: visit Robyn Kilty's cottage and Garden of National Significance, one of Christchurch's best known gardens.

SITE 4: Avebury House. Info to include:

- Built for William Flesher, who died in 1889 just after the house was built.
- His son, James Flesher, barrister and solicitor, mayor of New Brighton, Christchurch City Councilor, Mayor of Christchurch 1923-25.
- Wealthy, mortgagee to many new property owners in North Richmond in the 1920s.
- Sold riverside land between Avebury House and Medway Street to the government for state housing in the 1930s (previously CCC horse paddocks).
- Avebury House now owned by CCC for Richmond's community house. Its large, attractive grounds are much used for community gatherings.
- History of the house is well documented.

SITE 5: River Road opposite Medway Street foot bridge. Info to include:

- Four spec houses built 1920s.
- Several adjacent gardens worth saving for heritage value and as working sites for community gardens.
- House at no.377 in excellent order and spacious with detailed provenance on building of the house. Propose that this building be saved: perfect design for café with large modern kitchen and dining area, rooms for information museum about East Christchurch, large room for talks, lectures, etc. (See addendum)
- Good stopping place for tourists: food, toilets, info. Halfway stop on trail.
- River walks.

SITE 6: ANZAC Bridge. Info to include:

- Beautifully designed, eco-sympathetic architecture. Handsome sculptured flax in relief on lamp posts. Best modern Christchurch bridge.
- Deeply piled: 44m to solid ground beneath prehistoric seabed.
- Outstanding demonstration of city's sustainable planting in surrounding wetlands.

SITE 7: Bexley Housing Development: Info to include:

- Housing development devastated by February 22 earthquake.
- Dramatic liquefaction.
- Index of profound seismic instability of this coastal wetland.

Site 8: Bexley Wetlands and Estuary. Info to include:

- Heritage landscaped wetlands park with walking tracks adjacent to the estuary.
- Native and exotic birdlife.
- Effects of earthquakes on estuary eco-system.
- Significant Ngai Tahu food-collection site.

Addendum to Site 5: River Road opposite Medway Street foot bridge:

Planning the garden heritage trail came from knowledge of my own local history, how my house and garden, and those of my neighbours, reflected an historical continuum from the beginnings of colonial settlement. My knowledge of pre-European settlement became clearer from the maps published after the earthquakes. Author Stevan Eldred-Grigg and his wife moved into 377 River Road in the 1980s. Eldred-Grigg researched the history of his home and the wider suburb of Richmond.

Following the February 22nd 2011 earthquake, two of the four villas owned by the Lewthwaites during the Great War and the 1920s remained in liveable condition apart from damaged foundations. Number 377 specifically, now owned by Ken and Gaylene Sharplin, has been meticulously enlarged and renovated by them in recent years. The original Art Nouveau stained glass windows, the brass door handles and keyholes, the beautifully rimu-panelled rooms are a source of pride and joy to all of us in the street community. On the street there is a "car shed" built for a Model T Ford in 1925.

The proposal for the seven sections from 365 to 383 follows:

Proposals for 377:

- This house be bought by the City Council, repaired and the land remediated. Use this house as the hub of the complex.
- Converted to a café-restaurant ("River Road Café"?), house design suits this purpose.
- Native garden and courtyards at front and back of the house suitable for outdoor dining.
- The front parlour of the house suitable for teaching, meetings, museum, local information.
- Café kitchen classes in the re-emerging art of bottling jams and pickles using fruit and vegetables harvested from the surrounding protected gardens and community gardens.

Proposals for 373 & 383: Info to be included:

- These two gardens to be retained in their current style. 383 still has its original 1920s design for vegetables, orchard and fowl-house.
- When our houses are removed, these sites might be filled with specialist fruits reflecting the fashions of the 1920s, e.g., old-species apple orchard in one, mixed berries in the other.
- Gateways from 377 "café" leading into backyard heritage gardens and community gardens.

Proposal for community gardens:

- The three sections adjacent to 373 (365, 367, 371) and the section between 377 and 383 (381) be secured as community gardens and the special trees be retained.
- A partnership with the Canterbury Community Gardens Association for the care of the heritage gardens and orchards and berry gardens might be possible.

Contact:
Name: Diana Madgin
Address: 373 River Road, Christchurch 8013
Phone: (03) 385 3559
Cellphone: 021 412 282
E-mail: wew25@ext.canterbury.ac.nz

Objectives

A powerful story can be told of the establishment of Christchurch by reading the Avon River's many layers of cultural, heritage, and landscape features.

