

Roydon Quarry Hearing – Statement of Nigel & Alex McGrath

December 5th 2019

Dear commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to share our family's concerns in regard to the proposed quarry.

Firstly, we'd like to acknowledge that Dr Gareth Fitch who has volunteered expert evidence regarding health concerns for equine athletes, thanks you for your understanding in his needing to attend to surgeries this afternoon.

He remains available and willing to answer any further questions required from him as conclusions are drawn around distance travelled by the dust particles he is concerned about.

Secondly, we'd like to acknowledge and put forward strong support for everybody else who has already spoken against the consent of this proposed quarry due multiple concerns which include road safety, air quality, amenity and health concerns due dust, noise pollution, monetary loss due effect on property values – the list goes on.

Our concern is that no matter what the experts end up agreeing to be the facts around each of these concerns – our community as a whole has seen, read and heard too much local and international evidence to suggest we will ever be comfortable again if this quarry goes ahead. The mental wellbeing of the community is severely at risk. This is simply not an area of land that should be quarried and we feel it would set a very dangerous precedent for future land development in and around communities across New Zealand.

Our primary intention in speaking to you today however, is to point out and allow you the opportunity to question us on specific concerns we hold as owners of a small business that operates within close proximity of the proposed site.

My husband Nigel has been training harness racing horses at our Weedons property for over twenty years. In that time, he has trained over 500 winners, been inducted into the New Zealand Trotting Hall of Fame, and has successfully maintained a book of loyal, long-time owners.

He tends to have around fifty horses on his books at any one time and works an approximate eighty-hour week to maintain his success.

Maintaining and hence owning a racehorse is not cheap. Our owners invest significant sums of money in our business every month, in the hope of enjoying the thrill of a few wins on the track. There is no shortage of options for them in terms of whom they choose to look after and train their horse.

The harness racing horse has continued to improve immensely genetically (in terms of the times they can run and their stamina over distance) over the last 5-10 years. New Zealand records are commonly broken and seldom held for more than a season. Essentially every split-second gained or lost on the track truly matters.

TABLED AT HEARING

Application:

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Our owners know this innately and hence want and need to be extremely confident that their trainer can provide the best environment for their horse to perform at its best.

Our concern in regards the quarry and the effect it will have on our business is therefore two-fold;

1. Per the evidence supplied by Dr Gareth Fitch, our property location will see the health of our horses physically impaired due exposure to dangerous dust particles. It is important for us to re-stress at this point that ANY shift in performance potential no matter how small, matters.
2. Our secondary concern is that regardless of actual dust-effect outcomes on the health of our horses, perceptively our business would become significantly disadvantaged in the eyes of our owners – my husband will expand on this later.

In summary the racing game is 100% a results game – if the quarry goes ahead we are at real risk of losing;

- The potential for the horses to perform at their best – leading to a decline in results and hence a decline in earnings.
- The support of clients and their horses to train – a further financial hit that is very likely to spiral in one direction only.



Given the importance of location to running a successful racing stable we must touch on why the business was initially setup where we are today and why relocation is not an option.

As you will be aware the land and soils around Templeton are flat and free draining – ideal for grazing horses and for applying training tracks.

Additionally, the rural zoning of the land supports ongoing dispersed population and limited if any industrial activity – it's the country – the air is clear and noise is of a level that sees horses at ease.

Along with this, we are (and have always been) within reasonable distance of all main amenities. This includes being in good vicinity of all the main racetracks in the Canterbury

region – an important consideration when considering travel time. Races in Canterbury are routinely run on Friday nights and Sunday afternoons – when time is always limited, less time on the road holds a high personal value.

For reasons I won't dwell further on, it is very fair to conclude that when my husband invested in our land over twenty years ago, he made a sound commercial decision in terms of the future value of the land irrespective of the business being run on it.

However, when he purchased it, it was already setup as a horse training establishment – a function that added value to the property. If we were forced to relocate due to the existence of a quarry, the functional value of the property as a horse training establishment would be lost. We note that this is independent of the potential effect on the value of the land itself, given the potential existence of a quarry.

Today, the capital required to setup a horse-training establishment (land-exclusive) would easily exceed \$500,000.

Given natural urban sprawl and development over the last 20 years, a new land investment for us would need to be another 15-20 kilometres away from our current location and we would have to apply capital development to that land to a figure that was not financially sound or reasonable.

To put it plainly, a forced location change would see us have to opt to close the business, as any alternative would be infeasible and unlikely to be financially supported.

At this point I would like to re-iterate that perception alone is enough to see our business put at risk, due to its proximity to a quarry.

I will now pass to my husband who will further cover;

1. Why he bought the land – the appeal of the location
2. The history of Roydon Lodge. This was not covered in our submission but as a prominent local trainer feel obligated to cover this briefly (if that is acceptable)
3. Increased traffic – unsettling for the horses due assumed increases
4. Dust concerns
5. Provide an example as to the implications of a quarry being installed near a training facility.
6. Any questions you may have in regards to our submission

With sincere thanks for your time and consideration,

Nigel & Alex McGrath