

**Before an INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL
Appointed by WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL**

UNDER the Resource Management Act 1991

IN THE MATTER OF the Proposed Waimakariri District
Plan

AND

IN THE MATTER Hearing Stream 12: Rezoning
Requests (larger scale) and
submissions 160 and 237 on Ōhoka

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF HUGH ANTHONY NICHOLSON
ON BEHALF OF WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL**

URBAN DESIGN AND LANDSCAPE

14TH MAY 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	CODE OF CONDUCT	4
3.	SCOPE.....	5
4.	STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS.....	5
5.	EXISTING ENVIRONMENT	8
6.	CONSOLIDATED URBAN FORM	9
7.	CONNECTIVITY	12
8.	ACCESSIBILITY & WELL-FUNCTIONING URBAN ENVIRONMENT	13
9.	MANDEVILLE / ŌHOKA	15
10.	VILLAGE CHARACTER.....	17
11.	ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN.....	20
12.	DESIGN GUIDELINES	20
13.	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT	22
14.	FURTHER SUBMISSIONS	24
15.	CONCLUSION.....	25

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My full name is Hugh Anthony Nicholson. I am a Director at UrbanShift which is an independent consultancy that provides urban design and landscape architecture advice to local authorities and private clients.
- 1.2 I hold a Post-Graduate Diploma of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Urban Design from the University of Sydney. I have more than thirty years' experience in both the public and private sectors. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA).
- 1.3 Prior to my current role, I worked as the Design Lead for the *Ōtākaro Avon River Regeneration Plan* with Regenerate Christchurch for two years, and as a Principal Urban Designer with Christchurch City Council for ten years. Before this I worked as an Urban Designer for the Wellington City Council for seven years.
- 1.4 I am a chair / member of the Nelson City / Tasman District Urban Design Panel and the Akaroa Design Review Panel. I was a member of the advisory panel for the development of the National Guidelines for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) for the Ministry of Justice, and a member of the Technical Advisory Group for the Wellington Waterfront.
- 1.5 My experience includes:
 - a. Project leader for the establishment of the Christchurch Urban Design Panel which reviews significant resource consent applications and significant Council public space projects (2008);
 - b. Project leader for *Public Space Public Life Studies* in Wellington (2004) and Christchurch (2009) in association with Gehl Architects which surveyed how people used different public spaces around the city centre, and how the quality of these public spaces could be improved;

- c. Steering group and design lead for *Share an Idea* and the Draft *Christchurch Central Recovery Plan* including associated draft district plan amendments to the central city zones which were subsequently reviewed and incorporated into the *Christchurch Central Recovery Plan*;
- d. Expert urban design witness for Christchurch City Council to the Independent Hearings Panel for the Christchurch Replacement District Plan on the Strategic Directions and Central City chapters;
- e. Design reviewer for more than fifty resource consent applications for major central city rebuilds for the Christchurch City Council including the Justice & Emergency Precinct, Tūranga (the central library), the Bus Interchange and the Christchurch Hospital Outpatients and Acute Services Buildings.
- f. Urban design and landscape peer reviewer and expert witness at hearings for private plan changes¹, submissions on the Proposed Selwyn District Plan (SDP) and submissions on Variation 1 to the Proposed SDP, for the Selwyn District Council. I have been an expert witness in Environment Court mediations for two of the plan changes.

1.6 I provided expert urban design and landscape architecture evidence for the Waimakariri District Council with regard to Private Plan Change 31 (PC31).

2. CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1 I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and that I agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express, and that this evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person.

¹ Private Plan Changes 67, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 79, 81 and 82

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 I have been asked by the Waimakariri District Council to carry out a peer review of urban design and landscape matters relating to submissions 160 and 237 Ōhoka² for Hearing Stream 12: Rezoning Requests (larger scale) in the Proposed Waimakariri District Plan (Proposed WDP), in response to the Ohoka rezoning submissions of Rolleston Industrial Developments Limited and Carter Group Property Limited.
- 3.2 In carrying out this assessment I have visited the site on a number of occasions including the 18th April 2023, and reviewed:
- a. The evidence of Ms Nicole Lauenstein, Mr Garth Falconer, Mr Tony Milne, Mr David Compton-Moen, Mr Tim Walsh and Mr Simon Milner;
 - b. The relevant provisions of the Proposed WDP;
 - c. Submissions and further submissions relevant to my expertise and to the proposed rezoning at Ōhoka;
 - d. The relevant documents from PC31;
 - e. *Our District Our Future - Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*, Waimakariri District Council, 2018;
 - f. *Residential Character and Intensification Guidance for Waimakariri District Council*, Jasmax, August 2018
 - g. *Waimakariri District – Rural Character Assessment*, Boffa Miskell, 2018.

4. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- 4.1 In my peer review and in providing evidence I have drawn strategic direction on good urban form from four sources, the *National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPSUD)*, the *Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (CRPS)*, the Proposed Waimakariri District Plan (**proposed WDP**) and the *Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*, all of which provide overarching guidance.