Acknowledging significant sites along the recently identified "red zone" corridor along the Avon River corridor is the driver and foundation for compiling this document.

The **preservation** of these identified sites requires recognising and actioning before demolition of a noteworthy layer of our city has disappeared.

Celebrating the character of significant features along the Avon River can make a noteworthy journey of *educational, historical, cultural, and landscape value*.

Sharing what was once residential, so that it becomes a communal recreational zone.

Eastern Suburbs Red Zone Layer as of November 19, 2011

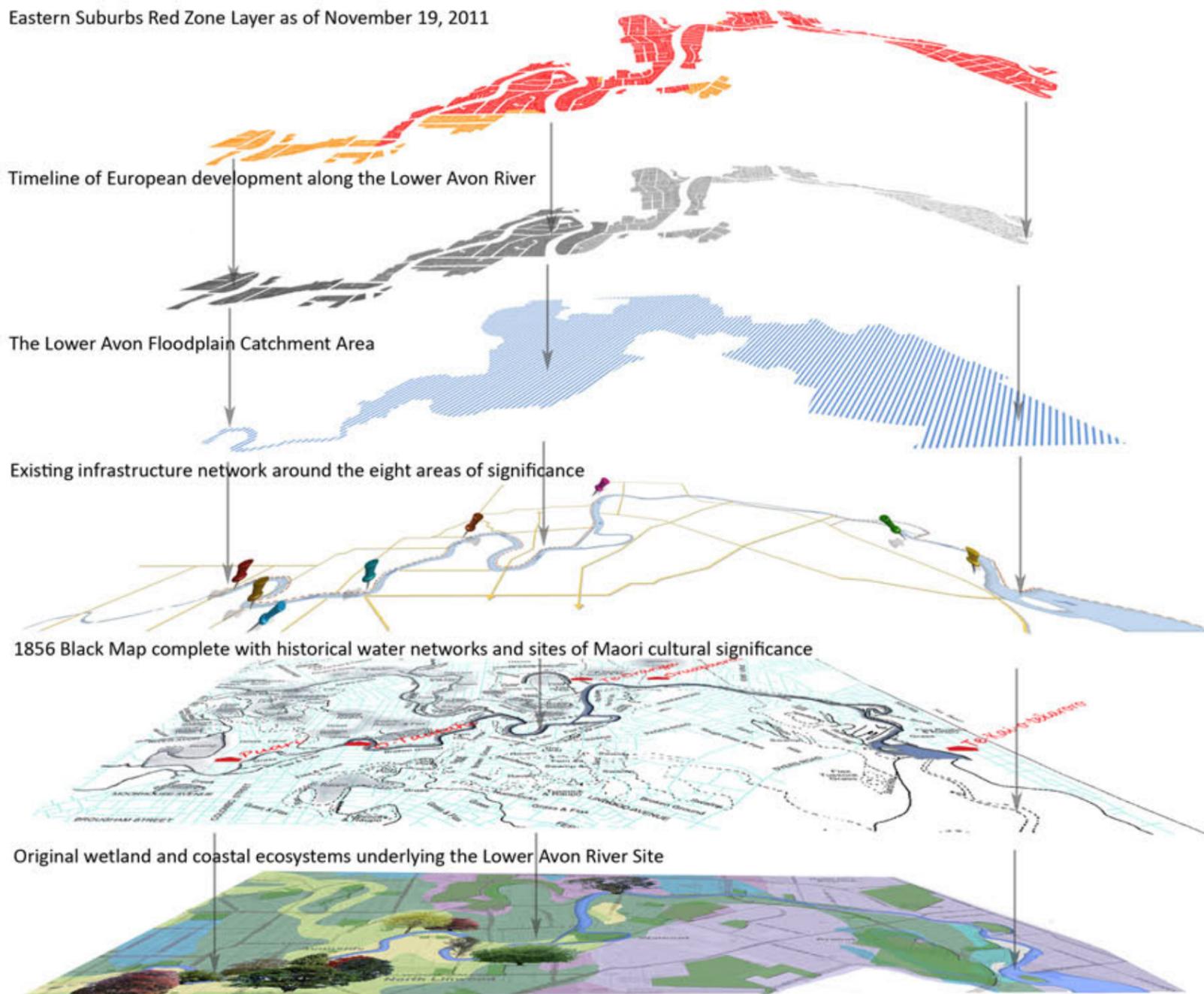
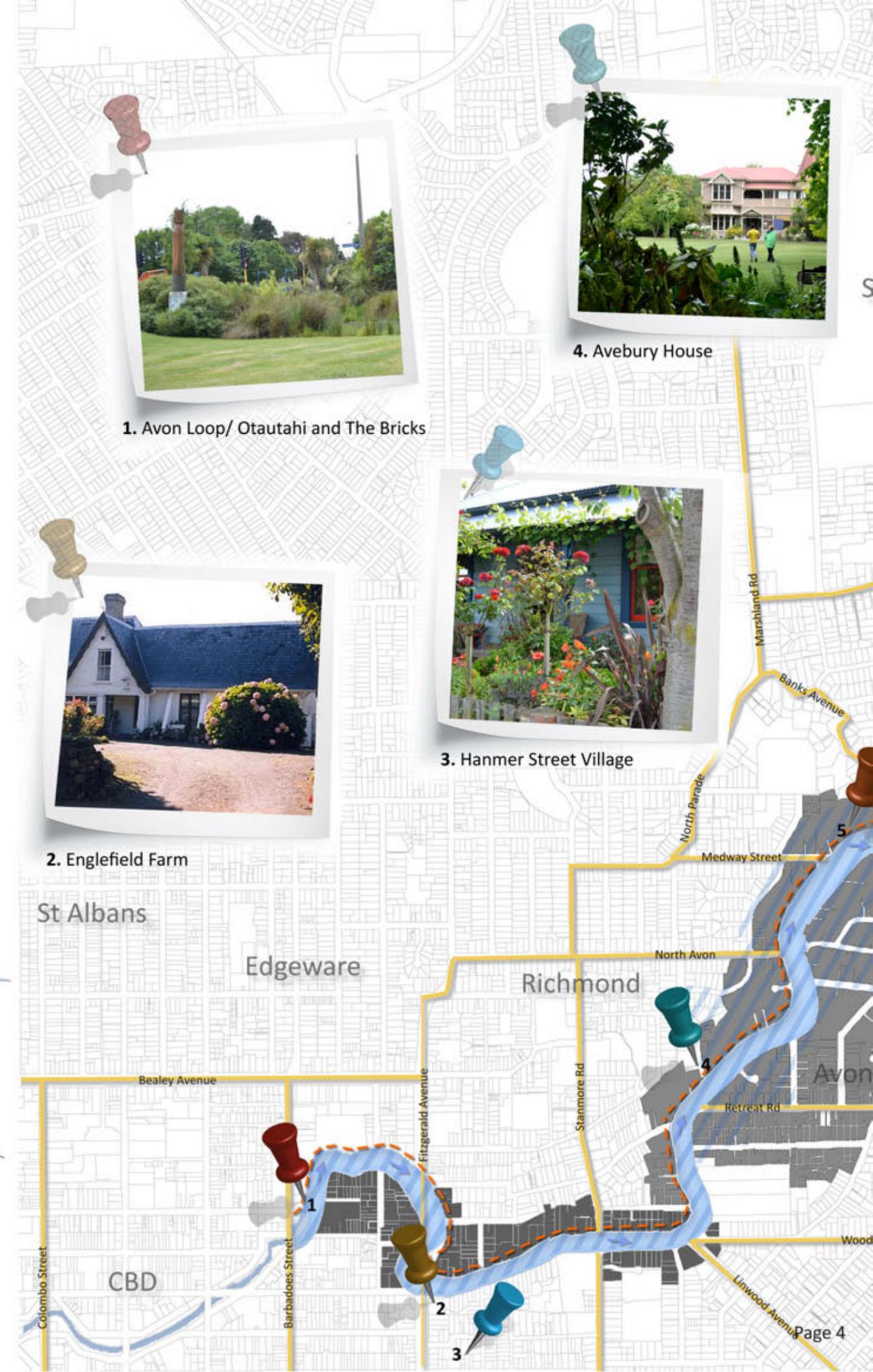


figure 1. Layered plans showing the correlation of each layer, particularly the direct evidence of the red zone which is encompassed by the floodplain catchment area and the original wetland ecosystems.





6. ANZAC Bridge



7. Bexley Housing Development



5. River Road opposite Medway Street footbridge



8. Bexley Wetlands & Estuary

Housing typologies

Distinct housing typologies transecting the Avon River corridor tell the story of the regions post European settlement development. Distinctive architectural styles assist to tell the story of where and when these development episodes took place. Materials used, the size individual dwellings and their allocated land parcel support the narrative throughout the journey.



