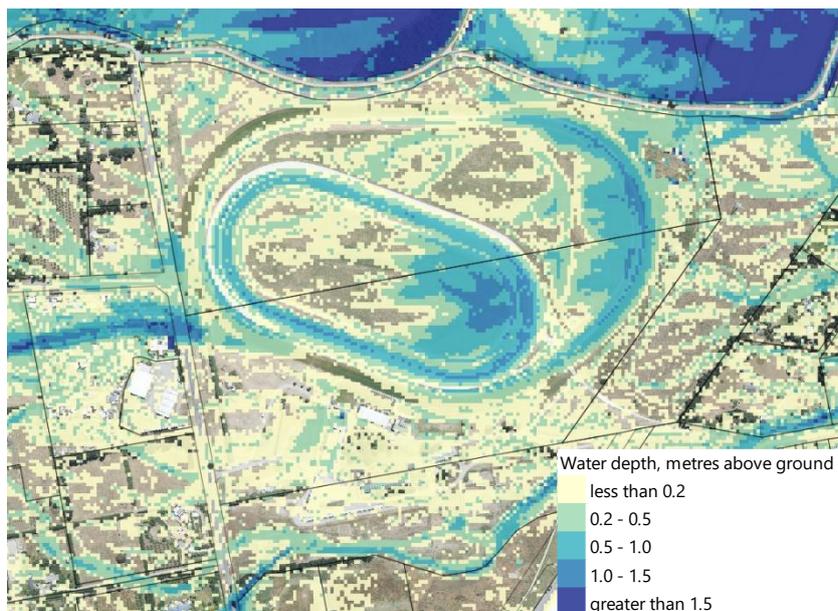


Rangjiora Racecourse



Summary comments

Rangjiora Racecourse is located on the outskirts of Rangjiora township, half an hour north of Christchurch. The course is dual code with both a thoroughbred and a harness racing presence. The thoroughbreds tend to use the course for training, only while the harness use the course for both training and racing. The course has potential moderate flooding issues. 1/100 – 1/500-year flooding scenarios are displayed in the below image.



Clubs associated with the course

Rangiora Harness Racing Club, Canterbury Jockey Club, Amberley Trotting Club, North Canterbury Trotting.

Ownership

Ownership of the racecourse is split 7/12, 5/12 in favour of Canterbury Jockey Club. The course covers 41.3 hectares and has a rateable value of \$2.7 million.

Assets and opportunities

Rangiora Harness Racing club has sizeable cash reserves and low debt levels. Approximately 1.6 hectares of land (the smaller parcel in the above image) is to be zoned general residential in the proposed Waimakariri district plan. This land has a high-level estimated development yield of 22 500m² lots which would provide not insignificant revenue to the clubs if developed and sold. The harness club wishes to see the facilities used more for community activities and public events. Currently there is a visibility issue due to the course's location. A new road is planned for the future, which will increase visibility and access to the course.

Course infrastructure

The harness track is configured as a replica of Addington (without flood lights) and provides a ready-made reserve for Addington, with the same racing starter limits and distances all within forty minutes of travel time of Addington.

The course contains a 1,200-metre all-weather track and an 1,800-metre grass racing track and several sand-training tracks.

In addition, the course provides 49 loose boxes for on-course trainers, 20 loafing paddocks and 190 tie-ups which are used on race day and trialling days. The trials days (47 per annum) are run by Rangiora Harness Racing Club's sister organisation, North Canterbury Trotting.

While weekly trials entry numbers vary during the season, the course provides on course training and trialling for an average of 90 harness horses per week.

The two stands provide seating and services for up to 3,000 people. The stands have had repairs and strengthening work undertaken following the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, covered by insurance, and are now at close to 50 per cent of earthquake standards under IL2.

The racecourse itself is zoned General Rural in both the active and proposed Waimakariri District Council Planning Documents.

The buildings need work. There is asbestos in the tea kiosk, which has a high cost of removal. The club wants to invest more in stabling.

Suggested actions

The role and future of the course for harness needs to be clarified. This is a complex situation with a long history and we offer these suggestions for discussion only.

Options for the future of Rangiora Racecourse were identified by both clubs. These include:

1. Reducing the course to one code and operating the venue as just a harness racing club, and as the North Canterbury centre for trials and races. This is beneficial as it would save in staff and reduce costs overall to the harness club.
2. Sell the surplus land. This would involve subdividing the live-zoned area, selling it off and reinvesting the profits equally between the clubs. Following this they could continue to operate as either a training centre only or continue to run races too. This option has a subdivision yield of 22 lots.
3. Sell all the land. Most of the course is outside of the council's 'infrastructure boundary' and has not been live zoned in the proposed district plan. While the costs can be considerable, a private plan change to rezone the remainder of the course to general residential and selling all the land is an option. After setting aside land for a small community centre, this option yields an additional 465 lots. With this option there is the issue of the high cost of demolishing the stands.

We suggest the following actions:

- Undertake residential development on live-zoned portions of land.
- Resolve the dispute between Rangiora Harness Racing Club and Canterbury Jockey Club clubs. If the clubs cannot come to an amicable agreement with a clear direction forward for the venue supported by both clubs, then we suggest one club buy out the other.
- If option 3 above is not pursued, then:
 - Pursue diversification of income streams.
 - Update the asset maintenance plan.
 - Undertake maintenance and renewals forward work plans for the venue (including any capital investment).
 - Risk assessment and management of asbestos in the tea kiosk.

Joint club views on issues and challenges

The location of the course is excellent and has the potential to serve North Canterbury well. There is, however, significant grounds maintenance work needed.

Both Canterbury Jockey Club and Rangiora Harness Racing Club identified issues with both clubs operating at the same venue. Now, Canterbury Jockey Club does not race at Rangiora, and we are told the grass course is regarded as dangerous as a galloping surface by the jockeys. The course is therefore surplus to the Canterbury Jockey Club's requirements.

Our impression from talking to the jockey club is that it plans to centralise in Riccarton adding to the number of horses using the new synthetic facilities. This was the understanding of the harness club who also expressed a desire for the facility to be a one-code facility.

While they are able to operate together on a day-to-day basis, the relationship between Rangiora Harness Racing and Canterbury Jockey Club is strained. This is a pressure point that needs addressing regardless of the option pursued.

Harness

The club's impression is that the venue holds significant importance to the harness industry. It currently hosts many horses for trials, with about 50 to 60 horses trialling in the winter and around 100 in spring. The club also provides ten racing licences in a year and about 47 trial and workout meetings. It holds itself out to be the number two track and the fallback option for Addington, as it is the exact replica in terms of size and layout. Their position as "number two" is something the club wishes to maintain over time.

Training is not an important part of the facility, as it is subsidised and can happen elsewhere, often on people's own properties or on the beach nearby.

The Rangiora Harness Racing Club (RHRC) maintains a good industry relationship with other venues in Canterbury. In the past, it has allowed Addington and Greymouth to race at Rangiora and has lent certain items to Addington for cup week.

Issues with the industry overall were identified as wanting more involvement from HRNZ in managing the track and having a more professional crew as the majority of those working are volunteers.

The course is supported by the community, with the club's Christmas at the Races event on December 19th attracting around 3,000 people. The harness industry is within the top ten employers within North Canterbury.