² **Ōhoka** ō (*the place of*) hoka (*stake to which a decoy parrot is tied*), A. W. Reed, *Maori Place Names: Their Meanings and Origins*, 4th ed, 2016, p.72

- 4.2 The **NPSUD** seeks to provide “*well-functioning urban environments*”³ that enable more people to live near a centre or employment opportunities, and which are well serviced by public transport⁴.
- 4.3 In particular the **NPSUD** promotes urban environments that provide good accessibility between housing, jobs, community services, and natural and open spaces, support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and are resilient to the likely effects of climate change⁵.
- 4.4 The **CRPS** seeks to manage the urban form and settlement pattern of Christchurch through the consolidation and intensification of urban areas.
- 4.5 The objectives of the **CRPS** direct that residential development should be of a high quality and incorporate “good urban design”⁶.
- 4.6 The **CRPS** also seeks housing developments that give effect to the listed principles of good urban design, and to those in the NZ Urban Design Protocol 2005. These principles refer to the need for well-integrated places that have high-quality connections including walking, cycling and public transport, and that are environmentally sustainable⁷.
- 4.7 Objective SD-02 in the **proposed WDP** amongst other matters, seeks urban development and infrastructure that is consolidated and integrated with the urban environment, and recognises existing character and amenity values. Further it seeks to focus new residential activity within existing towns or identified development areas within Rangiora and Kaiapoi, and to support a hierarchy of urban centres with Rangiora, Kaiapoi, Oxford and Woodend being a focus for residential development and intensification.
- 4.8 Policy UFD-P2 *Identification of new Residential Development Areas* in the proposed WDP seeks that any new Residential Development Areas outside Kaiapoi or Rangiora occur in a form that concentrates or is attached to an

³ National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020, Objective 1, p.10

⁴ Ibid, Objective 3, p.10

⁵ Ibid, Policy 1, p.10-11

⁶ Canterbury Regional Policy Statement, Objective 6.2.3 Sustainability

⁷ Ibid, Policy 6.3.2 Development form and urban design

existing urban environment, and promotes a coordinated pattern of development. It also seeks areas that have good accessibility between housing, jobs, community services, and natural and open spaces, including by way of public or active transport. These area should support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and make use of existing or proposed transport infrastructure.

- 4.9 Policy TRAN -P2 *Environmentally sustainable outcomes* in the proposed WDP seeks to promote the use of public transport and active transport.
- 4.10 The *Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*⁸ includes a strategic aim of retaining a ‘small settlement character’, and proposes a limited growth option that allows ‘existing vacant areas in the small settlements to develop and provides for some further ‘organic’ expansion opportunities, generally consistent with historic growth rates’. The strategy proposes that most new greenfield and intensification developments will be focused on the larger towns, and the character of the District’s smaller settlements will generally be retained.
- 4.11 Drawing on the strategic directions outlined above I have reviewed the urban form proposed in PC31 in terms of:
- a. The extent to which it creates a consolidated and integrated urban form, centred around and close to the centre of Ōhoka;
 - b. The level of connectivity with the existing village and community facilities, and with the wider district;
 - c. The level of accessibility between housing, jobs and community services using a range of travel modes including walking, cycling and public transport;
 - d. The extent to which the existing village character and amenity values of Ōhoka are recognised, and the rural setting is maintained.

⁸ *Our District Our Future: Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*, Waimakariri District Council, July 2018

5. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1 Ōhoka is a small semi-rural township north of Christchurch. Established in the mid 19th Century, by 1874 there were three flax mills in the area including one at Ōhoka, a ‘boiling down’ works plus a post office and a hotel⁹. In the 20th Century there was a flour mill on the Ōhoka Stream until the 1980s, and the Ōhoka Bakery supplied a range of breads to surrounding areas until its closure in 1950.
- 5.2 The Eyre County Council had its headquarters and yards in Ōhoka, and the railway branch line from Kaiapoi was open until 1965. The Ōhoka vicarage served as the original Te Pounamu Maori Girls College established in 1909, as a boarding school for Māori girls¹⁰.
- 5.3 Over the last three decades Ōhoka has been transformed from a small rural service town to a small rural / lifestyle settlement with many residents commuting to Christchurch.
- 5.4 A number of the original buildings have been re-purposed as private residences, including the Ōhoka Vicarage, Eyre House (the former council chambers and office building for the Eyre County Council), and the managers house from the Ōhoka flour mill¹¹.
- 5.5 The Ōhoka School was established in 1868 and by the latter part of the 1800s had over 200 pupils¹². Today it is a co-educational state primary school with approximately 200 students from years 1-8¹³. The school includes the Ōhoka Sports and Events Centre which is also available to the wider community.

⁹ *Canterbury Water Management Strategy: Waimakariri Zone, Socio-Economic Profile*, Report by Mary Sparrow for Environment Canterbury and Waimakariri District Council, p.10

¹⁰ *Ōhoka's old identity and heritage sites under threat*, Mike Crean, The Christchurch Press, 28th July 2012

¹¹ *Ōhoka's old identity and heritage sites under threat*, Mike Crean, The Christchurch Press, 28th July 2012

¹² <https://hail.to/Ōhoka-school/article/pXVNzvU>

¹³ <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/find-school/school/population/age?district=®ion=&school=3451>

- 5.6 The rezoning request site consists primarily of grazed fields and is rural in character. The surrounding areas are a mixture of rural and rural residential properties that could be described as rural or semi-rural in character.

6. CONSOLIDATED URBAN FORM

- 6.1 The rezoning request seeks to rezone 156 hectares of rural land south-west of Ōhoka to a combination of Settlement, Large Lot Residential and Local Centre zones in accordance with an Outline Development Plan (ODP).
- 6.2 The adjective 'consolidated' is defined as "*joined together into a coherent, compact, or unified whole*"¹⁴. The definition of 'integrate' (or to become integrated) includes:
- (i) *To form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole*
 - (ii) *To incorporate into a larger unit*¹⁵
- 6.3 Although urban form is a relatively complex concept I have used two indicators, walkability buffers and the proportion of the site boundaries that are joined to the existing village, to provide some measures of the degree of consolidation and the extent of integration of the proposal.
- 6.4 Environmental indicators are generally simple numerical measures that provide insight into the state of the environment. They are used as a practical means of tracking complex environmental issues. A good indicator is quantitative and repeatable, and identifies trends in the relevant issue¹⁶.
- 6.5 Street networks are not included on ODPs, and an 800m walking radius provides a useful proxy for the average 1km walking trip identified in the NZHT¹⁷, given that actual distances walked on streets are generally greater than distances 'as the crow flies'. I consider that generally an area within an 800m walkable buffer is more consolidated.