Pre 1900 workman cottages.
A distinctive colonial character, wooden with an iron roof, compact and always facing the street irrespective of orientation.



1920's - 30's Arts & Crafts bungalow.
California style wooden dwellings with intricate features such as lead-light windows and stone accents.



1950's - 60's State housing.
Post WWII the government supported housing scheme build small single story dwelling. Well built wooden cladding with concrete tile roofs.



1970's - 80's Single family dwelling.
Built on relatively large parcels of land (approx 1000m²) constructed of brick or block the dwelling became larger than previously.



1990's +.
Single family dwellings built smaller sections of land for ease of maintenance. Brick cladding and metal roofs.

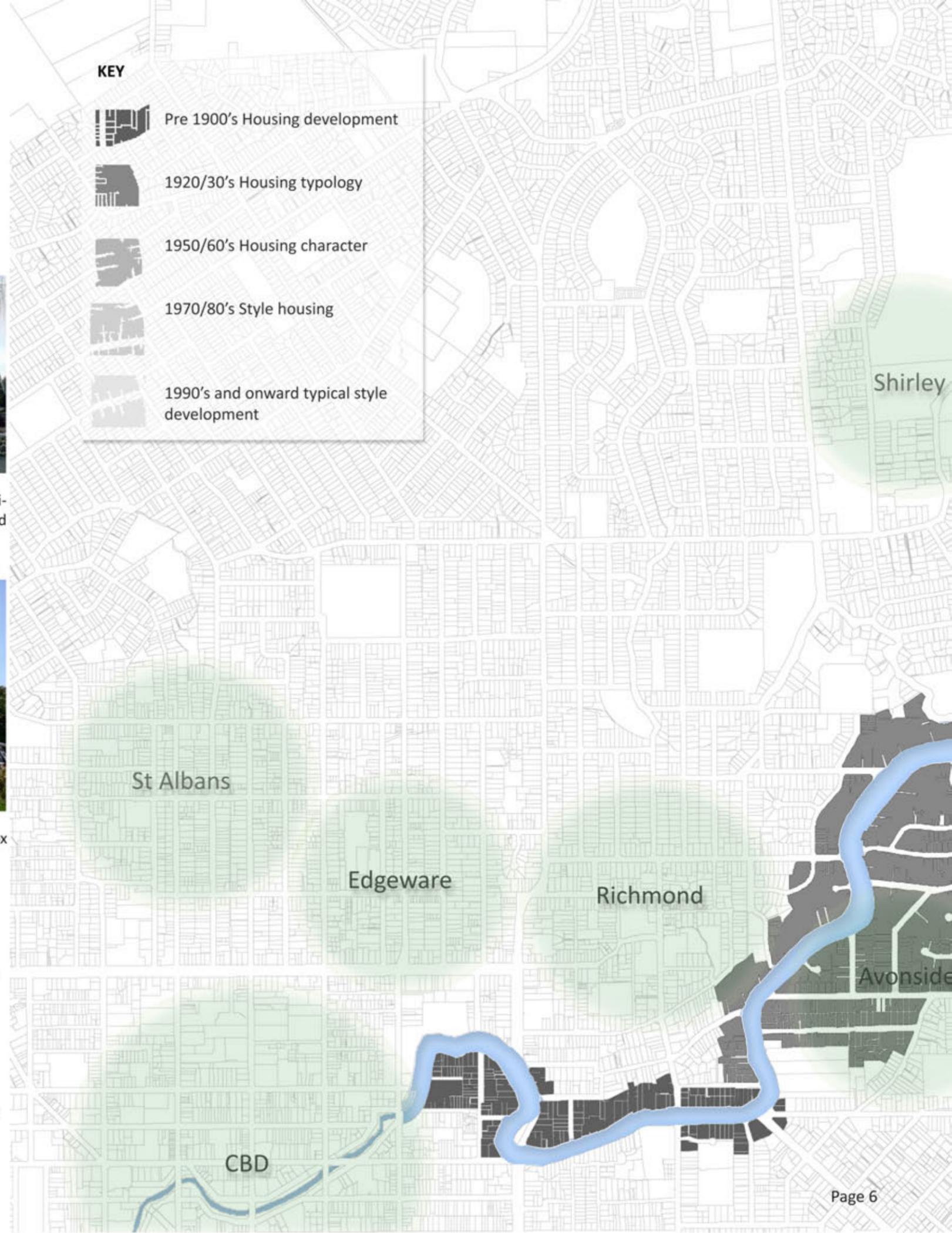


figure 2 (above). Housing typologies showing building character through the overall site.

figure 3 (right). Housing typologies indicating the time line of development through The Avon River corridor.



Burwood

Avondale

Aranui

New Brighton

Dallington

Wainoni

South Brighton

Landcover of Christchurch in 1856 & Maori sites of significance.

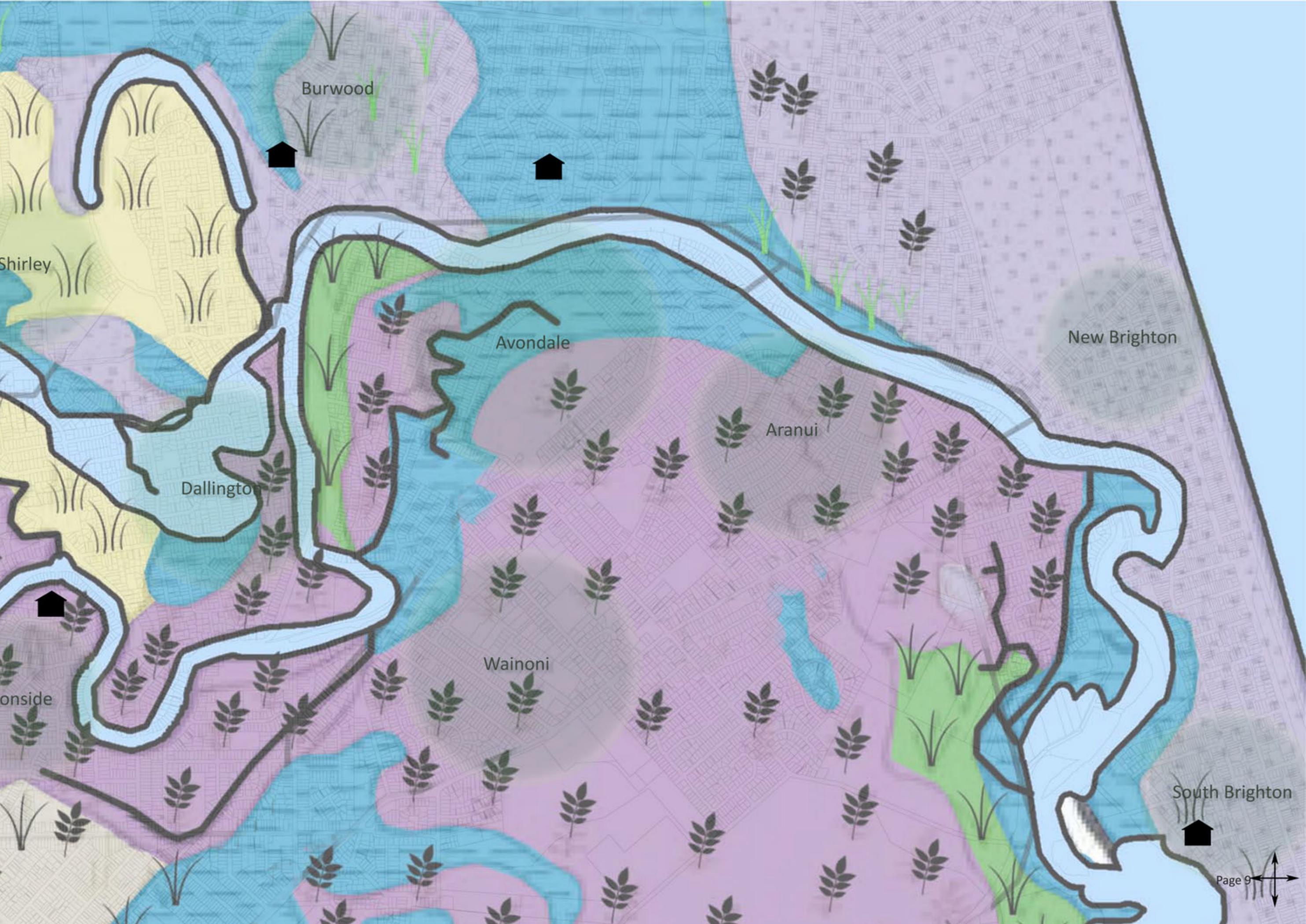
Visually recognised land-cover by early European settlers show the dominance of swamp, flax, fern, surface water, and streams throughout the region. The Avon River follows much of the same path except for around Porritt Park and Kerr's Reach, however many of the region's small streams are today drained below street surface and are the cause of much community devastation. Sites of Maori significance along The Avon River corridor are also identified.



figure 4 (above). "The Bricks" watercolour of 1851.

figure 4 (right). Landcover of Christchurch in 1856, & Maori sites of significance.





