

## **Private Plan Change RCP031**

### **Statement of Evidence**

#### **Sara Wells and the Wells Family**

My name is Sara Wells. I have lived in the Ohoka area for 25 years, with my husband Grant. Today's submission is on behalf of myself and Grant, and our sons Tom and Sam.

We oppose the application for Private Plan Change RCP031.

We fully support the submissions of all the submitters who are also opposed to this plan change – all the individuals and all the organisations.

#### **1. District Plan**

As it should, the Waimakariri District Council (WDC) has spent a significant amount of time (and cost) to ensure the district is well-planned for the future. WDC is ensuring the district's rural character is maintained, and that there is sufficient productive farmland for future generations.

The point of the planning process is to provide a considered approach to future growth, taking into account the views and needs of ratepayers, residents and businesses in the district. And identifying what gives the district its character and what makes it special to those who live here. WDC have utilised their expertise to do this. They have also consulted with the wider community to determine what the district will look like in the future, and how to best meet the community's needs.

As part of its planning process, WDC specifically heard the views of the Ohoka community and recognised the special character of the village. The District Plan does not allow intensification in Ohoka. RCP031 is directly contrary to the District Plan.

A new town with 850 households, retirement village, education service and two commercial areas is completely out of keeping with the rural character of Ohoka. I do not understand how the applicant can claim it retains the village aspect or the rural feel of the area. It is a disconnected urban development that will totally destroy the character of Ohoka.

The applicant voiced their disappointment at the lack of community engagement.

The community has fully engaged in the process, as shown by over 600 submissions opposed to RCP031. The community has spent hundreds of unpaid hours engaging with the process, to clearly voice their opposition to this application.

In contrast, the applicant claims they are part of the community by virtue of living here, yet they have not engaged with the community in any way throughout this process.

They have presented their expert witnesses, who are paid to find solutions amenable to the applicant and to counter any issues raised against the application. While their experts are supposed to be impartial, ultimately they're working for the applicant and his best interests, not for the local community or wider district.

The very many organisations who have submitted against this application do have the interests of the community and the wider district at heart, and there is no personal financial gain for them.

The applicant claims there is a lack of suitable land for development in the district. The unspoken subtext is 'land that is cheap enough for this development'.

As identified by WDC and in accordance with the NPS-UD, urban development should be connected to and integrated with already established urban areas – eg Rangiora, Kaiapoi. These towns have the necessary infrastructure for intensive urban development. Ohoka does not have any of the infrastructure needed. The applicant appears to expect WDC and other parties to create the infrastructure for them.

On the absence of infrastructure, it seems from the experts' statements that:

1. A solution can always be engineered, regardless of impact or appropriateness.
2. If the engineered solution is not suitable or not effective, WDC ratepayers will bail it out.
3. If the solution proves problematic or insufficient long term, WDC ratepayers will deal with it as the applicant will be long gone by then.

Their proposed solutions are hypothetical at this point, primarily based on desk-modelling, and some are quite myopic. The detailed investigation and design won't be done until the consent stage, which seems rather convenient. But by then it will be too late to stop this development, and solutions will have to be found, regardless of impact, responsibility, financial and environmental cost.

For example:

- Drinking water, if insufficient – tap into the Kaiapoi supply
- Stormwater – apparently no increased load on drainage network
- Public transport – create a public transport route
- Education – build a new school

WDC expects to need 15,000 new houses in the next 30 years. Placing 850 of these in a rural area with none of the necessary infrastructure, is not a managed and appropriate way to grow the district's housing stock.

## **2. Amenity Values**

We chose to live in Ohoka because of the rural character of the wider area and the nature and size of the small village. We are very happy making a short drive to Rangiora, Kaiapoi, etc as needed. We do not want any commercial areas in Ohoka.

We established our home and are raising our family here because this environment is important to us. We don't want to live in or near urban areas, that is why we choose to live here!

Ohoka has high amenity values – the rural views and aspects, the feeling of community, the quiet rural roads. Our children bike to the domain and to their friend's homes, enjoying their independence. We walk our dog and I ride my horse, enjoying the quiet roads where we live.

The applicant wants to exploit these amenity values – the result of the investment the community has made in this environment. In profiting from this they diminish these values for all present and future residents.

The increase in population and built areas in this application would adversely change the amenity values of this area. Ohoka would lose its character, its strong community and its rural feel.

The density of properties would change the views and outlooks. No landscape treatments will maintain or enhance these outlooks. Houses, buildings, fences and paving cannot be made to look like paddocks and mountains, no matter what is planted alongside.

The increased traffic will make the roads unpleasant and dangerous to use if not in a vehicle.

Ohoka has a huge heart.

The domain, the hall, the bush. The school. The farmers' market. The garage and the irrigation business. These are physical aspects of the heart of Ohoka.

The community's heart is demonstrated in its consolidated opposition to RCP031. It is demonstrated in the community's support of working bees, planting days and donations. School events and fundraisers, plant sales and garden tours. The community has a huge heart that cannot be ignored.

Urban development does not create heart – people are heart.

Ohoka Gas, the garage, has long been at the centre of Ohoka. It is not to be dismissed as 'just a garage'. They are a hub for supplies and support, and crucially so through the Covid lockdowns. They provide valued advice and knowledge, along with fuel, basic groceries, mechanical services and equipment hire.

The former owners have been fully engaged with the community for over 30 years, contributing hours of volunteer work to Ohoka. And they remain engaged. The new owners have confirmed that they will be similarly engaged. We do not see any engagement from the applicant.

People live here a long time. They make a choice to move to the country, to a lifestyle block or a property in the village. They may do this to raise a family, or to retire, or to first raise their family and then retire. They do this because they don't want to live in an urban area. They do this because of the existing amenity values and rural character. They do this because they do not want commercial areas, intense development and everything that comes with it.

### **3. Rooding**

The significant increase in traffic will have a serious effect on commuter routes, the local road network and major intersections. Congestion will significantly increase on the already very busy Tram Rd and motorway to Christchurch.

- The Tram Rd motorway on and off ramps are already an issue, with several serious crashes.
- The Stop signs onto Tram Rd are often ignored.
- The Tram/Bradleys/McHughs intersection (Mandeville shops) is very tricky, especially at peak times.

Increased traffic will compound these problems, adding a greater risk of crashes with critical injuries or fatalities.

Children walk, scooter, bike and ride their ponies through Ohoka to get to school, to the domain, to meet their friends. This is one of the things that gives Ohoka its character.

On Mill, Bradleys, Whites and Jacksons roads, increased traffic will:

- Reduce use of active transport by children and parents.
- Increase road hazards at Ohoka School on Jacksons Rd – there is insufficient off road parking, with vehicles frequently parked on verges, both sides.
- Significantly reduce the rural feel of Ohoka.

### **4. Public Transport**

There is no public transport in Ohoka. Every journey involves a vehicle containing one or a few people. Adding many many more vehicles is not environmentally friendly, climate conscious, or sustainable, whether the vehicles use internal combustion or electric power. No amount of token greenhouse gas reduction can offset the impact of a new town without viable public transport.

Traffic congestion is already a serious concern for commuters using Tram Rd and the motorway, and parents driving to/from school. Any urban development must have accessible public transport available.

### **5. School**

Ohoka School is a small rural school. It has a specific feel and character, that we, as parents, love. Our children have flourished there. The Ministry of Education has no current plans for more schools in the area, and RCP031 is specifically outside the Ministry of Education infrastructure planned area.

The application would more than double the roll and dramatically change the nature of the school. If the enrolment zone changed to be shared with Swannanoa, as proposed by Dr Wall, the increased roll would still require significant building works to adapt. Traffic, roading, road safety, and parking would all be significantly affected by an increased roll and increased local population.

## 6. Flooding

Ohoka is a swamp, flooding has always been an issue. All the locals know this.

The children of 1943 knew this – see Appendix 1.

The land in question is poor draining, with springs and streams and a high water table. It also has the undercurrent (groundwater resurgence).

The existing drainage network is not fit for any additional discharge as it is not performing with the current levels of discharge. While Mr McLeod claims they “can attenuate run-off to pre-development levels”, there will fundamentally be additional water entering the drainage network. It can’t go anywhere else.

There are already significant flooding and drainage issues in the area, as seen with the recent heavy rain events. According to Mr Throssell, these events have been 10 or 20 to 50 year events, but they have now occurred each year for 3 consecutive years. With the impact of climate change, heavy rain events are expected to grow in frequency and severity.

The flooding affects the Ohoka area all the way down to Silverstream. The 850 households and other buildings will cover significant areas of land with hard surfaces. Run off from these will compound the present flooding impact on neighbouring and downstream areas, and introduce contaminants to the streams. There is nowhere else for the water to go. As locals know, the clay pan prevents it soaking down, it has to run off.

Mr McLeod implied this year’s July flooding was caused by poor maintenance of private drains. His evidence is somewhat selective, focussed (with one exception) on a few properties in Jacksons Rd rather than the more heavily affected Whites, Mill or Bradleys roads. Landowners do maintain their drains, often at great expense, as it is in their best interests to do so.

His exception was Wilson Drive, a roadside swale of a type proposed in the application. A drainage solution that does not perform, many years after the development was completed. I don’t think that developer will be returning to address this performance problem.

The proposal for a polo ground is ridiculous. Mr Wood states “polo fields require well drained, flat, wide and expansive land”. I’m not sure how he missed it, but this land is not well drained! The only polo this site is suitable for is water polo or canoe polo.

It is clearly a token attempt to make it attractive to local horse owners, most of whom are not interested in polo. As a resident and horse owner, I am not aware of any attempt to engage with the community, so his statements re uptake are spurious.

There are many well-drained, far more suitable locations, to establish a new polo ground in the WDC area, if one is actually needed.

## **7. Drinking Water**

The current village supply is from one bore, there are numerous private bores in the zone as well. The groundwater allocation zone is over-allocated.

The application requires four additional bores. I find it incomprehensible that Mr Steffens proposes their fallback for water supply as “there is provision in the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan for additional allocation to be available for new community supplies in over-allocated catchments.”

How can there be any justification to build a new town in an already over-allocated groundwater zone?

## **8. Commercial**

Two commercial areas are proposed. These are completely out of place in this location. They would significantly affect the rural character of the area, and are insensitively in close proximity to established homes.