¹⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consolidated>

¹⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integrate>

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_indicator#cite_note-1

¹⁷ New Zealand Household Travel Survey, Ministry of Transport, 2015-2018, <https://www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/household-travel/>

- 6.6 Mill Road, '*Ōhoka's long main street*'¹⁸, is the heart of Ōhoka. At the eastern end at the intersection with Jacksons Road is the Ōhoka School and site of the former flour mill. At the western extent the former Ōhoka railway station and yards were located opposite the Ōhoka Vicarage at 536 Mill Road.
- 6.7 Figure 3 (attached) shows 400 and 800 metre buffers around the main community facilities including the Ōhoka School, the service station and Ōhoka Domain. Almost all of the existing residential areas in Ōhoka are within the 400m metre buffer.
- 6.8 The northern end of the proposed rezoning adjoins Mills Road, and the site extends approximately 1.8km north-south and 1.2km east-west. Approximately 20% of the site sits within the 400m buffer shown in Figure 3 (attached), and approximately 46% sits within the 800m buffer.
- 6.9 I consider that the proportion of a site boundary that adjoins an existing settlement is another useful measure of consolidation. Figure 1 shows a diagrammatic settlement pattern with rectilinear blocks and shaded areas indicating undeveloped blocks.

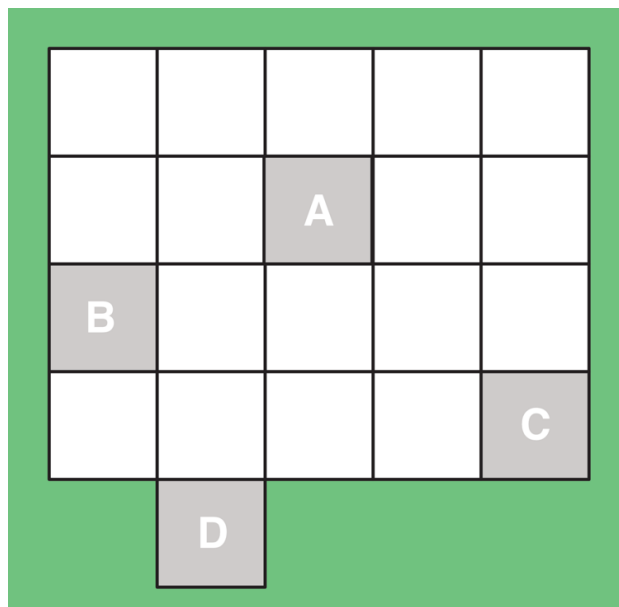


Figure 1: Diagram of settlement with rectilinear block pattern showing various edge connections

¹⁸ *Ōhoka's old identity and heritage sites under threat*, Mike Crean, The Christchurch Press, 28th July 2012

- 6.10 Block A has 100% of its boundary adjoining existing urban areas and developing this would clearly contribute to a consolidated settlement. Block B has 75% of its boundaries adjoining existing urban areas and would similarly contribute to a consolidated settlement. Block C has 50% of its boundaries adjoining existing urban areas, and in appropriate circumstances it would also contribute to and consolidated settlement.
- 6.11 Block D has 25% of its boundaries adjacent to existing urban areas and creates an outlier or peninsula extending out from the town. I do not consider that Block D by itself would contribute to a consolidated or integrated urban form, although it could form part of a broader spatial urban growth strategy.
- 6.12 The boundary of the site of the rezoning request is 5.67km long. The parts of the boundary that adjoin the existing Ōhoka township, along Mill Road, around the houses on the corner of Mill Road and Whites Road, and the frontage opposite the Ohaka Domain are approximately 0.98km long, or 17% of the total boundary length.
- 6.13 An equivalent diagram for Ōhoka and the rezoning request would look more like Figure 2, assuming that the blocks in the existing Ōhoka township are half of the density of the blocks in rezoning request.

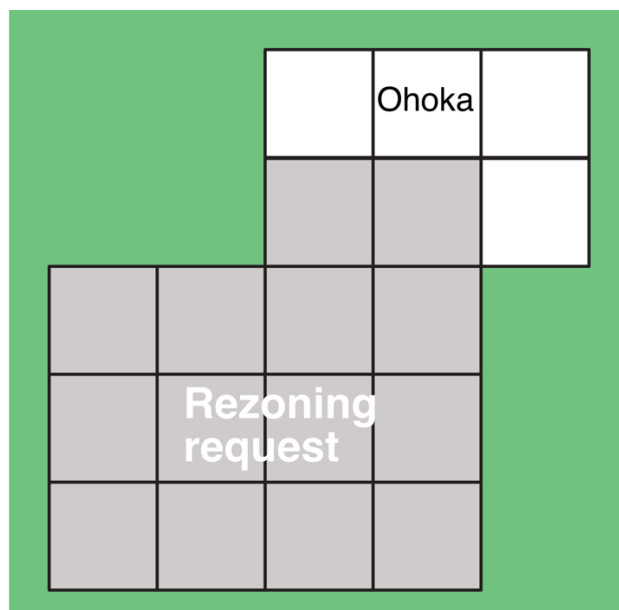


Figure 2: Diagram of Ōhoka and the rezoning request with Ōhoka blocks shown at half the density of rezoning request blocks and with 18.75% of rezoning request edges connected

- 6.14 I consider that a consolidated site would generally have higher proportions of the boundaries of the site adjoining the existing settlement. In the order of 50% or greater would suggest that two or more sides of the site were adjacent.
- 6.15 In my opinion the rezoning request would not contribute to a consolidated urban form for Ōhoka, but rather would create a 'peninsula' of urban land extending south from the existing township surrounded on three sides by rural and rural residential land.

