

BEFORE THE WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW HEARINGS PANEL

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF the hearing of submissions and further submissions on the Proposed Waimakariri District Plan

AND

hearing of submissions and further submissions on Variations 1 and 2 to the Proposed Waimakariri District Plan

Hearing Stream 12E: Rezoning Requests

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF GEOFFREY SPARK
FOR RICHARD AND GEOFF SPARK
(PDP SUBMITTER 183 / VARIATION 1 SUBMITTER 61)**

Dated 9 August 2024

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Introduction

1. My name is Geoffrey Robert Hugh Spark. I grew up on this land and am a third generation dairy farmer. I would like to also introduce Richard Spark, who has spent his 80 years living on and farming this land. Richard also owns and operates Rossburn Receptions and the Northbrook Museum, and is passionate about preserving New Zealand's colonial history.
2. This farm has been in the Spark family since 1942 when my grandparents started here with 45 acres and 20 cows. Richard and his two elder brothers, Bob (my Father) and John, both now passed, progressively added on acreage to the farm. There are now 197 hectares (approximately 500 acres), in one holding on Rangiora's eastern residential boundary. The farm currently milks 600 cows.
3. Our family is very community minded and over the years has contributed to the Northern A and P Show, as well as various School Board of Trustees and other community organisations.
4. Personally, since 2019, I have been the North Canterbury representative on the Fonterra Co-operative Council. I am a Facilitator for Rural Support Trust and Farmstrong, a past Director of Waimakariri Irrigation Ltd, and past President of Rangiora Pony Club. I am currently Chair of the organising committee for the 2024 Springston Trophy to be held in Rangiora in October 2024.
5. My wife and I, and our 3 children, have our own farm business based in Eyrewell. We are heavily involved in our local community and make our farm and irrigation storage lake available for hosting many events including the Oxman Half Ironman, Canterbury Primary Schools Triathlon, as well as Waka and Dragon Boating festivals. A focus of mine is connecting the rural and urban communities, and hosting these events on our farm does this in a very positive way.
6. Our family have deep roots in North Canterbury. We believe Rangiora is a great town in a very desirable location and is destined for a very bright future. We believe that due to the desirability of the area, demand for residential development in Rangiora will continue to grow. Employment opportunities are also growing as new businesses seek to establish themselves in Rangiora. This view is reinforced by the speed in the sales of the recently released Rangiora Business Hub commercial lots, which are situated just 1-2km from our land. With enhancements to the roading network into Christchurch, and with an international airport close by, travel infrastructure is well serviced. Nearby lakes, rivers,

mountains and the ocean provide rich recreational options, further underpinning Rangiora as very desirable place to live.

Reasons for seeking rezoning

7. Our proposal to seek residential rezoning over part of our farm is due to many factors including:
 - (a) Crossing our cows across an increasingly busy Boys Road is fast becoming impractical and a Health and Safety risk to our people, cows, as well as motorists. The days of being able to farm this land safely is fast coming to an end and residential development is the logical future use for this land.
 - (b) The Eastern Link Road, which I understand is proposed for construction in around 2029, will cut through the middle of our land on the north side of Boys Road. The Eastern Link Road also continues south from Boys Road through to Marsh Road. This new road will isolate approximately 30ha from the balance of the farm. The Eastern Link Road becomes a logical boundary for residential development to the west of the Eastern Link
 - (c) Our intention is that the balance 140ha (340 acres) will be retained as a dairy farm. The dairy shed and supporting infrastructure is well positioned within the remaining 140 hectares to be farmed. We plan to continue milking approximately 480 cows so even with the reduced farming area, it will remain as an efficient and economic farm operation. The average New Zealand dairy farm is approximately 400 cows. The farm will continue employing multiple staff and it is anticipated that the rezoning will reduce farm staff by one half full time equivalent.
 - (d) We are motivated to commence residential development soon after rezoning. Having farmed the land for the last 80 years we see the timing is right to develop the land for residential purposes. Our intention will be for the residential development to be of a high quality and function, and make the most of the highly valued natural and recreation features such as Northbrook Wetland and the Northbrook Stream.
 - (e) We have protected the Northbrook Stream by fencing it from stock for decades and we highly value the ecology, biodiversity and the aesthetic value of the Northbrook. The rezoning and development will be designed to both protect, enhance and showcase this highly valued lowland, spring fed stream.

Northbrook Trail

8. As a family we are very proud of the brooks that flow through the farm including the Southbrook, Middlebrook, Northbrook and Cam River. We are currently in talks with Waimakariri District Council to establish a walking/cycleway that follows the Northbrook Stream and Cam Rivers. The vision, which the Waimakariri District Council shares, is to connect Rangiora and Kaiapoi with a walkway/cycleway via the Northbrook and Cam Rivers. This will provide recreational, connectivity and social benefits to the district.
9. We have offered to donate the land to the Council that we own adjacent to the Northbrook Stream and Cam River required to build the walkway/cycleway. Having a long connection with Rangiora and North Canterbury we see the Northbrook Trail as a legacy project from our family to the district.
10. We believe that it is logical that the land is rezoned to residential to support the value proposition of the walkway/cycleway. The intention is for the walkway/cycleway to be incorporated into the urban design of the land adjacent to the Northbrook Stream, so that it becomes both a feature of the residential development, as well as a connectivity corridor for the public. I **attach** a copy of the proposed route and a photo montage of an area within the Spark farm but outside the proposed rezoning area.
11. We have a strong history of working alongside Waimakariri District Council including construction of several wastewater easements through the farm. As well as our consultation with the Council over the proposed rezoning, we are also currently working with them regarding the Northbrook Trail as outlined earlier, as well as a new sewer main through the farm planned for construction in 2025, and the Eastern Link Road planned for construction approximately 2029. It is clear to us that through good design and coordination, the Northbrook Trail, new sewer and Eastern Link can all enhance and integrate well into the rezoning proposal.
12. Another example of the family working constructively with WDC is a recent communication (July 2024) received from WDC to see if there is an opportunity for WDC to work in with our proposed development's stormwater treatment. I understand the purpose would be to assist WDC in providing attenuation of the Newnham Street area which currently does not have stormwater treatment or attenuation through a basin.
13. We have expressed that we are open to working with WDC to assist them.
14. Our family has a strong connection with this land. We are committed to a high quality development utilising, and indeed opening up, the high environmental qualities of this

site. We also seek to ensure that development creates a high quality urban environment that both improves, and provides access to, the special characteristics of this location.

Comments on officer's reports

15. I have read the officer's reports and leave it to the relevant experts to talk about the various matters. One of the issues identified is in relation to the local centre. I note there was discussion about potentially shifting it to a more central location of our proposed development.
16. What we intend for this particular location in regards to the local centre is really to take advantage of the site for servicing the recreational users. It is, in my mind, a very aesthetic site. It overlooks, with a north-west aspect, the Northbrook Stream, Council park and Mount Grey in the distance. I consider it to be a better location for a public social space.
17. It is also right on the active walk/cycleway pathways of the Northbrook wetlands (existing) and the proposed future Northbrook trail. It is a very special location.
18. What we are intending for that area is a small-scale restaurant/café and potentially an associated 'farm shop' or similar where local produce and goods could be sold for the nearby farms. We see this as providing potentially quality food to locals with a very low carbon footprint.
19. I acknowledge there are other potential uses but those are the matters which led to that location being chosen. I would very much like to keep this location as I consider it quite a special place.
20. I have discussed with our experts the possibility of an additional facility closer to the centre of the overall development. I understand this has now been incorporated into the updated ODP and we see this as an opportunity as the overall development occurs.

Geoff Spark

9 August 2024



