

FTAA–2507–1084: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Harlow Lifestyle Village

Date submitted:	23 July 2025	Tracking #: BRF–6541	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	28 July 2025

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to MfE FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz Send email to Ministers to invite comment
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for Harlow Lifestyle Village (in File Exchange) 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2))

Ministry for the Environment contacts:

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author(s)	Max Gander-Cooper, Stephen Church		
Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	✓
General Manager	Ilana Miller	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location



Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Te Awamutu Developments Limited to refer the Harlow Lifestyle Village project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process. At this stage you can either decline an application for the reasons set out section 21, or provide the application to, and invite comments from, the parties identified in section 17. If you do not decline the application, you will receive a further briefing following receipt of comments, to support your final decision on whether to refer the project.
2. The project is to develop a senior living community (restricted to persons over 55) at 2025 Ohaupo Road, Te Awamutu, Waikato. The project will include:
 - a. 407 dwellings including single-storey houses, duplexes, apartments and a 100-bed care facility
 - b. Communal facilities
 - c. A neighbourhood centre.
3. The project will require the proposed approvals:
 - a. Resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991
4. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented

along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.

5. We have decided the application is complete and complies with section 14 of the Act, as the application complies with section 13 requirements, may be capable of satisfying the criteria in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity. The applicable fee and levy have been paid.
6. We recommend you progress consideration of the referral application to the next stage of analysis (Stage 2) and invite written comments from the parties prescribed in section 17(1) of the Act being: local authorities, the Minister for the Environment and relevant portfolio Ministers, relevant administering agencies, the owners of Māori land within the project area and identified Māori groups from section 18(2) of the Act. The parties are listed in Attachment 3.
7. We recommend that you invite written comments from the Minister for Regional Development, the Minister for Economic Growth, and the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) as additional parties under section 17(5) of the Act. We note the project will require approvals from NZTA to connect to a limited access road.

Action sought

8. Please indicate your decisions on the recommendations in Table A.

Signature

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'I' followed by a horizontal stroke that tapers to a point.

Ilana Miller
General Manager – Delivery and Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

	Project Name		Applicant		Project Location	
Project details	Harlow Lifestyle Village		Te Awamutu Developments Limited c/- Bloxam, Burnett and Oliver		2025 Ohaupo Road, Te Awamutu.	
			The applicant is eligible to apply for new resource consents.			
Project description	The project is to develop a senior living community (restricted to person over 55) at 2025 Ohaupo Road, Te Awamutu, Waikato. The project will include: a. 407 dwellings including single-storey houses, duplexes, apartments and a 100-bed care facility b. Communal facilities c. A neighbourhood centre The project will require the proposed approvals: a. Resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991					
Consultation undertaken	As required by s11, the applicant has consulted with:					
	Relevant local authorities	Relevant iwi authorities, hapu and Treaty settlement entities:	Relevant MACA groups	Ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou]	Relevant administering agencies	Holder of land to be exchanged
	Waipa District Council Waikato Regional Council	Ngā Iwi Tōpū o Waipā Waikato Tainui	N/A	N/A	Ministry for the Environment	N/A
Section 22 assessment criteria						
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	The Minister may consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant.					
	<i>Assess the factors that are relevant to the application. How is the factor relevant and is it being met by the project?</i> <i>Will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment [s22(2)(a)(iii)]</i> The applicant considers there is insufficient capacity for new dwellings across the Future Proof region (Hamilton city and greater surrounding areas of Waikato and Waipa Districts) in the short-medium term. While the applicant’s economic report confirms that Te Awamutu appears to have sufficient capacity to meet expected demand, this is based on high realisation rates that may be overly optimistic and masks notable shortfalls for dwellings at most price points. The applicant states the development of 407 dwelling/units, in a lifestyle village framework, will support additional residential capacity and respond to the local, regional and national housing shortage. It will also provide additional capacity for new homes outside of the \$500-\$600k price bands, where the capacity is most concentrated. The applicant notes the issue of providing for housing for an aging population is not new but is one whereby specific planning interventions that cater for an ageing population are not specifically being provided for. The Retirement Village Association records that the shortfall of appropriate retirement housing and care capacity to cater for New Zealand’s aging population is already at a crisis point (i.e. demand is outstripping supply). The project’s variety of housing options and a mixed tenure approach which differs from the traditional retirement village, can also offer regional benefits, potentially reducing some of the stigma related to lifestyle village living and encouraging competition in the local senior living market. This aligns with Objective 2 of the NPS-UD, which acknowledges that choice and competition is fundamental to economic efficiency. <i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i> The applicant considers the project will deliver the following significant regional economic benefits: - during construction, contribute approximately \$120 million to GDP, support over 848 full-time equivalent job-years, and generate \$70 million in wages - once operational sustain 81 full-time equivalent jobs annually, contributing \$8.3 million to GDP and \$6.1 million in wages each year. <i>Will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards [s22(2)(a)(viii)]</i> The applicant considers the project addresses the national risk of climate change and natural hazards by managing flooding hazards through on-site stormwater management and incorporating measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including promoting walking, cycling, ridesharing, and facilitating public transport movements <i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> The applicant considers the project is consistent with the Waipa District Strategic Policy Framework. <i>Any other matters that may be relevant [s22(b)]</i> The applicant considers the project will have social and cultural benefits by: - changing (and challenging) the way retirement villages operate and are accepted by the market, by providing an option for fully independent/fee-simple senior living. The product being offered at Harlow means that landowners are not locked into an occupation right agreement (ORA) under the Retirement Villages Act 2003 (RVA) – thereby enabling different housing varieties and price points. - the opportunity to partner with mana whenua to provide affordable housing opportunities which would address a regional demand for mana whenua. The applicant also considers the project could have ecological benefits by avoiding wetland encroachment and incorporating stormwater detention with ecological restoration. This contributes positively to regional ecological outcomes, especially within the Mangapiko sub-catchment.					

referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]		
	The applicant considers the traditional plan change process and subsequent consenting framework will have the effect of delaying development by 18-24 months assuming successful approvals and no appeals. Obtaining consent under the FTAA would significantly shorten this timeframe and reduce costs.		
	Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]		
	The applicant considers referring the project to the fast-track approvals process is unlikely to place undue pressure on the fast-track approvals system or contribution to inefficiencies the proposal is well-advanced, with substantial preparatory work already completed. The necessary technical and planning information is largely available, meaning there should be no difficulty or delay in lodging a comprehensive and high-quality substantive application. This readiness minimises the risk of inefficiencies, rework, or delays within the fast-track process. Importantly, the proposal is also not overly complex and is unlikely to delay the processing of other applications within the fast-track system.		
Minister invites comments	You must copy the application to and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:	The Minister may also copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person[s17(5)].	The Minister may request further information about a referral application from the applicant, the relevant local authorities, or the relevant administering agencies to be provided within the time frame specified in the request.
	a. Waipa District Council and Waikato Regional Council as relevant local authorities b. Minister for the Environment c. Other relevant portfolio Ministers: Associate Minister of Housing, Minister for Seniors d. The Māori groups identified in Attachment 3	a. NZTA, as the applicant will require approvals from NZTA to enable the project b. Minister for Regional Development c. Minister for Economic Growth	N/A
Recommendations			Minister's decision
a. Note that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the relevant local authorities and any relevant Ministers.			Noted
b. Note that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any comments on it from, the parties listed in section 17(1) but that you are required to do so if you do not decline the application under section 21 of the Act.			Noted
c. Note that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.			Noted
d. Note that if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame you are required to consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.			Noted
e. Note that section 20 of the Act permits you to request further information from the applicant or relevant local authorities or relevant administering agencies at any time before you decide whether to accept or decline an application.			Noted
f. Agree to progress the Harlow Lifestyle Village Project to our Stage 2 analysis (invitation to comment and s 18 report stage).			Yes / No
g. Agree to provide the application to, and invite comments from: a. Relevant local authorities: Waipa District Council and Waikato Regional Council b. Minister for the Environment c. Relevant portfolio Ministers: Associate Minister of Housing, Minister for Seniors d. The Māori groups identified in Attachment 3			Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
h. Agree to provide the application to and invite comments from the following additional entities/persons under section 17(5): a. Minister for Regional Development b. Minister for Economic Growth c. New Zealand Transport Agency			Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
i. Note that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence other than to Ministers			Noted
j. Send email inviting Ministers to comment			Yes / No

Signed:

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Appendix 1: Statutory framework summary

1. You are the sole decision maker for referral applications. If you accept a referral application then the whole or part of the project will be referred to the fast-track approvals process.
2. If a Treaty settlement, the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or a joint management agreement provides for consideration of any document or procedural requirements, you must, where relevant:
 - a. Give the document the same or equivalent effect through this process as it would have under any specified Act; and
 - b. Comply with any applicable procedural requirements.
3. You must decline a referral application if:
 - a. you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in s22
 - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (s5)
 - c. you consider you do not have adequate information to inform your decision.
4. You may decline an application for any other reason, including those set out in s21(5) and even if the application meets the s22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under s 17(1). However, if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame, you must consider them, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.
6. If you do not decline a referral application at this initial stage you must copy the application to, and invite written comments from:
 - a. the relevant local authorities,
 - b. the Minister for the Environment and relevant portfolio Ministers
 - c. the relevant administering agencies
 - d. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - e. the owners of Māori land in the project area:
 - f. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.

Appendix 2: Application documents for Harlow Lifestyle Village Project: (in File Exchange)

Appendix 3: List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)	Contact person	Contact email
Te Whakakitenga o Waikato	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity – Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995 and the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 (s18(2)(a)); negotiating mandate (s18(2)(d))	Jaedyn Falwasser	s 9(2)(a) TeMakarini.Mapu@tainui.co.nz
Waikato Raupatu River Trust	Treaty settlement entity – Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 (s18(2)(a))	See Te Whakakitenga above	
Waikato River Authority	Treaty settlement entity – Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 (s18(2)(a))	Justine Young, Senior Policy Advisor	s 9(2)(a)
Ngā Iwi Tōpū o Waipā	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))	Gaylene Roberts, Chair	ngaiwitoopuowaipa@gmail.com s 9(2)(a)
Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))	Mokoro Gillett, Chair	admin@ngatihauaiwitrust.co.nz s 9(2)(a)
Te Nehenehenui Trust	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))	Tramaine Murray	s 9(2)(a) office@tnn.co.nz
Raukawa Settlement Trust	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))	Anaru Begbie	s 9(2)(a)
Ngāti Hikairo	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))	Susan Turner, chair	ngatihikairoiwi@gmail.com s 9(2)(a)
Ngāti Apakura Runanga Trust	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))	Hori (George) Griggs, chair	admin@ngatiapakura.co.nz
O-Tāwhao Marae	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))		info@tac.school.nz