7. CONNECTIVITY

- 7.1 Connectivity refers to creating streets that are joined together in city-wide networks that provide more choices, and support increased resilience and safer places¹⁹. Well-connected places include walking and cycling networks.
- 7.2 The ODP provides one north-south primary road and two east-west primary roads. Two additional indicative local road connections onto Whites Road, are indicated. The ODP proposes one north-south pedestrian / cycle route and four east-west pedestrian / cycle routes, as well as pedestrian / cycle paths along Bradleys and Whites Road. Two pedestrian / cycle crossing points are proposed on Whites Road from the Local Centre Zone.
- 7.3 In my opinion the proposed ODP would provide an appropriate level of internal connectivity (within the site).
- 7.4 The road network that connects the site with the wider district consists of narrow high-speed rural roads which lack separated pedestrian or cycle paths, or public transport facilities such as bus routes, stops and shelters. The narrow gravel verges and the speed of passing traffic make walking or cycling unpleasant and at times dangerous.

¹⁹ *People Places Spaces: A design guide for urban New Zealand*, Ministry for the Environment, 2002, p.32

- 7.5 With respect to connections from the site to the wider district and region, I agree that Ōhoka has a reasonable level of connectivity for private vehicles, however, I consider that a well-functioning urban environment also requires networks of connections for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, and that these are lacking.
- 7.6 In my opinion, while there is a positive level of internal connectivity shown within the ODP, this is undermined by the site's isolated location and the lack of pedestrian, cycle and public transport connections on the rural roads connecting the site to existing town centres and the wider district.

8. ACCESSIBILITY & WELL-FUNCTIONING URBAN ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 Accessibility relates to providing access to public services and facilities particularly within easily walkable or cyclable distances²⁰. The New Zealand Household Travel Survey (NZHTS) found that the average walking trip was 1.0km, and the average cycle trip distance was 4.0km²¹.
- 8.2 Approximately 50% of the site would sit within an 800m buffer from the existing service station / shop and proposed commercial centre opposite the Ohoka Domain. Given the indirect alignment of streets I consider that this is a reasonable approximation for a 1km walking distance and that half of the site would have good walking access to the local shops and open spaces at the Ōhoka Domain. Trips to larger supermarkets and most other shopping, employment or recreational destinations would require a car. None of the site would be within a 1km average walking trip distance of the Ōhoka School.
- 8.3 Most of the site would be within the 4km average cycle trip distance of both the school and the local shops, however outside the rezoning request site there are no safe cycling paths or crossing facilities around the township.

²⁰ *New Zealand Urban Design Protocol*, Ministry for the Environment, 2005, p.21

²¹ New Zealand Household Travel Survey, Ministry of Transport, 2015-2018, <https://www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/household-travel/>

- 8.4 Currently there are no public bus routes through Ōhoka. The Ōhoka School has two school bus routes, and the Kaiapoi High School has one school bus route for eligible students.
- 8.5 Mr Milner proposes that the submitter would provide “*up to 10 years private funding... to support public transport in Ōhoka from the occupation of the first new homes until a more substantive Ōhoka community is established*”²². No substantive information is provided regarding the management structure, the likely operating costs, or forecasts of the expected number of passengers and whether these numbers would support the 38% regional level of farebox recovery currently required to confirm a new bus service.
- 8.6 A public transport service is not currently viable and there is no indication that it would be viable in the long term. While the offer of private funding for public transport for 10 years is generous, I have seen no evidence that public transport would be viable over the remainder of the lifespan of the proposed development.
- 8.7 I note that the site of the rezoning request is located approximately 25kms from central Christchurch, 9km from central Kaiapoi, and 9.5kms from central Rangiora, and agree with Ms Lauenstein and Mr Falconer that these are reasonably accessible distances using private vehicles, however, I consider that a well-functioning urban environment requires provision for active and public transport.
- 8.8 In particular the wider roading network surrounding Ōhoka consists of relatively narrow and high speed rural roads without separated pedestrian or cycle facilities. I understand that no Council funding has been identified to implement these connections. Even if safe pedestrian and cycle connections were provided by the developer, I consider that the distances to the nearest centres would significantly exceed the average walking trip of 1.0km, and the average cycle trip of 4.0km identified in the New Zealand

²² Statement of Evidence of Mr Milner, paragraph 30.6, March 2024

Household Travel Survey (NZHTS)²³ and I would not consider them easily walkable or cyclable.

- 8.9 I agree with Mr Falconer that the network of paths and spaces within the site “provides for both walking and cycling,... together with... indigenous planting,... recreation and stormwater control”.²⁴, however, I do not consider that this resolves the fundamental issues relating to the location of the rezoning request, the lack of active or long-term public transport connections to the wider district, and the likely reliance on private vehicles.
- 8.10 While some daily shopping needs could be met in the proposed commercial centre most opportunities for specialist retail, secondary or tertiary education, recreation, community services and employment will not be available in Ōhoka. Given the distance from the larger centres, and the lack of alternative transport options, I consider that potential residents of the rezoning request area would be largely dependent on cars on a daily basis.
- 8.11 In my opinion the proposed re-zoning does not contribute to a well-functioning urban environment as defined by Policy 1 of the NPS-UD, and in particular does not have good accessibility between housing, jobs and community services, by way of public or active transport.

9. MANDEVILLE / ŌHOKA

- 9.1 Settlement at Mandeville was triggered in the early 1980s by the zoning of an area for rural residential development and the development of a sports ground on publicly owned land that was originally the Mandeville Race Course. Further residential development occurred throughout the 1990s. There are currently approximately 500 dwellings in Mandeville which based on the average household size for Waimakariri of 2.6 persons per household indicates a population in the order of 1,300 persons.

