

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)			
First name	Marlene		
Last name	Hopkinson		
Postal address	██████████ ██████ ██████████		
Home phone / Mobile phone	██████████	Work phone	
Email (<i>a valid email address enables us to communicate efficiently with you</i>)	████████████████████		

2. We will email you draft conditions of consent for your comment			
☐	I can receive emails and my email address is correct -YES	☐	I cannot receive emails and my postal address is correct

Please provide your comments below, include additional pages as needed.

1. Introduction

My name is Marlene Hopkinson. I am 80 years old, a retired school teacher, and I have lived at ██████████ ████████ Ōhoka, since 1981. My husband and I moved here with our three children because we wanted a quiet, peaceful and uncomplicated rural life. We wanted our children to grow up with space around them, surrounded by animals, farmland, country people and a small rural school where families knew one another.

When we first moved to Ōhoka, people joked that I would need thigh-high gumboots because of the swampy ground. They were not far wrong. Even today, gumboots are probably the most expensive and certainly the most useful footwear I own. For around seven months of the year, if you step off the concrete or a hard surface on our property, you need to be wearing them.

That is simply part of living in Ōhoka. Beneath the topsoil is a clay pan, and water can sit on the surface for long periods after rain. We have lived with and understood these conditions for decades. They are part of the land and part of the rural environment in which our family chose to make its home.

Our property is a 50-acre block, and over the years it has provided our family with the kind of upbringing we hoped for when we first came here. Our children grew up around animals, paddocks and country life. They attended the local school and became part of a small, close community. We did not move to Ōhoka because we wanted suburban living. We moved here precisely because it was not a town.

What has always made Ōhoka special to me is its openness, its quietness and its rural character. There is space between neighbours, open farmland, mature trees, animals, and the feeling that you are living in the countryside rather than in an urban development. It is a humble way of life, but it is one I have valued enormously for more than four decades.

At 80 years old, I have watched Ōhoka change over many years, but its essential character has remained that of a small rural village. The proposed development represents something completely different in scale and nature. Hundreds of houses, large areas of hard surfaces, additional traffic, commercial development and the infrastructure required to support an urban population would fundamentally alter the place that my family and I have known as home.

I find it difficult to understand how such a significant change to an established rural community can be properly considered without fully understanding the people who already live here and the reasons they chose to make Ōhoka their home.

For me, this is not simply a debate about land development. It is about whether a rural village that families like mine have lived in, cared for and contributed to for generations should be transformed into an urban environment. Once the open space, rural character and village atmosphere of Ōhoka are lost, they cannot simply be recreated somewhere else.

After living here since 1981, I believe the social effects of a development of this scale on the existing Ōhoka community deserve to be taken extremely seriously. The people who already live here should not be treated as an afterthought when decisions are being made that could permanently change the character of the place we call home.

2. Flooding

Flooding is one of my greatest concerns about this proposed development because I have lived on this land since 1981 and I know how wet Ōhoka becomes.

Our property is a 50-acre block immediately beside the Sheriff's farm. During winter, large areas of our land become extremely wet and can become saturated very quickly. After periods of heavy rain, water can remain sitting across the paddocks for a considerable length of time. This is not something that happens

once every hundred or two hundred years. It is something I have seen repeatedly during the decades that I have lived here.

When we first moved to Ōhoka, people told me I would need gumboots because of the swampy nature of the land. More than forty years later, that remains true. Gumboots are an absolute necessity for much of the year. Anyone who has lived on this land through a Canterbury winter understands how quickly the ground becomes sodden and how slowly the water can disappear.

For this reason, I find it difficult to accept that flood risk can be dismissed simply because an area may sit outside a line on a Council flood-hazard map. A map does not change what I have witnessed on this property since 1981. My photographs from the winter of 2024 show extensive surface water around Ōhoka following heavy rainfall. This was not some extraordinary, record-breaking flood event. It was an example of what parts of Ōhoka can look like after the sort of heavy winter rain that residents have experienced many times.

My major concern is that the proposed development land is to be raised while my property will remain at its existing level.

That raises a very simple question for me: **if the land next door is raised, where will all the water go?**

My property cannot simply be lifted to match the new development. Our home, paddocks and farm will remain where they have always been. If hundreds of houses, roads, driveways and other hard surfaces are constructed on raised land beside us, I need to know with certainty that this will not cause additional water to flow towards, pond on, or remain on our property.

I am also concerned about relying entirely on flood modelling prepared for the development. With a project of this scale, modelling assumptions must be correct because once more than 800 houses and the associated infrastructure have been built, the landscape has been permanently altered. If the modelling proves to be wrong after construction, neighbouring residents cannot simply return the land to the way it was before.

This is why I believe the flood modelling and the effects of raising the development land require rigorous independent scrutiny before any approval is granted. The assessment needs to look not only at whether the new houses themselves will remain dry, but also at what happens to the existing properties surrounding the development.

It would be completely unacceptable to solve the flooding problem for a new development by increasing the flooding problem for the people who already live here.

After living on these 50 acres since 1981, I know how this land behaves in winter. I know where the water sits, how wet the paddocks become and how long it can take for the ground to dry. That lived experience should not be disregarded simply because a modelling map suggests otherwise.

Before this development is allowed to proceed, I believe the Applicant must clearly demonstrate where the water will go when the development land is raised and that existing lower-lying neighbouring properties, including mine, will not experience increased flooding, ponding or drainage problems as a consequence.