Burwood

Shirley

Dallington

Avondale

Aranui

New Brighton

onside

Wainoni

South Brighton

Ecosystems based on soil types & Heritage Trees.

Overlaying Heritage Notable Trees with a category 1 status across the Lower Avon River indigenous ecosystems map reflects the development of the Eastern Suburbs. Acknowledging the existing open spaces surrounding the Avon River corridor identifies potential locations for immediate development post earthquake. Recognizing the potential for a land swap that would both create an open space network along the Avon corridor, accommodating and celebrating a multitude of activities throughout the route.

Heritage/ Notable Tree Species along Avon Corridor



figure 5. The Flora and Fauna charactersation of Native Wetland Plains.

WET PLAINS

- Kahikatea**
kereru - manatu,
older plains ecosystem
- Totara**
bellbird - matai,
older plains ecosystem
- Te Kakahi complex**
dry or stony
- Pukio**
pukeko - karamu,
peat plains ecosystem

COASTAL PLAINS

- Akeake**
riroriro - ngaio,
old dune ecosystem
- Pingao**
kuaka - tauhinu,
young dunes ecosystem
- Oioi**
tuturiwhatu,
marsh ribbonwood,
estuarine ecosystem

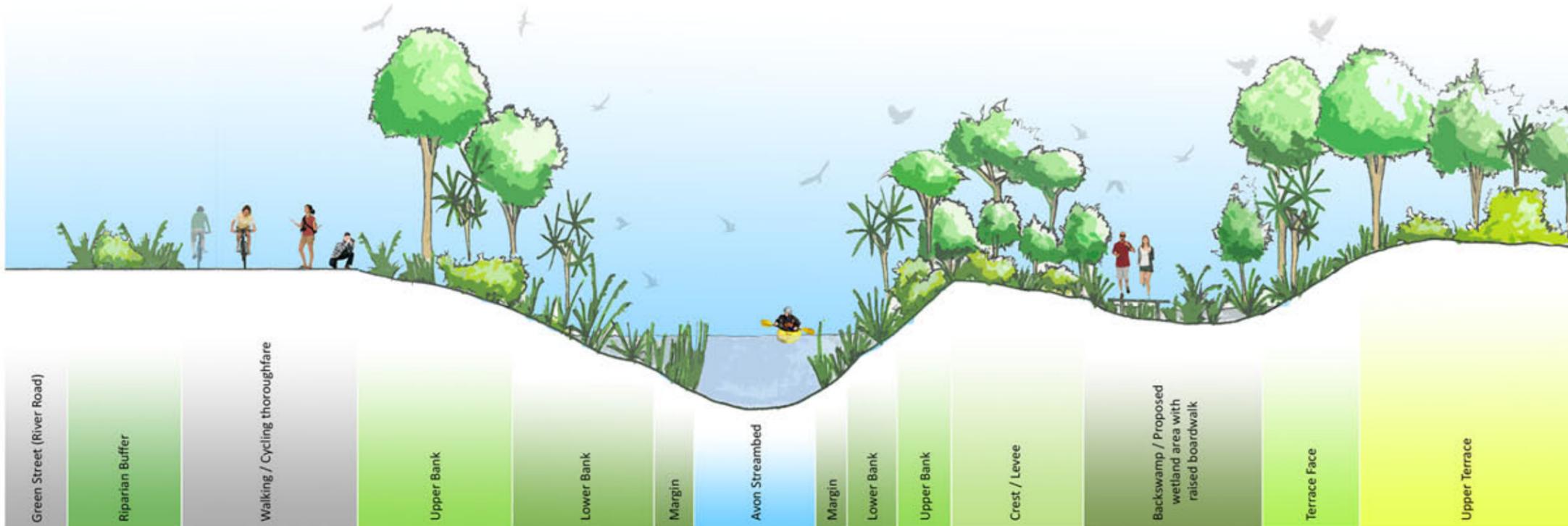


figure 6. Cross section diagram of the Lower Avon River complete with native parkland



figure 7. Ecosystems based on soil types overlaid with Notable / Heritage trees.



Circulation networks.

The significant sites identified are connected by the thread of Avon River. Utilising and celebrating the Avon River as a means of transportation would create another layer to the proposed Open Space corridor linking Christchurch city to The Avon Heathcote Estuary. Pleasure craft carrying tourists journeying the river would enhance the experience and accentuate the timeline of Christchurch settlement, from pre-European the post 2011 earthquake.



figure 8. Sites of significance along the Avon River corridor



Horseshoe Lake

Burwood

Avondale

Aranui

Wainoni

New Brighton

Dallington

South Brighton

New Brighton Road

Avondale Road

Anzac Drive

Gayhurst Road

Wainoni Road

Breezes Road

Pages Road

74

74

O-Tautahi and The Bricks.

This site is presently severed by Barbadoes Street. Improving the connection between O-Tautahi and The Bricks would greatly improve the usability of the site, perhaps pedestrian access under the existing road bridge. The existing interpretation panels are weak and the present cairn marking the site of the upstream limits of navigable access on The Avon would benefit from enhancement. This is an appropriate starting point for a tour of the Lower Reaches of the Avon River where there is available space for tour buses to park.



figure 9. (above) Photo montage showing the potential celebration of the site with its heritage being acknowledged as a meeting place and The Avon being celebrated as a means of recreation and transport.

Existing images across The Bricks site



figure 10. (top left) wetland vegetation.