²³ New Zealand Household Travel Survey, Ministry of Transport, 2015-2018, <https://www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/household-travel/>

²⁴ Statement of Evidence of Mr Falconer, paragraph 14, March 2024

- 9.2 The rezoning request would extend Ōhoka 1.8 km southwards to within 300 metres of the neighbouring Mandeville residential zones, and would effectively bridge the gap between Ōhoka and Mandeville giving rise to a sprawling semi-rural conurbation²⁵ with a combined population in the order of 3,850 people.
- 9.3 I accept that there will be a defined 10m wide landscaped strip around the southern boundary of the site, however, I still consider that the rezoning request would extend to within 300m of the San Dona subdivision north of Tram Road in Mandeville.
- 9.4 The San Dona subdivision was established in the 1990s and comprises of approximately 115 households with lots ranging from 1.2 to 2.2 hectares²⁶. I understand that Council officers have recommended that this subdivision remains in the Rural Lifestyle Zone, however, I understand that this is as a result of servicing and flooding issues rather than the rural character of the subdivision. The San Dona subdivision and the proposed rezoning would be separated by between two and four 4ha blocks with little in the way of open rural character to distinguish the communities (see Figure 4 attached).
- 9.5 I acknowledge that if the rezoning request is not approved, the application site could be subdivided into four-hectare lifestyle blocks, however, it is not certain that this would occur and I consider that there are significant differences between 36 four-hectare lifestyle blocks and 850 suburban sections in terms of the built form, the scale of effects and changes in character.
- 9.6 I agree with Mr Milne²⁷ that planting across the street frontage of four-hectare allotments may limit the open rural views currently available across the land, however, I consider that even with a ten-metre planted strip, passers-by are likely to be aware of the differences between a more intensive suburban development as proposed, and four-hectare lifestyle blocks, through increased levels of activity and built form, as well as a number of other cues.

²⁵ "An aggregation or continuous network of urban communities" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conurbation>

²⁶ Waimakariri Rural Residential Development Strategy, June 2019, p.7

²⁷ Statement of Evidence of Tony Milne, paragraph 21, March 2024

- 9.7 I consider that the proposed rezoning would add a significant number of households to an extended semi-rural residential conurbation between Ōhoka and Mandeville which would have limited employment, educational and retail opportunities, or community services, and would be likely to function as a dormitory or lifestyle settlement.
- 9.8 In my opinion an Ōhoka / Mandeville conurbation would not contribute to a well-functioning urban environment. In particular I consider that it does not have good access to jobs or community services, and travel is likely to be car dependent which would not support reductions in green-house gases.

10. VILLAGE CHARACTER

- 10.1 The Proposed WDP seeks development that “*recognises existing character and amenity values*”²⁸. The *Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*²⁹ includes a strategic aim of retaining a “*small settlement character*”, and proposes a limited growth option that allows “*existing vacant areas in the small settlements to develop and provides for some further ‘organic’ expansion opportunities, generally consistent with historic growth rates*”.
- 10.2 Ōhoka straddles two slightly wider statistical areas which cover 3.74km². The population of these statistical areas was 297 in both the 2018 and 2006 censuses³⁰. The proposed rezoning proposes an additional 848 residential allotments³¹. The average Waimakariri household size is 2.6 persons which indicates that the rezoning might increase the population of Ōhoka by approximately 2,200 people. This would be a population increase of more than 700%. This growth corresponds to the growth of a village into a small rural town with associated physical, economic, social and environmental changes. For example, the populations of Oxford and Pegasus are 2,200 and 3,300 respectively.

²⁸ Objective SD-02 Proposed Waimakariri District Plan

²⁹ *Our District Our Future: Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*, Waimakariri District Council, July 2018, p.20

³⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ōhoka>

³¹ Statement of Evidence of Tim Walsh, Paragraphs 44 & 45, March 2024.



Photo 1: Ōhoka 'village' sign

- 10.3 Ōhoka is frequently identified as a 'village' in conjunction with adjectives such as 'small', 'peaceful' and 'semi-rural'. Many of the submissions to both Plan Change 31 and the proposed rezoning oppose the development on the grounds of the loss of Ōhoka's existing village character.
- 10.4 The Dictionary of Urbanism provides six definitions for the word "village", ranging from "*a small settlement in the countryside*" to "*a small part of an urban area that has a distinct identity*"³². Mark Twain once described London as "*fifty villages massed solidly together over a vast stretch of territory*" and "*the great body of its inhabitants are just villagers*"³³.
- 10.5 In my opinion a 'village' is more than a collection of houses or physical features, but also implies a community of people. The Dictionary of Urbanism includes a definition of village as "*a community of people in a particular place*". Perhaps also of relevance is its reference to 'villaging' as a verb "*to aspire to the simulacrum of a bucolic, rural lifestyle while living in the city*"³⁴.