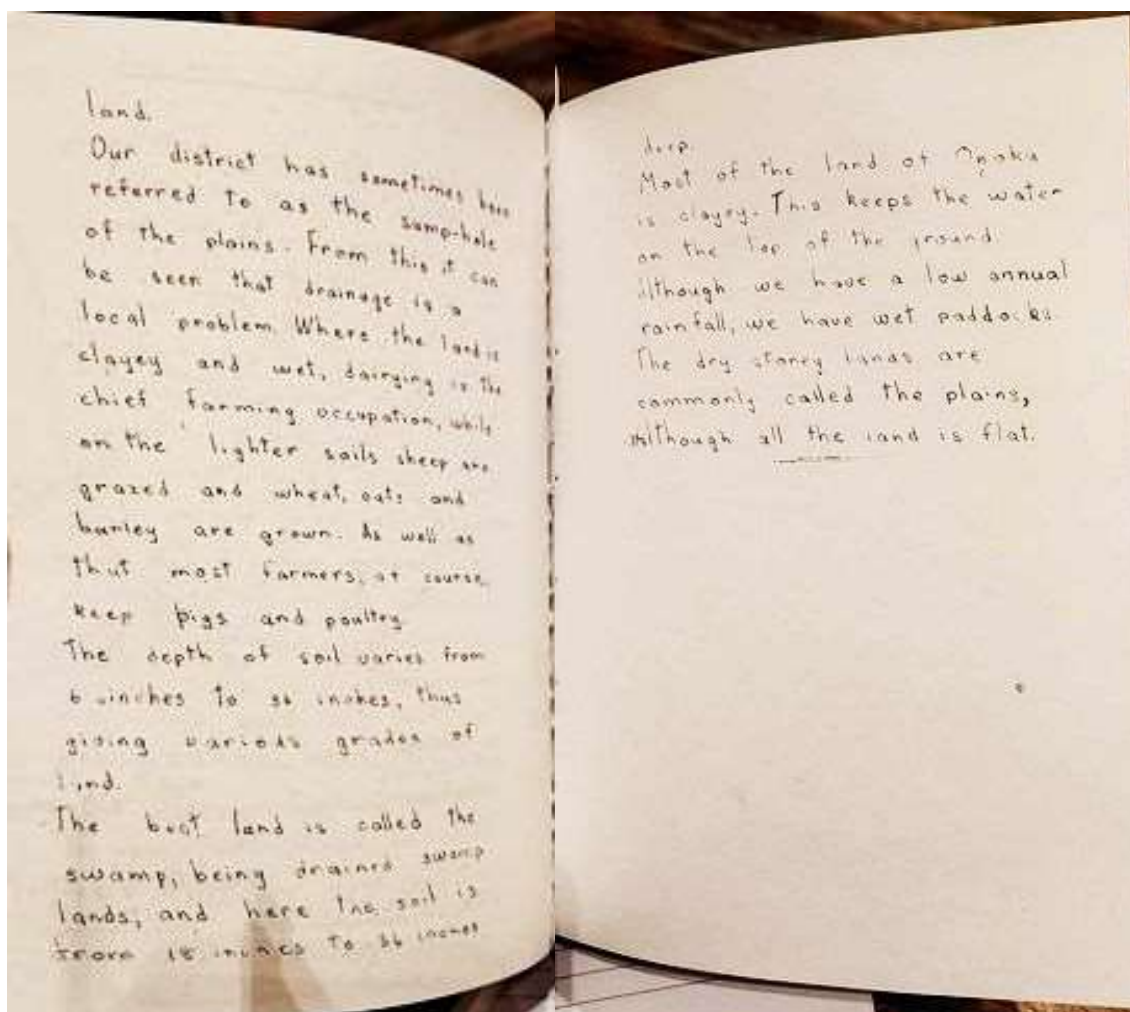
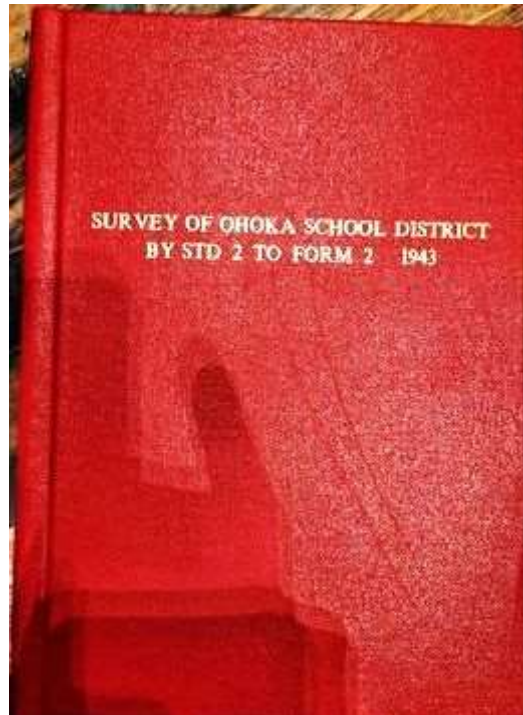
There are already sufficient commercial services for the area. The proposed areas would compete with Mandeville shops and the long-established Ohoka Gas – both of which more than meet the needs of the community.

We don't live here because we want shops nearby. We live here because we love the rural character and the lack of commercial areas.

We ask the commissioners to reject the application for Private Plan Change RCP031.

Sara, Grant, Tom and Sam Wells

## Appendix 1



## Transcript

Our district has sometimes been referred to as the sump-hole of the plains. From this it can be seen that drainage is a local problem. Where the land is clayey and wet, dairying is the chief farming occupation, while on the lighter soils sheep are grazed and wheat, oats and barley are grown. As well as that most farmers, of course, keep pigs and poultry.

The depth of soil varies from 6 inches to 36 inches, thus giving various grades of land.

The best land is called the swamp, being drained swamp lands, and here the soil is from 18 inches to 36 inches deep.

Most of the land at Ohoka is clayey. This keeps the water on the top of the ground. Although we have a low annual rainfall, we have wet paddocks.

The dry stoney lands are called the plains, although all the land is flat.