

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.			
First name (s)	Sarah and Matthew		
Last name	Groufsky		
Postal address	[REDACTED]		
Home phone / Mobile phone	[REDACTED]	Work phone	N/A
Email (a valid email address enables us to communicate efficiently with you)	[REDACTED]		
2. We will email you draft conditions of consent for your comment			
☐	I can receive emails and my email address is correct	☐	I cannot receive emails and my postal address is correct

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

1. Introduction

A sign at the entrance to our community proudly reads "Welcome to Ohoka Village". Ohoka is a rural township with a strong sense of community and identity. According to the most recent census, approximately 1,671 people live within the wider Ohoka statistical area. Through the Fast-track process, however, a development of more than 850 homes and a retirement village is proposed, a development that would more than double the existing population and fundamentally change the character of our community.

My husband and I live at [REDACTED] with our three children on just over 20 acres of productive rural land where we raise sheep and beef. We chose to build our lives in Ohoka because of its rural character, open spaces, and safe environment for families. Our children attend the [REDACTED] that runs through our property, and care for the wild pheasants and pūkeko that regularly wander up our driveway as though they are family pets.

We are surrounded by other rural properties where livestock are raised and productive land is actively farmed. This rural environment provides our children with opportunities and freedoms that are increasingly rare. They catch the school bus each day, ride their bikes, walk to the domain, visit friends independently, and enjoy growing up in a community where quiet roads, open landscapes, and a close connection to nature are part of everyday life.

The proposed development would significantly alter these qualities. While growth and development have a place, the scale and intensity of this proposal would transform Ohoka from a small rural village into a much larger urban settlement. As residents directly neighbouring the proposed development, we are deeply concerned about the impacts it will have on our family's way of life, the rural character of the area, local infrastructure, environmental values, and the wider community that makes Ohoka a special place to live.

2. Water Supply

We raise beef and sheep at our property and currently have fertile land that enables our animals to be mainly grass fed for most of the year. We raise these animals to sell and as part of our livelihood. Any impact to our water supply would have a dramatic effect on our ability to keep our animals fed and watered year round.

Our property is serviced by 2 wells and based on the modelling presented, these water sources will be adversely affected. This outcome is unacceptable given our reliance on these wells for stock water. While the developer refers generally to water availability within the zone and the ability to source water from bores and wells, it is my understanding that no site-specific testing has been undertaken to determine the actual effects of dewatering on our property. Consequently the impacts could be significantly greater than those predicted by the modelling, which already identifies unacceptable levels of risk and does not give proper consideration to the adverse effects that will happen to our property.

The developer's assertion that there is "sufficient allocation available within the zone to accommodate the proposed take" fails to adequately address the potential adverse effects on neighbouring properties, including ours. We are not satisfied that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that our water supply will remain secure and unaffected by the proposed development.

The burden of proof should rest with the developer to demonstrate, through robust, independent, and site-specific investigations, that the proposed dewatering will not adversely affect neighbouring landowners, including mine. In the absence of clear evidence confirming that our wells, water supply, productive land use, and farm operations will remain unaffected, we consider the risks to our property, stock welfare, and the ongoing viability of our land to be both significant and unacceptable.

3. School Transport / Road Safety

[REDACTED], which is the closest primary school to the proposed subdivision and is already operating at its maximum sustainable capacity. As a small rural school, our children are eligible for the rural school bus service. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The significant increase in vehicle movements associated with the proposed subdivision, including construction traffic and ongoing residential traffic, raises serious concerns about road safety for children using the school bus service. The developer has not committed to widening or upgrading Bradleys Road to accommodate this increased traffic or to improve safety for school children. Increased traffic volumes, reduced visibility, and the higher presence of heavy vehicles will fundamentally alter the road environment currently relied upon by children boarding and disembarking school buses.

We are concerned that insufficient consideration has been given to the safety of children who live in the area. The proposal does not include commitments to road improvements, traffic calming measures, footpaths, cycleways, or other infrastructure that would make Bradleys Road safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Instead, the development would place residential boundaries directly alongside a rural road network that is not currently designed to accommodate the substantial increase in traffic and heavy vehicle movements that this subdivision is likely to generate.

In addition, there appears to have been no consideration of the effects the development may have on the provision of school transport services. Under the current eligibility criteria, many children living within the proposed subdivision may qualify for the rural school bus service due to the lack of alternative public transport options. This raises questions about whether additional school bus services would be required and, if so, who would bear those costs. Alternatively, if the scale of the development results in the area being reclassified as urban, existing residents may lose access to the rural school bus service altogether. Either outcome has the potential to adversely affect existing residents and families including mine, yet these impacts do not appear to have been adequately assessed or addressed by the developer.