³² Cowan, R., *The Dictionary of Urbanism*, 2005, Streetwise Press, page 440

³³ Twain, M., *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Volume 1, 2010, University of California Press, page 108

³⁴ Cowan, R., *The Dictionary of Urbanism*, 2005, Streetwise Press, page 440

- 10.6 I agree with Mr Falconer that ‘a *village character*’ similar to Lincoln or Matakana could be created if the proposed rezoning is approved, however, my understanding is that the policy directions in the Proposed WDP and the *Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*³⁵ seek to ‘recognise’ or ‘retain’ the existing character of Ōhoka.
- 10.7 I agree with Mr Falconer and Ms Lauenstein that the proposed design could create a new development that is ‘sympathetic’³⁶ to or ‘reflects’³⁷ the character of Ōhoka, however, I consider that the proposal is of such a scale that it would change the existing character of Ōhoka. The *Waimakariri District Residential Character and Intensification Guidance* identifies that the key differences in character between zones relate to density, site size, separation of buildings, setbacks and garden size³⁸.
- 10.8 In particular I consider that the proposed minimum lot size of 600m² for sections in the Settlement Zone (SETZ) would be significantly smaller than the sections along the opposite side of Mill Road which range from 1,000–7,500m² with an average size of approximately 3,000m², and approximately 10 times smaller than sections in the more recent residential developments on Keetly Place and Wilson Drive. While good design can ensure that smaller sections are attractive and liveable, I do not consider that it can ‘retain’ the character of sections that are generally more than twice the size.
- 10.9 Some commentators suggest that “*in a village, most of the people you deal with have been known to you (or someone in your family circle) for a long time... you will probably have seen them in more than one role*”³⁹. While this appears to be more relevant to the idea of a village as a small settlement in the countryside, it does suggest that the size of the community is part of the character of a village.

³⁵ *Our District Our Future: Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*, Waimakariri District Council, July 2018

³⁶ Statement of Evidence of Mr Falconer, paragraph 59, March 2024

³⁷ Statement of evidence of Ms Lauenstein, paragraph 116, March 2024

³⁸ Residential Character and Intensification Guidance for Waimakariri District Council, Jasmox, August 2018, Section 2.20, p.44

³⁹ Cowan, R., *The Dictionary of Urbanism*, 2005, Streetwise Press, page 440

10.10 The proposed rezoning proposes a possible retirement home on part of the site and makes associated regulatory changes including a 12 metre height limit. This could have positive benefits including providing for aging in place, however, I note that retirement villages generally include large scale buildings and signage associated with a community hubs, offices, dining rooms and kitchens and assisted care apartments. The independent units and outdoor living spaces are generally small and relatively dense. While this is not necessarily an 'adverse' effect in itself, in my opinion it would affect the existing village character of Ōhoka.

10.11 In my opinion the existing character of Ōhoka with 200-300 residents is intrinsically different from a settlement of more than 2,200 people. I do not consider that the proposed changes meet the policy directions of the Proposed WDP or the District Development Strategy⁴⁰ in 'recognising' or 'retaining' the existing character of Ōhoka. The changes are not necessarily 'bad' but would be evident in the increased geographic and social scale, increased traffic, suburban densities and built form, and the loss of rural character and outlook.

11. ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

11.1 The illustrative masterplan is well-considered and, if rezoning request is approved, I would support the proposed design approach and masterplan which demonstrate one possible outcome under the proposed ODP.

11.2 I note that a number of alternative layouts are enabled under the proposed ODP and consider that there is no certainty that the final layout would deliver a similar urban form or urban design benefits as the illustrative masterplan.

12. DESIGN GUIDELINES

12.1 Mr Walsh proposes that there should be a requirement for development controls and design guidelines specific to the area to be approved by the

⁴⁰ *Our District Our Future: Waimakariri 2048 District Development Strategy*, Waimakariri District Council, July 2018

Council⁴¹. He considers that these will “*ensure that all development, including built form, fencing/walls, landscaping, parking, and public spaces, is of the quality and character required to maintain the existing characteristics of the Ōhoka settlement*”⁴². He suggests that these would be administered through an independent design approval process with professionals appointed by a residents association.

- 12.2 Mr Walsh proposes a district plan rule for “*all development*”⁴³ to be in accordance with the approved Council guidelines. The design guidelines would cover (without being limited to) context and character, relationship with the street and open spaces, residential amenity, built form and appearance, access, parking and servicing, safety, stormwater and sustainability.
- 12.3 I understand that development that is in accordance with the guidelines would have a permitted activity status, however, breaches would have a discretionary status. It is unclear what the constitutional basis the design approval group would have, and what additional administrative Council costs the process would incur.
- 12.4 The Council cannot delegate its decision making power to a third party, and would need to establish an appropriate constitutional basis for the design group to either make recommendations or to certify designs. This could be as a formal Council sub-committee or a similar body, or the design experts could be directly contracted by the Council (or applicant) to provide expert design advice. All of the solutions have cost and administrative implications.
- 12.5 There is potential for a number of additional resource consents, as well as additional Council resources to administer the design group and / or ensure compliance with the proposed guidelines. I recommend that additional information is required regarding the potential compliance requirements and costs, and that feedback from the Council is provided.

⁴¹ Statement of Evidence of Tim Walsh, paragraphs 48 & 49, March 2024

⁴² Statement of Evidence of Tim Walsh, paragraph 48, March 2024

⁴³ Statement of Evidence of Tim Walsh, page 135, March 2024

- 12.6 If the proposed rezoning is approved I am supportive of the use of design guidelines together with independent design reviewers to improve the design quality of the outcomes, however, I am uncertain how these would be implemented, and they do not address my concerns about scale and extent of development, the poor connections and accessibility with regard to the wider district, or the changes to Ōhoka's existing village character.

13. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

- 13.1 I have reviewed the landscape and visual impact assessments provided by Mr Compton-Moen and Mr Milne.

- 13.2 I generally agree with Mr Compton-Moen's description of the receiving environment in paragraphs 22 to 28 of his Statement of Evidence. I also agree that the site could be developed into 4ha rural residential or lifestyle lots under the proposed zoning and that this would affect the degree of landscape effects and the visual impact.