Once this development is built, it will be too late to discover that the modelling was wrong.

See photos below of flooding affecting [REDACTED], house, garden and farm.













3. Rural Character & Amenity

One of the main reasons we moved to Ōhoka was because it is far enough away from the urban areas to give residents a real feeling of space, peace and nature. That is what we have always loved about living here.

Ōhoka feels rural. There is open land, space around us and a sense of quiet that you do not get in a town or subdivision. For a resident who has lived here for many years to lose that would be awful.

I do not understand why we would want to turn a rural village into an urban environment. If people choose to live in Ōhoka, it is because they value the countryside, the open space and the peaceful way of life.

This development would completely change that feeling. Instead of living in a rural setting, we would be surrounded by a much more urban environment.

For me, that would mean losing one of the most important reasons we chose to live here in the first place. Ōhoka should remain a rural village, not become a town.

4. Infrastructure

I do not believe the existing infrastructure in Ōhoka is suitable for a large urban development.

Our roads are narrow and in many places poorly sealed. There are no proper footpaths and very few safe places for people to walk, cycle or ride horses. This may be manageable in a small rural village, but I cannot see how it is suitable for the amount of traffic that would come with a development of this size.

The road repairs that are carried out often do not seem to last, and the roads quickly deteriorate again. I am also concerned about the culverts throughout the area. Many appear too small and poorly designed for the level of heavy vehicle use and constant traffic that this development would bring.

These are rural roads and rural services. They were never designed to support an urban population.

My other major concern is our water supply. Our private well is our only source of water. It supplies our household and also provides water for the livestock on our farm. We have no alternative supply.

It seems reasonable to me that such a large development nearby could place additional pressure on the groundwater supply. I am very concerned that this could lower the water level or reduce the reliability of our well.

Before this development is allowed to proceed, I believe the Applicant must clearly demonstrate that our water supply will not be affected. This should not be left to chance. Our household and our farm depend on this well every day, and existing residents should not be expected to carry the risk if something goes wrong.

5. Insurability Risk

Insurance premiums are already continuing to rise, and I am concerned that a development of this size could make that situation worse for existing residents.

If this development increases the risk of flooding around my property, even slightly, that change in circumstances could affect how an insurance company views my home and land. This could mean higher insurance premiums or more difficulty obtaining the same level of cover in the future.

At 80 years old, I do not want to be placed in a position where the value, insurability or security of my home is affected by a development that I have had no control over.

Any increase in flood risk could leave existing residents carrying an ongoing financial cost through higher insurance premiums. I believe this is a real social and financial impact that needs to be considered before the development is approved.

6. Absence of Net Economic Benefits

I struggle to see what real local or national benefit there is in building a development of this size in Ōhoka.

The Council has already planned for a very large amount of future housing in other parts of North Canterbury. My understanding is that enough land has already been provided for around 17,000 new homes. If that is the case, I do not understand why another large urban development is necessary in a small rural village like Ōhoka.

The Council has already spent ratepayers' money planning where future housing and infrastructure should go. Those plans have been developed for a reason. It makes little sense to me to then ignore that planning and allow a major urban development in an area that was not intended to accommodate growth on this scale.

I am also aware that the Council has previously opposed this development proposal. As a ratepayer, I find it very frustrating that so much time, money and effort has already gone into planning the future growth of our district, yet we are again having to defend our village against a development of this size.

I accept that North Canterbury will continue to grow and that more houses will be needed. What I do not accept is that those houses have to be built in Ōhoka when land has already been planned and provided for growth elsewhere.

To me, the costs of this development to our existing community are very clear. We face more traffic, pressure on our roads and infrastructure, increased concerns about flooding and water supply, and the loss of the peaceful rural character that has made Ōhoka such a special place to live.

I therefore ask the Panel to carefully consider what genuine additional benefit this development would provide when housing growth has already been planned for elsewhere in the district. I do not believe the benefits of building it in Ōhoka outweigh the very real effects that existing residents would have to live with.

7. Anything Else

My overall concern is that there are simply too many important issues that still appear to be unresolved.

Questions remain around flooding, roads, traffic, water supply, infrastructure, insurance and the loss of Ōhoka's rural character. For a development of this size, I believe these matters should be properly answered before any approval is given, not dealt with after the development has already been allowed to proceed.

I also cannot see what benefit this development provides to the people who already live in Ōhoka. The Applicant may describe benefits from new houses and development, but it has not been demonstrated to me how existing residents will be better off as a result.

For those of us who already live here, the effects appear to be increased traffic, more pressure on our roads and infrastructure, greater concerns about flooding and water, and the loss of the peaceful rural environment that attracted us to Ōhoka in the first place.

After living here since 1981, I do not believe existing residents should be expected to accept so much uncertainty and so much change when there has been no clear demonstration of any real benefit to our community.

Before a development of this scale is approved, I believe the Applicant should be required to resolve these issues and clearly demonstrate why the development is necessary and what genuine benefit it provides to Ōhoka and the people who already live here.

How to Submit This Form

Your comments must be received by the Fast-track Team by 12 October 2026. Email is the preferred method — you can attach this completed form as a PDF or Word document.

Email (preferred): substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz — put “Ōhoka Residential Subdivision” in the subject line.

Post: Ōhoka Residential Subdivision Fast-track Application, Environmental Protection Authority, Private Bag 63002, Wellington 6140.

In person: Stewart Dawson's Corner, 366 Lambton Quay, Wellington 6011.