

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	Melanie and Warren		
Last name	Johnston and McGregor		
Postal address	[REDACTED]		
Home phone / Mobile phone	Warren – [REDACTED] Melanie – [REDACTED]	Work phone	
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

We were both born and raised in Christchurch and have spent our lives in Canterbury. More than a decade ago, during a Sunday drive through North Canterbury, we discovered Ohoka. We were immediately drawn to its unique character. Unlike many rural settlements that have become increasingly suburbanised, Ohoka retained the qualities of a traditional English village: a peaceful rural atmosphere, expansive landscapes, mature trees, and a strong sense of community. From that day forward, we set ourselves a goal. One day, we would retire to Ohoka.

That decision was shaped in part by our experiences living on Christchurch's eastern side through the devastating Canterbury earthquakes. Like many families, we endured the uncertainty, disruption, and loss that followed. In the years afterwards, we developed a long-term plan: to work hard, raise our four children, pay off our mortgage, and ultimately create a future for ourselves in the rural environment we

had always dreamed of. For us, that future was not simply a move to the countryside. It was a move to Ohoka.

As our children grew up and embarked on their own lives, we reached the point where that dream could become reality. In September 2020, [REDACTED] came onto the market. It represented everything we had spent years working towards. It offered the rural character, peaceful environment, and village lifestyle that had inspired our dream all those years earlier. We purchased the property and finally realised a dream we had worked towards for many years.

Today, nearly six years later, we remain deeply grateful to call Ohoka home. We did not choose Ohoka by chance. We invested years of planning, sacrifice, and commitment to become part of this special community because of the qualities that make it unique. Those same qualities are now at risk.

This submission is therefore much more than an objection to a development proposal. It is an appeal to recognise and protect the distinctive rural village character that has made Ohoka one of Canterbury's most treasured communities. Decisions made through the Fast-track process will have consequences that extend far beyond the boundaries of the proposed development site. They will determine whether Ohoka retains the character, environment, and lifestyle that residents have worked so hard to preserve, or whether those defining attributes are permanently and irreversibly lost.

2. Flooding

Flooding is one of our most significant concerns for us.

Although planning documents describe parts of Ohoka as being within a 1-in-200-year flood zone, our experience as residents suggests flooding is far more common. In the six years we have lived in Ohoka, we have experienced at least four significant flood events.

When we first moved to our property, we noticed unusual features including large gaps beneath fences, drainage ditches, and a sump pump installed in our driveway. We soon learned that these were not incidental features but essential measures for managing the area's high groundwater levels and frequent flooding.

We experienced this firsthand during a major flood event when a power outage caused our sump pump to stop working. Floodwater quickly accumulated, flooding our garage and rising towards our home. Fortunately, power was restored before further damage occurred and the pump was able to lower the water level before it reached our home. This experience demonstrated how vulnerable our property already is and how dependent we are on existing drainage systems functioning effectively.

Local knowledge supports our concerns. A neighbouring landowner, whose family previously farmed the proposed development site, advised us that the area has always flooded and contains numerous natural springs. Water flowing from the foothills can continue moving through the area for days after rainfall has stopped, often causing flooding well after the storm itself.

Historical accounts also reflect the area's natural characteristics. Parts of the district were once referred to as the "**Ohoka Swamp**" (Tim Fulton, *Ohoka Water Wisdom: The True Story of the Late Harold Stone* - 5 August 2022, Tim Fulton Media) highlighting its long association with wetlands and waterlogged land. Despite drainage works over many decades, those characteristics remain evident today. The water table is exceptionally high and, in the six years we have lived here, we have only seen the ground become noticeably dry on two occasions.

Our property sits directly opposite the proposed development site on Mill Road and is located in a low-lying basin below road level. During previous flood events, water from the land proposed for development flowed across neighbouring properties, crossed Mill Road, and entered our property. This is not a theoretical concern but a situation we have already experienced.

The proposed development would introduce more than 850 homes, a retirement village, roads, parking areas, footpaths, and other impermeable surfaces. While stormwater detention ponds are proposed, we remain unconvinced that they can adequately manage the increased runoff generated by a development of this scale.

A fundamental question remains unanswered: what happens when these stormwater ponds reach capacity during periods of heavy rainfall, elevated groundwater levels, and continued runoff from the foothills? Water cannot simply disappear. Once storage is exceeded, it must flow elsewhere.

Given Ohoka's history as a wetland environment, the area's high-water table, the evidence of repeated flooding, and the experiences we have already lived through, we believe the flood risk associated with this development has been underestimated. The Fast-track Committee should place significant weight on local knowledge, historical land characteristics, and real-world flooding experiences when assessing the suitability of this proposal and the potential consequences for existing residents.

3. Rural Character & Amenity

The Carter development proposal would have a significant and irreversible adverse effect on the rural character and amenity that defines Ohoka. We choose to live in Ohoka because it offers a genuine rural village lifestyle, characterised by open spaces, peaceful surroundings, country roads, dark night skies, and a strong sense of community that is increasingly rare within Canterbury.