figure 11. (top right) St Mary's stream

figure 12. (bottom left) The Bricks Cairn

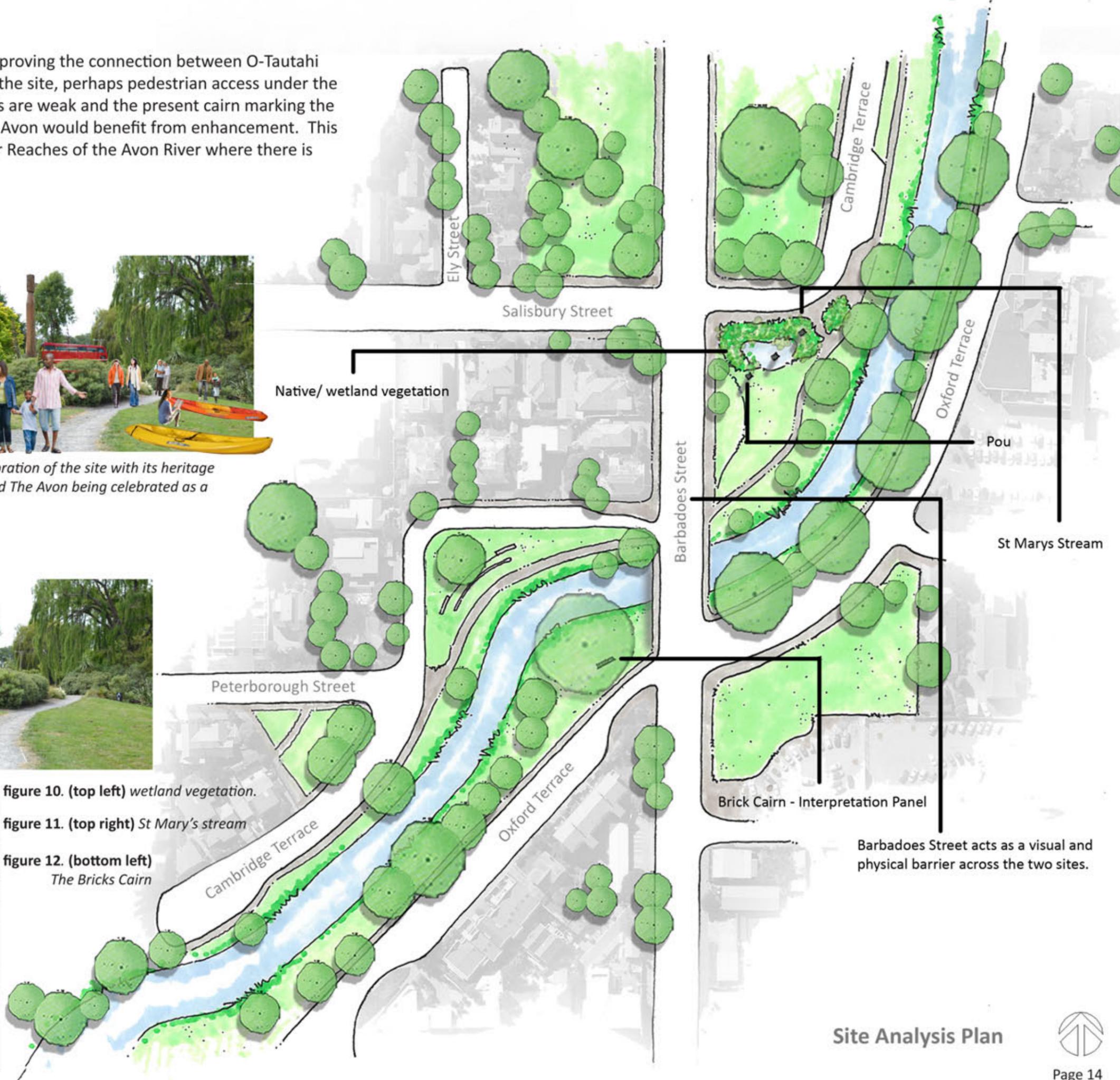




Figure 13 (left). Shows the potential of Avebury House as an ideal venue for public receptions.



Figure 14 (right). Pedestrian activity along Hanmer Street.



Figure 15 (left). Shows a levee rupture being used as an earthquake memorial by planting native wetland species.



Figure 15 (right). Shows the potential of the Avon River as a vibrant corridor that can be utilised as a means of communication for visitors and tourists.

River Road opposite Medway Footbridge.

This area is to act as the 'hub' along the heritage trail with the proposed River Road Cafe to be the central focus.

- River Road to be turned into a Green Street with expanded riparian edges.
- Front Yards of properties to be turned into native gardens (acting as rain gardens) with informalised plantings.
- Community Gardens to replace the houses along River Road.
- The existing backyards with their gardenesque character are to be retained for 'Heritage Garden Tour' purposes, creating a vibrant juxtaposition against the informalised planting nearby.
- A native corridor linkage will be created from the Avon River to the existing parkland area at the back of the properties.
- The existing sheds reflect a relationship between the built architecture and the garden styles of the era.



figure 17. Locator Google Earth image showing the stretch of properties between Medway and Banks Avenue.



figure 18. Panoramic of an existing backyard garden.



figure 19. Iconic Medway Street footbridge.



Site Concept Plan





River Road Cafe Proposition

- Cafe
- Educational Facility
- Community Asset

figure 20. (right / below). These images show a before and after rendition of the Cafe proposal at 377 River Road. The images show the decking and courtyard space at the back of the property immersed within native plantings.



figure 21. (above). The two images above show the kitchen area which can easily be transformed for commercial use.

Sustainable Design Attributes to include

- Solar Panels
- Composting Toilets
- Recycling rainwater/ greywater
- Vegetable composting
- Community gardens
- Disconnected drain pipes



Site 7 & 8 Wetland Heritage.



6. ANZAC Bridge



7. Bexley Housing Development

Elegant timber structures and roosts will be implemented within the wetland for the birds to use as a safe haven. The Wetland scheme will promote native biodiversity for the area.



Boardwalks provide more scope to explore the Heritage Park. Families, birdwatchers, and conservationists can interact with the birdlife, fauna and flora. They can relax in seating areas, as well as overlook the site in elevated bird watching units. The educational information boards can be a teaching tool for school trips, recognising traditional and ecological values of the site.



8. Bexley Wetlands & Estuary



Bexley Wetland Development: Bird Sanctuary.



Lower Avon River

The shape of the Wetland predominantly maximises the potential for multiple eco-niches, as well as overspill ponds

Information panel boards along walk trails, recognising the native wildlife species, fauna and flora, and ecosystems.

Gradiated land areas and pockets provide wind shelters for the Bird life as well as non intrusive bird viewing locations

Looped boardwalks, along existing contours throughout the wetland. Access in conjunction with the River Avons banks, providing a River walk

Traffic calming zone for recreational traffic coming through. Car park away from main wetland area with steep embankment backdrop.

Islands and narrow submerged linkages direct flow of the wetland. Maximise existing topographical formations. Also provides levees areas for bird roost structures.

Steep embankments built up to act as a buffer to lift wetland birds above traffic danger. Most likely clothed in native plants and grasses

Existing estuary overspill zone