

Before the Independent Hearings Panel
at Waimakariri District Council

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: Proposed private plan change RCP31 to the Operative
Waimakariri District Plan

and: **Rolleston Industrial Developments Limited**
Applicant

Evidence of Charles Wood

Dated: 6 July 2023

Reference: JM Appleyard (jo.appleyard@chapmantripp.com)
LMN Forrester (lucy.forrester@chapmantripp.com)

chapmantripp.com
T +64 4 499 5999
F +64 4 472 7111

PO Box 993
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

Auckland
Wellington
Christchurch



EVIDENCE OF CHARLES WOOD

- 1 My full name is Charles Herbert McGregor Wood.
- 2 I am a professional polo player and qualified coach. I run the Waireka Polo Club in Sefton (Hurunui District), North Canterbury. I am also the club captain of the Christchurch Polo Club.
- 3 I have spent the last eight years playing and coaching polo in the UK and regularly visit other countries to play. Currently I am playing polo professionally in South Korea.
- 4 I have been riding horses for 31 years, since I was four years old. I started playing polo as a teenager and turned professional after university when I was 21.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 5 In my evidence, I consider the proposal to include an international standard polo ground within the proposed private plan change 31 development area in Ōhoka.

POLO IN NEW ZEALAND AND CANTERBURY

- 6 Polo has been around for many years, with the New Zealand Polo Association forming in 1890, and the national Savile Cup tournament for polo being one of the oldest sporting trophies in New Zealand.
- 7 Polo is a growing team sport played all across New Zealand. I have seen polo grow particularly in Canterbury over recent years, which has coincided with the rise in urban polo events in Christchurch City becoming more popular. In many respects, Polo brings the country to town, and the town to country.
- 8 There are approximately 20 public polo clubs throughout the country and more than 300 handicapped players (and many others without a handicap including for example junior players). Each polo club is part of one of the three Regional Associations: Northern, Central and South Island.
- 9 While polo players and equipment are well resourced around the country, quality polo facilities and particularly fields are not. There is a real lack of quality international scaled polo fields around New Zealand, and Canterbury. While size is important to achieve this international quality standard, just as important is the quality of the playing surfaces provided.
- 10 Of the existing 20 odd public polo fields in New Zealand, I would estimate only about four or five of these would be up to the

international standard. This means that many polo players need to travel further afield to train, play, and compete.

- 11 Within Canterbury there are approximately 8 club polo fields. The only polo field in the Waimakariri District is located within the Rangiora Show Ground on Ashley Street. While I have played internationally on a number of these grounds over my lifetime, in my opinion, only two or three which would be up to the standard I would expect for an international polo ground (and two of these grounds are private). The Wigram polo ground is generally considered the best, highest quality, polo ground in Canterbury.
- 12 Polo events are popular and draw people from far and wide from both urban and rural catchments. North Canterbury has the biggest population of polo players in the South Island. The current lack of grounds is holding both players and clubs back. There is a demand for new polo fields (good standard) in Waimakariri, and in close proximity to Christchurch.
- 13 At the Waireka Polo Club, we play a large part in introducing both adults and children in Canterbury to the sport of polo. We run a specific afterschool programme for children in the summer. Participants come by minivan from various Christchurch schools to the ground to train with us, and then go on to play three official tournaments. Depending on the year, we have 6-10 schools participating in this program. I have no doubt that if the ground was located closer to Christchurch, we would have more children and students attending the club. At the moment, one of the hardest things for the school programme is getting everyone out there.

THE PROPOSED POLO FIELD AT ŌHOKA

- 14 A lot of the people who come and play with us at the Waireka Polo Club happen to live in and around the Ōhoka area. Ōhoka is a particularly attractive location for a polo field as it is closer to the centre of Canterbury and other settlements than many of the other more rurally located polo fields.
- 15 The proposed polo facilities on the plan change site provide for a full-scale international polo field, club house, car and horse float parking, and spectator embankments.
- 16 I have been in discussions with the applicant regarding the inclusion of a polo field into the proposed plan change since the start of this year. I have assisted in the design and location of the polo field within the development and have provided feedback on specifics such as scale, access requirements, facilities, drainage, parking, and horse facilities. It is good to be involved at this stage of a development to ensure it is established in a functional way that compliments the development and surrounds.

- 17 Should this plan change be accepted, the applicant has provided an opportunity to the Waireka Polo Club to expand its facilities to Ōhoka and run the proposed polo ground, including the possible expansion of the school program.
- 18 I believe the location of the proposed polo facilities within Ōhoka is ideal for the following reasons:
 - 18.1 Ōhoka has a long and continuing history of equestrian pursuits since the settlement was first established. It is located nearby thoroughbred studs, pony clubs, equestrian, and so a polo field would fit well and compliment these facilities. There are many stables within the Ōhoka area, and so there would be guaranteed local uptake and interest in the polo facilities, as well as from people travelling in. I personally learned to ride at a pony club in Ōhoka, I had many friends in the area with horses and I recall riding up and down White's Road as a young boy.
 - 18.2 It is easily accessible from the State Highway and the main road into Ōhoka. It is proposed that horse floats and contractors would have access to the polo facilities from Bradley's Road, separate from the formal public access along Mill Road.
 - 18.3 The site is ideal in terms of suitability. Polo fields require well drained, flat, wide and expansive land, with good access and internal carparking, as well as adjacent fields for grazing. The proposed polo ground is capable of meeting all of these suitability requirements.
 - 18.4 The proposed location adjacent to the Ōhoka Stream will provide a high level of amenity, with public access along the stream provided.
 - 18.5 It will provide good access and facilities for spectators, with embankments formed for elevated views of the polo field.
 - 18.6 The location is relatively sheltered from south and east (where poor weather conditions are most likely to come from).
 - 18.7 The location is in close proximity to other amenities and facilities such as cafes and service stations. Within walking distance to commercial area which will include bars and cafes – this will be attractive to both spectators and players.
 - 18.8 The proposed horse trek/walking track around polo field will be an attractive feature for a polo ground, and could double

as an exercise track for horses based on site (as well as for horse enthusiasts generally in the Ōhoka area).

- 19 This would be a highly visible facility compared to many of the other polo grounds around Canterbury, many of which are often tucked away at the back of farms and surrounded in shelter belts. Generally polo players like to be watched by an audience, and the proposed location will provide good exposure.
- 20 I have no doubt that for these reasons, the proposed polo ground will be an attractive and successful addition to Ōhoka and will help grow the game of polo in New Zealand.
- 21 I am looking forward to continuing my involvement with the applicant, should this plan change be granted, and continuing to provide advice throughout the development and ongoing operation of the polo field.

CONCLUSION

- 22 There is a general lack of quality polo facilities and grounds across New Zealand.
- 23 Ōhoka is an attractive location to establish a new international standard polo ground for a variety of reasons.
- 24 The proposed polo facility in Ōhoka will be an attractive destination for all polo players and enthusiasts across the country. I have no doubt that a polo ground on this site would be a successful and positive addition to the development, and Ōhoka as a township.

Dated: 6 July 2023

Charles Wood