- 13.3 I agree with Mr Milne⁴⁴ that the Canterbury Regional Landscape Study Review (2010) is relevant when it states:

"...for most New Zealanders the flat topography and patchwork patterning of the Plains landscape is the very essence of Canterbury. The contrast between the unmodified and rugged mountains, the sinuous patterning of the braided rivers and the manicured patchwork quilt of the plains has been recognised as distinctive and has inspired both literature and art. The plains are a prosperous agricultural landscape which is a valued economic resource and a symbol of farming productivity".

However, I do not consider that the requested rezoning supports or is consistent with this landscape description.

⁴⁴ Statement of Evidence of Tony Milne, paragraph 46, March 2024

13.4 I have used a seven point scale drawn from the NZILA's *Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*⁴⁵ to assess the scale of effects of the Plan Change on the landscape character and the visual impact:

very low	low	mod-low	moderate	mod-high	high	very high
----------	-----	---------	----------	----------	------	-----------

13.5 In my opinion the requested rezoning would have a *moderate* impact on both the landscape character and the visual impact as a result of the change from 36 four-hectare rural residential lots to 850 residential lots. This reflects the changes from a moderately-open rural /rural-residential landscape with larger scale open spaces and natural features, and a smaller number of built elements, to a suburban landscape with shorter views, enclosed spaces and a greater number of built elements. I note that Mr Compton-Moen and Mr Milne consider that the effects of the requested rezoning on landscape character and visual impact would be *low-moderate*.

13.6 I consider that the proposed landscape treatments around the edges of the site would be appropriate in this setting and have taken them into account in my assessment of the effects on landscape character and visual impact. I consider that even with a ten-metre planted strip, passers-by are likely to be aware of the differences between a more intensive suburban development as proposed and four-hectare lifestyle blocks through increased levels of activity and built form, and other visual cues.

13.7 I note that Policy 6 of the NPS-UD specifically directs that changes to amenity values such as landscape character and visual amenity need to be balanced against the positive effects of increased housing supply and choice, and are not, of themselves, an adverse effect.

⁴⁵ *Te Tangi A Te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, May 2021, pp. 63-65

14. FURTHER SUBMISSIONS

- 14.1 A number of the further submissions refer to previous submissions on Private Plan Change 31 (PC31). In some instances the submissions to PC31 are attached while in others they are mentioned in the text. Where available I have referred back to the PC31 submissions.
- 14.2 Further submission 46 (Waimakariri District Council) refers to their submission on PC31 suggesting that while the urban design within the development has been considered there has been little effort at integrating the proposal into the wider Waimakariri urban environment⁴⁶. Furthermore, the submitter argues that PC31 would not provide a sufficiently integrated and “well-functioning” urban environment as described in the NPS-UD⁴⁷.
- 14.3 I agree with these parts of FS 48 as outlined in previous sections. I also agree with the submitter that Ōhoka has not been identified as a key activity centre or a node for growth, and would be at odds with the centres-based approach intended in higher order documents. If the proposed rezoning is approved it will effectively develop the rural land between Ōhoka and Mandeville and *“will create a scenario whereby the two settlements will effectively appear as one with little in the way of open rural character to differentiate between the communities”*⁴⁸.
- 14.4 A number of further submissions including 56 (E Liddell), 65 (J Armstrong), 69 (S Brantley), 70 (B Brantley), 71 (A Brantley), 74 (V and R Robb), 110 (B Melrose), 119 (A Marsden), 120 (C Marsden), 128 (R Hall), 132 (J Hadfield) consider that growth of the scale proposed in the rezoning (circa 850 lots) will overshadow the existing Ōhoka community and change the existing rural village character. I agree with these submitters and consider that the character of a village with 300 residents is inherently different from the character of a town with 2,500 residents.

⁴⁶ Submission 216, RCP031, Waimakariri District Council, paragraph 4.9

⁴⁷ Ibid, paragraph 22

⁴⁸ Ibid, paragraph 42

- 14.5 A number of further submissions including 51 (P and M Drive), 69 (S Brantley), 70 (B Brantley), 71 (A Brantley) 98 (M Koh), 112 (G Alexander), 128 (R Hall), 130 (D Brady) note that the 'rural character' of Ōhoka derives from generously landscaped sections (eg. rural small holdings between 0.5 and 4ha) with open views over rural land, and consider that the proposed development with 500m² sections and 'urban density' would alter the rural character of the village.
- 14.6 I agree with these submitters and consider that the difference between urban and rural character derives primarily from the density of residential land use. A large part of the requested rezoning would have a density of 12 households per hectare which is equivalent to many suburban areas in Rangiora, Kaiapoi and Christchurch. This suburban character would be clearly distinct from Ōhoka's rural village character with generously landscaped sections and low-density dwellings set back from the road.

15. CONCLUSION

- 15.1 I have reviewed the statements of evidence from the applicant, and the submissions and further submissions with regard to the requested rezoning at Ōhoka. In my opinion:
- a. The requested rezoning would not contribute to a compact or consolidated urban form for Ōhoka, and would create a 'peninsula' of urban development extending south from the existing township surrounded on three sides by rural or rural residential land;
 - b. The level of connectivity within the ODP is positive, however, there are not sufficient pedestrian, cycle or long-term public transport connections on the rural roads connecting the site to the wider district to provide a well-functioning urban environment;
 - c. While some daily shopping needs could be met in the proposed commercial centre, most employment, community services and recreational opportunities would be dependent on car travel given the lack of active or a viable long-term public transport options;

- d. The requested rezoning would add a significant number of households to an extended rural-residential conurbation between Ōhoka and Mandeville which would have limited employment, recreational opportunities, or community services, and would not contribute to a well-functioning urban environment or support reductions in green-house gas emissions;
- e. The requested rezoning could create a new 'sympathetic' village character, however, it would not retain or recognise the existing Ohoka village character as a result of the significantly increased size and population of the settlement, the smaller sections and gardens, and the potential scale of a retirement home;
- f. If the Commissioners are of a mind to approve the requested rezoning, the revised ODP would be appropriate;
- g. The illustrative masterplan and design approach are well-considered, however, there is no certainty that these outcomes will be delivered through the proposed ODP;
- h. If the requested rezoning is approved, the use of design guidelines together with a design review process to improve the design quality would be appropriate, however, additional information is requested regarding potential compliance requirements and costs, together with feedback from the Council consents team;
- i. With mitigation measures and when compared with a permitted 4ha rural residential subdivision of the site, the effects of requested rezoning on the landscape character the visual impact would be *moderate*, although I note that the NPS-UD directs that these effects need to be balanced against the positive effects of increased housing supply.