The development of more than 850 homes and a retirement village would inevitably urbanise the area. Increased traffic, noise, street lighting, and residential density would permanently alter the character of our village. The dark night skies currently enjoyed by us would be diminished by light pollution, reducing one of the unique qualities of rural living. The quiet enjoyment we currently have would also be affected by increased vehicle movements, activity, and noise.

There are also safety concerns. Ohoka's roads are currently used by local children including our grandchildren when they visit. A substantial increase in traffic would change the nature of these roads and increase risks for us.

We respectfully submit that the Fast-track Committee should give significant weight to these irreversible adverse impacts. While the proposal may deliver additional housing, it would do so at the cost of permanently transforming the character of Ohoka and diminishing the very qualities that make the special place we chose to live. The loss of those values to us would be substantial, irreversible, and felt not only by us but by future generations who will never experience the Ohoka that exists today.

4. Infrastructure

We are deeply concerned at the lack of infrastructure available to support a development of this scale. The proposal would introduce more than 850 homes and a retirement village into a small rural settlement that currently lacks the transport, drainage, and public infrastructure typically required to accommodate significant urban growth.

Importantly, these concerns are not ours alone. Mayor Dan Gordon has publicly stated that the Council has never considered Ohoka suitable for large-scale residential development and that the area presents significant infrastructure and servicing challenges.

The proposal has also been considered and declined through two separate independent planning processes. We were one of many hundreds of people to submit against the development. We are frustrated and angry we are in the same place again, having to file another submission!

We respectfully submit that the Fast-track Committee should give significant weight to the conclusions already reached through these independent processes. Where a proposal has twice been found unsuitable on planning, infrastructure, and servicing grounds, there should be a compelling and demonstrable reason to reach a different conclusion. In our view, the infrastructure constraints and adverse effects identified previously remain unresolved and continue to weigh heavily against approval of this development.

5. Insurability Risk

As Prime Minister Christopher Luxon stated, New Zealand must ensure "**we're not doing dumb stuff, for example, building back into flood plains**". (RNZ, *Talk of relocation after string of weather disasters*, Christopher Luxon says 13 April 2026)

Approving more than 850 homes and a retirement village on historically wet and flood-prone land appears inconsistent with his statement!

We are concerned not only about the direct impacts of flooding but also about the long-term financial consequences for us. Any increase in actual or perceived flood exposure will affect our insurance availability, premiums, policy conditions, and property values, transferring long-term financial risk to us. This ultimately affects the value and security of an asset we hope to pass on to our children.

The proposal should not be approved because the evidence provided to date fails to demonstrate that the development will not increase flood risk to existing or future properties. Until it can be conclusively shown that there will be no adverse flooding effects, approval would be premature and inconsistent with sound planning and risk-management principles.

6. Absence of Net Economic Benefits

As residents of Ohoka, we believe the focus has been placed on the **gross benefits** of the development rather than the **net benefits** to us and the community once all adverse effects are considered.

For us, the question is simple: what are we and our village Ohoka being asked to give up in return? The answer is significant. We face the loss of rural character, increased flooding and drainage risks, greater pressure on local infrastructure, increased traffic, reduced amenity, potential impacts on property values and insurability, and the permanent transformation of our beautiful rural village into an urban settlement. These costs will be borne by us every day, long after the development has been completed.

What is particularly difficult to understand is why these impacts should be accepted when independent planning processes have already identified sufficient capacity for future growth elsewhere in the district. If the housing can be provided in locations that have been planned, serviced, and deemed suitable for growth, then the claimed benefits of this proposal are substantially reduced.

Having spent years working towards the opportunity to live in Ohoka, we do not see any net benefit for us or our community. Rather, we see a proposal that delivers substantial benefit to a developer while imposing long-term environmental, social, financial, and infrastructure costs on us.

When those adverse effects are properly weighed against the additional housing provided, we do not believe the proposal demonstrates a net public benefit sufficient to justify the permanent and irreversible changes that would be imposed on us and Ohoka. The Fast-track Committee should therefore place greater weight on the net outcomes for the community, not simply the gross outputs claimed by the proposal.

7. Anything Else

We respectfully ask the Fast-track Committee to decline the Ohoka Residential Subdivision.

As residents of Ohoka, we love our village. We have experienced firsthand the qualities that make this community unique and the challenges that already exist, particularly in relation to flooding and infrastructure. In our view, the proposal would result in significant and irreversible adverse effects on flood risk, rural character, amenity, infrastructure capacity, property insurability, and the overall wellbeing of us and the Ohoka community.

These concerns are not based solely on personal preference. They have been recognised by the Waimakariri District Council and through two separate independent planning processes, both of which concluded that Ohoka is not an appropriate location for development of this scale.

Ohoka is a unique rural village with a distinct identity, history, and environment and we love living here. Once these qualities are lost, we cannot recover them! We therefore submit that the adverse effects of the proposal substantially outweigh any claimed benefits and that approval would not be in the long-term interests of us, the Ohoka community or the wider district.

8. Photos



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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.