Given the importance of child safety, school accessibility, and the existing pressures on local infrastructure, we consider these matters to be significant adverse effects that require proper assessment and mitigation before the proposal can be supported.

4. Absence of Net Economic Benefits

The Fast-track Act allows a project to be declined where its adverse impacts are out of proportion to its regional or national benefits. In my view, the developer has failed to demonstrate that this proposal provides meaningful net benefits to either the region or the country.

Waimakariri already has sufficient land identified for housing growth in Rangiora, Kaiapoi, and Woodend. These are the locations where growth has been planned for and where infrastructure investment has already occurred. The homes built at Ohoka are unlikely to represent substantial additional housing supply. Rather, they are likely to be homes that would otherwise have been built elsewhere in the district.

The same applies to economic benefits. Construction jobs and investment associated with this development would largely be redirected from other developments rather than creating significant new economic activity. While the developer presents large headline figures for houses, jobs, and investment, those figures do not represent the true net benefit to the region.

The relevant question is not whether this development creates some benefit, but whether it creates benefits that would not otherwise occur. The developer has not demonstrated this. As a result, the claimed regional and national benefits appear to be overstated, while the actual net gains are likely to be modest.

In my view, the benefits of this proposal are not sufficiently significant, unique, or regionally important to justify approval through the Fast-track process.

5. Native Birdlife / Night Skys

Our property enjoys a significant amount of birdlife, including wild pheasants, pūkeko, and other native species. The proposed development places residential properties directly along the Bradleys Road boundary, with no meaningful ecological buffer between the development and existing rural properties. The plans appear to provide only fencing, with no substantial planting to separate the urban development from neighbouring rural land.

This boundary is only metres from our fence line and driveway. Pheasants are ground-nesting birds and their eggs and chicks are particularly vulnerable to predation by domestic cats and dogs. The application does not appear to adequately consider the impact that a large increase in urban pets could have on the established birdlife of the Ohoka area, including species that currently inhabit and breed around our property.

In addition, the proposal includes street lighting throughout the subdivision. The assessment of lighting effects appears superficial and relies largely on future mitigation rather than providing certainty now. Increased lighting has the potential to affect rural amenity values, the dark night environment currently enjoyed by neighbouring properties, and local wildlife that may be sensitive to light disturbance.

At a minimum, I request that any consent granted require the establishment and ongoing maintenance of a substantial planted buffer along the Bradleys Road boundary. Such a buffer would help provide habitat and protection for existing birdlife, create separation between urban and rural environments, reduce the effects of roaming pets, and assist in screening and mitigating light spill from street lighting and residential development.

6. Rural Character & Amenity

The ability to live and work in a rural environment is the very reason our family chose to make Ohoka our home. It is a place where we can raise stock, our children can walk their pet calf down the road, see wild pheasants in the driveway, watch the occasional pony trot past, and safely catch the school bus. These experiences are not just charming aspects of rural life they are an integral part of the community, identity, and lifestyle that residents have invested in and sought to protect.

The proposal to construct a subdivision immediately adjacent to our property, at a scale much larger than the existing Ohoka community itself, is difficult to comprehend. Such a development would fundamentally and permanently alter the character of the area, transforming a rural community into something far more urban.

Despite the significant impacts this development would have I have found little within the developer's documentation that adequately addresses the loss of rural character, the effects on my family and other families who currently live here, or the cumulative impacts on community infrastructure, road safety,

schools, and local services. The scale of change being proposed is extraordinary, yet the assessment of its effects appears superficial and fails to reflect the reality of how people live, work, raise families and livestock in Ohoka.

I am left asking how a development of this magnitude can be considered appropriate for a rural community when it would exceed the size of the community it is being inserted into. The developer should be required to clearly demonstrate how the unique character, safety, amenity, and lifestyle values that attract families to Ohoka in the first place will be protected, rather than simply assuming they can be mitigated with little evidence or commitment of what that actually means. Suggesting that the finer points can be addressed later is not ok for a development of this scale.

7. Summary

I ask the Panel to decline this application. A very similar proposal by the same developer has already been assessed on its merits and declined twice. The fundamental issues that led to those decisions have not changed. The site remains the same, the scale of development remains substantial, and the adverse effects on neighbouring properties and the wider Ohoka community remain significant.

The developer has failed to demonstrate that the proposal delivers substantial net regional or national benefits. Housing growth is already being provided for in locations that have been planned and serviced for that purpose. As a result, the true benefit of this development appears limited.

In my view, the adverse impacts of this proposal are clearly out of proportion to its benefits. For that reason, and for the reasons set out throughout this submission, I ask the Panel to decline the application.

Appendix - Ōhoka School Infrastructure and Traffic Impact Assessment

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.