Hugh Nicholson

14th May 2024

Figure 3: Ōhoka 400m Walkable Catchments with Illustrative Masterplan

Information has been derived from various organisations, including Environment Canterbury and the Canterbury Maps partners. Boundary information is derived under licence from LINZ Digital Cadastral Database (Crown Copyright Reserved). Environment Canterbury and the Canterbury Maps partners do not give and expressly disclaim any warranty as to the accuracy or completeness of the information or its fitness for any purpose.

Information from this map may not be used for the purposes of any legal disputes. The user should independently verify the accuracy of any information before taking any action in reliance upon it.

Legend

- Ōhoka community facilities
- 400m walkable catchments
- Open Spaces / Reserves
- Residential zones
- Requested Rezoning

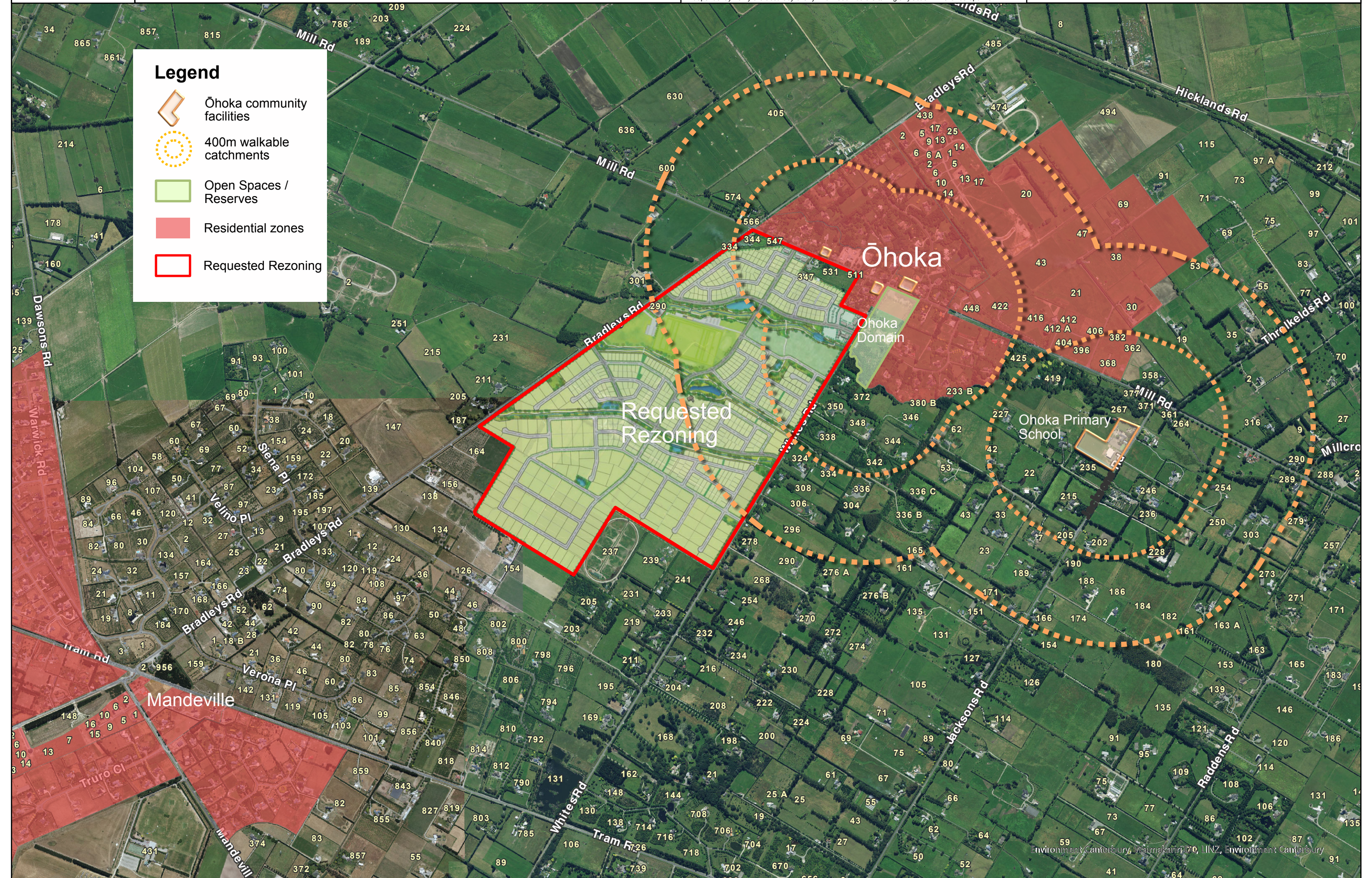




Figure 5: Ōhoka Aerials - 1960 - 1980
(Rezoning site outlined in red)

0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Kilometres
Scale: 1:15,000 @A3



Figure 6: Ōhoka Aerials - 2000 - 2022
(proposed rezoning site outlined in red)

0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Kilometres
Scale: 1:15,000 @A3

