

Your Comment on the Ōhoka Residential Subdivision

Please include all the contact details listed below with your comments and indicate whether you can receive further communications from us by email to substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz.

1. Contact Details	
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.	
Organisation name (if relevant) N/A	
First name	SHARMALEE & YASANTHA
Last name	PANAGODA
Postal address	
Home phone / Mobile phone	Work phone
Email (a valid email address enables us to communicate efficiently with you)	

2. We will email you draft conditions of consent for your comment	
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Please provide your comments below, include additional pages as needed.

PLEASE SEE SEPARATE PAGES
FOR COMMENTS.

1. Introduction

Introduction:

My name is Sharmalee Panagoda. I live on Whites Rd, Ohoka, with my husband, Yasantha, and our two children, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]. Yasantha and I originally moved out to Ohoka from Christchurch in 2013, after our Avonside home was destroyed in the earthquakes. We were looking for somewhere calm and quiet, where our dogs could run, but if they accidentally got out, the likelihood of them being hit by a car was low.

Both Yasantha and I grew up in a rural environment and wanted to raise our family in the same way, so they could enjoy the hares, pheasants and pukekos, the ducks learning to fly on our pond, the cows across the road and the beautiful mountains behind them, often covered in snow. They could pick their own fruit from our orchard, learn about the eels in the creek and go play in the local domain.

Ohoka gave us all of this and more. It is a close community, where the service station is at the heart of the town and the postie knows everyone personally. It is built on history and tradition, with the walking map of Ohoka highlighting what's left of the historic buildings from the original village. It is a special place with a unique character that only those who live here know.

Yasantha and I both work in Christchurch. I'm an electronic engineer and work from home two days a week. Yasantha is a regional manager for a commercial cleaning company. It's important for us to be able to commute back and forth efficiently. Our jobs are demanding and Ohoka is the perfect refuge for us to come home to and re-ground ourselves. Life hasn't been easy for us and we've both worked hard to move ourselves up from the ground level to where we are now. We've traded a large portion of our income for the privilege to live in Ohoka, but it has been worth it. Ohoka is now our home and in our hearts.

Flooding:

Our property has a stream boundary on three sides, and this stream is fed directly from the water that runs off the farmland across the road from us on Whites Rd. The drain running along this farmland is known to flood (see attached photos from April '25) and causes flooding on downstream properties. Our property already has some flooding with just moderate rainfall, so we have grave concerns for the effect that the proposed subdivision will have on water flow onto our and neighbouring properties. The effects of this should be properly assessed and substantial testing done before considering massive construction works.

Rural Character and Amenity:

There is no way that the proposed subdivision can go ahead whilst retaining the character of the Ohoka village. Ohoka has prime farmland, great for grazing animals and growing crops. It is one of the greenest areas in the Waimak, another attraction that brought us here. The gorgeous tree-lined roads would be destroyed by road-widening and infrastructure development. The little village would be smothered by the increase in population, traffic and commercial developments. Country people don't want to live in 'suburbia'. (We could have spent a lot less money and stayed in Christchurch, if we wanted that.)

The Ohoka School roll would not be able to cope with the increase in student numbers and the special character of this lovely rural school would be lost, as well as rural school traditions, like Pet Day, where kids bring pets to school (including horses, alpacas, bunnies and chickens).

Our view of the mountains would be replaced by a view of people's houses, and lots of them. Subdividing into 10-acre lifestyle blocks might be tolerable, but 850+ houses would be like building a new, much larger, town on the doorstep of the existing one, essentially drowning Ohoka village and everything the community has fought hard to preserve over the years.

Infrastructure:

We rely on a private bore for drinking water and a septic tank for wastewater treatment. The impact of the proposed subdivision on the groundwater levels and water quality is largely unknown. If there were adverse effects on our water supply, there is no way to reverse this.

Our roads are quite quiet at the moment. Our kids often catch the bus to and from school, and we're hoping they will eventually be biking, but a large increase in traffic would make this trip hazardous and potentially unsafe, especially as these are primary school children. Some kids ride their horses and ponies to school, and we often see them riding down Whites Rd. Horses and fast traffic do not mix well. There are no official bus stops – the children are dropped off or wait to be collected from the roadside at the end of their driveway. There are no footpaths along the majority of Whites Rd.

Insurability Risk:

Along with the unknown impact to water levels comes an increase in insurance risk, and hence higher premiums, which would make properties in our area less desirable.

Absence of Net Economic Benefits:

There are a number of new subdivisions coming up in areas that are better-suited to this and that don't cause the level of Adverse Impacts that the proposed subdivision would most certainly cause to Ohoka village.

Anything Else:

We are very concerned that we will be subjected to a massive construction site across the road, with vehicles coming and going, major earthworks and building for an extended period of time, potentially spanning years. Not only would it be an eye sore, but the dust and noise generated would impact the lives of everyone in close proximity and render Ohoka properties unsaleable, as no one wants to live next door to a construction site.

The increased population will impact the environment. Birdlife will move elsewhere due to the noise, litter and crime will increase, and the beautiful, natural haven that is our home will be majorly impacted, not temporarily but permanently.

We ask the Panel to please give due consideration to our request to preserve Ohoka village, our home, by declining the application to fast-track the proposed subdivision in Ohoka.

Flooding of farmland (proposed development site) on Whites Rd:

