Ministry for the Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

FTAA-2605-1244: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Rangitoopuni Forest

Date submitted:	22 June 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-01720	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	**Response by:**
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	29 June 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	**Return** the signed briefing to: *FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz* **Send** email to Ministers to invite written comments
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for the Rangitoopuni Forest project 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Ministry for the Environment contacts:

Position	Name	Cell phone	1st contact
Principal Author	Ashiley Sycamore		
Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	✓
General Manager	Ilana Miller	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location



Image 1: *Project area illustrated by red outline*

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Rangitoopuni Developments Limited Partnership (the applicant) to refer the Rangitoopuni Forest project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process.

2. 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 inform your final decision on whether to refer the project.

Project description

3. The project area is located within the Riverhead (Rangitoopuni) Forest, northwest of Auckland City in the Auckland Region, and comprises seven adjoining landholdings with a total area of approximately 3,052 hectares, of which approximately 2,242 hectares is identified as developable land.

4. The project is a staged, large-scale subdivision that will transition the existing production forest to a predominantly rural-residential and open space environment. Development

staging is proposed to align with the forestry harvest cycle.

5. The project provides for predominantly low-density residential "forest lots", generally ranging from approximately 2,500 m² to 1 hectare, and a smaller component of more compact housing located within and adjacent to proposed community hubs. The project also includes provision for marae and papakāinga housing.

6. The project involves the construction and establishment of:

    a. approximately 3,407–4,164 residential forest lots

    b. four community hubs, including small-scale commercial and retail activities, housing, community infrastructure, accommodation, and education facilities

    c. a recreation hub, including outdoor recreation services and associated community, cultural, and accommodation infrastructure

    d. the establishment of the Te Kawerau ā Maki-owned Rangitoopuni Forest Reserve, comprising approximately 573 hectares of regenerating native forest and land available for public access

    e. approximately 200 km of publicly accessible walking and cycling tracks

    f. private infrastructure to be owned and operated by Te Kawerau ā Maki

    g. the protection and enhancement of riparian margins and wetland areas

    h. landscaping and native planting, including large-scale ngahere restoration across the site, with approximately 2,500 hectares of protected native vegetation across the reserve and covenanted areas on private lots

    i. all associated works required to enable the development, including earthworks, roading, open space formation, stream works, and on-site stormwater, wastewater, and water supply infrastructure.

7. The project is proposed to be undertaken in eight stages over an approximately 20-year timeframe, with construction expected to commence in late 2027 to early 2028, and overall completion anticipated by 2048. A single substantive application is to be lodged for all stages of the project.

Approvals sought and potential prohibited activity

8. The applicant seeks the following approvals via the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project:

    a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), potentially including for activities prohibited under regulation 53 of the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F), and for standard freshwater fisheries activities as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Act

    b. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 as described in section 42(4)(h) of the Act

    c. archaeological authorities under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 as described in section 42(4)(i) of the Act

    d. an approval, a dispensation, or an authorisation that would otherwise be applied for in respect of a complex freshwater fisheries activity under the Freshwater

Fisheries Regulations 1983 or the Conservation Act 1987 as described in section 42(4)(j) of the Act.

9. The applicant indicates that the project may involve damming water within a natural inland wetland, which would trigger a prohibited activity under Regulation 53 of the NES-F. The applicant notes that, at this stage and in advance of detailed design, it is not possible to determine with certainty whether a prohibited activity will be triggered. Accordingly, the applicant adopts a precautionary approach and seeks consent for a prohibited activity as part of the referral application.

10. If you agree to progress the project to our Stage 2 analysis, the next briefing will require you to consider whether to decline the referral application on the basis that it may involve a prohibited activity. This is a potential reason you may decline a referral application under section 21(5) of the Act. However, we note section 21(7) of the Act explicitly states that the presence of a prohibited activity does not, in itself, prevent you from accepting a referral application.

Initial recommendations

11. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.

12. 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.

13. 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:

    a. Auckland Council (including Watercare Services Limited and Auckland Transport) as the relevant local authority

    b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development

    c. the Minister of Conservation, the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and the Associate Minister of Housing as the other relevant portfolio Ministers

    d. the Department of Conservation and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agencies

    e. the parties in Appendix 3 as the other identified Māori groups.

14. We also recommend that you invite written comments from the following parties as additional persons under section 17(5) of the Act. We have outlined the rationale for inviting each person below:

    a. the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi – given the scale of the development and its proximity to State Highway 16

    b. the Minister of Education – as the project proposes education activities, however limited detail has been provided on the nature and extent of these activities

    c. the Minister of Defence – as the project area includes Designation 4311

(Whenuapai Airfield Approach and Departure Path Protection), for which the Minister of Defence is the requiring authority

d. the Minister for Auckland – as the project is a large-scale development within the Auckland Region

e. the Minister for Economic Growth – as the applicant considers the project will generate significant economic benefits.

Action sought

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

Signature



Stephanie Frame
Manager – Fast-track Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Project details</td><td>Project Name</td><td>Applicant</td><td colspan="3">Project Area</td></tr>
<tr><td>Rangitoopuni Forest (the project)</td><td>Rangitoopuni Developments Limited Partnership (the applicant)</td><td colspan="3">The project area is located within the Riverhead (Rangitoopuni) Forest, northwest of Auckland City in the Auckland Region, and comprises seven adjoining landholdings with a total area of approximately 3,052 hectares, of which approximately 2,242 hectares is identified as developable land.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project description</td><td colspan="5">The project is described as a staged, large-scale subdivision that will transition the existing production forest to a predominantly rural-residential and open space environment. Development staging is proposed to align with the forestry harvest cycle. The project provides for predominantly low-density residential “forest lots”, generally ranging from approximately 2,500 m² to 1 hectare, and a smaller component of more compact housing located within and adjacent to proposed community hubs. The project also includes provision for marae and papakāinga housing.

The project involves the construction and establishment of:
a. approximately 3,407–4,164 residential forest lots
b. four community hubs, including small-scale commercial and retail activities, housing, community infrastructure, accommodation, and education facilities
c. a recreation hub, including outdoor recreation services and associated community, cultural, and accommodation infrastructure
d. the establishment of the Te Kawerau ā Maki-owned Rangitoopuni Forest Reserve, comprising approximately 573 hectares of regenerating native forest and land available for public access
e. approximately 200 km of publicly accessible walking and cycling tracks
f. private infrastructure to be owned and operated by Te Kawerau ā Maki
g. the protection and enhancement of riparian margins and wetland areas
h. landscaping and native planting, including large-scale ngahere restoration across the site, with approximately 2,500 hectares of protected native vegetation across the reserve and covenanted areas on private lots
i. all associated works required to enable the development, including earthworks, roading, open space formation, stream works, and on-site stormwater, wastewater, and water supply infrastructure.

The project is proposed to be undertaken in eight stages over an approximately 20-year timeframe, with construction expected to commence in late 2027 to early 2028, and overall completion anticipated by 2048. A single substantive application is to be lodged for all stages of the project.

The applicant seeks the following approvals via the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project:
a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), potentially including for activities prohibited under regulation 53 of the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F), and for standard freshwater fisheries activities as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Act
b. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 as described in section 42(4)(h) of the Act
c. archaeological authorities under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 as described in section 42(4)(i) of the Act
d. an approval, a dispensation, or an authorisation that would otherwise be applied for in respect of a complex freshwater fisheries activity under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 or the Conservation Act 1987 as described in section 42(4)(j) of the Act.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Notification and/or consultation undertaken</td><td colspan="5">As required by section 11, the applicant has:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Notified in writing,
the relevant local authorities</td><td>Notified in writing,
the relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities</td><td>Notified in writing,
the relevant administering agencies</td><td>Consulted,
the relevant MACA groups, or ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou</td><td>Notified in writing,
the holder of land to be exchanged</td></tr>
<tr><td>– Auckland Council</td><td>– Te Kawerau a Maki
– Ngati Te Ata
– Te Akitai Waiohua
– Ngati Whatua Orakei
– Ngati Whatua O Kaipara
– Ngati Maru
– Ngai Tai ki Tamaki
– Te Runanga o Ngati Whatua
– Ngāti Tamaterā
– Ngāti Tamaoho</td><td>– Department of Conservation (DOC)
– Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT)</td><td>Not applicable</td><td>Not applicable</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Section 22 assessment criteria</td></tr>
<tr><td>The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or</td><td colspan="5">The Minister must consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]
The only current GPS is the GPS on Grocery Competition. This is not considered relevant to your decisions for a residential development project.

You may consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant:

The applicant considers the project is a development project that would have significant regional and national benefits for the reasons outlined below:</td></tr>
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<table>
<tr><td>national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]</td><td colspan="3">Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]
The applicant considers that the project will deliver infrastructure benefits. The applicant states that the project includes upgrades to transport infrastructure, provision of on-site servicing, and integration with planned regional infrastructure. The applicant considers that the project supports the efficient use of existing and planned investment across the wider north-west Auckland growth area, including transport, community, and servicing networks.

Will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment (within the meaning of policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020) [s22(2)(a)(iii)]
The applicant considers that the project will contribute to housing supply in an already constrained Western Auckland market, where population growth is projected to drive continued demand for housing and maintain pressure on prices. The applicant states that delivering approximately 3,446–4,212 new dwellings would provide a meaningful addition to local and regional supply and choice, helping to moderate price pressures and improve housing affordability outcomes in the Riverhead, Kumeū, and Huapai area.

The applicant states that the project will enable a more diverse housing stock across Auckland, including opportunities for marae-based and papakāinga development, supporting the ongoing use of whenua to meet current and future needs. The applicant considers that these outcomes will support iwi housing aspirations, intergenerational wellbeing, and cultural connections to ancestral land, and therefore contribute to a well-functioning urban environment.

Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]
The applicant states that an Economic Impact Assessment prepared by Property Economics (Appendix N) concludes the project will deliver significant economic benefits for the regional economy, including the Māori economy, and community. The applicant notes that, over a 20-year timeframe, the project is expected to generate approximately $5.69 billion in direct expenditure, contribute around $3.88 billion in total value added (GDP) to the Auckland Region, and support approximately 2,800 full-time equivalent jobs during the peak construction year and around 28,000 full-time equivalent job years over the development period. The applicant considers these outcomes represent a significant contribution to regional economic activity and employment.

Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]
The applicant states that the project will provide ecological enhancement through riparian restoration, wetland enhancement, and large-scale revegetation planting across the site, with a focus on riparian margins, gully systems, and wetland environments. The applicant considers that this approach will improve habitat quality and ecological connectivity, support the establishment of higher quality fauna and flora habitats, and result in increased biodiversity over time. The applicant also notes that ongoing pest plant and animal management will form part of the long-term ecological management approach.

The applicant states that, subject to the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, the approach is expected to achieve a net ecological improvement over time. The applicant notes that the project includes a substantial open space network, including a 573-hectare central reserve, and approximately 2,500 hectares of protected native planting across the site through reserves and covenanted bush, which is considered to contribute significantly to ecological enhancement and habitat creation.

Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]
The applicant states that the project is consistent with the Auckland Regional Policy Statement (ARPS), including Chapter B6, which enables the development of Treaty Settlement land to support Māori social, cultural, environmental, and economic wellbeing. The applicant considers the project aligns with this policy direction by enabling Te Kawerau ā Maki to develop returned whenua in a manner that provides for their wellbeing now and into the future. The applicant further considers the project aligns with infrastructure-related provisions by proposing on-site servicing solutions to ensure the development is adequately serviced.

The applicant states that the project is also consistent with the Auckland Future Development Strategy (FDS), which emphasises enabling the use and development of Māori land, including Treaty Settlement land, to achieve iwi economic, cultural, and social objectives. While acknowledging that the project would enable rural-residential growth in a location not specifically identified in the FDS for that purpose, the applicant considers that this is outweighed by the FDS's strong emphasis on enabling development of Treaty Settlement land. The applicant therefore considers the project to be consistent with the FDS overall, particularly in supporting iwi-led development and associated regional benefits.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]</td><td colspan="3">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 states that referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate its delivery by enabling a single integrated statutory pathway, rather than a lengthy, uncertain, and resource-intensive private plan change and subsequent consenting process that could take around five years or more and involve notification, hearings, and potential appeals. The applicant considers that the fast-track approvals process would provide a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism by consolidating approvals, reducing duplication and delay, and enabling Te Kawerau ā Maki to realise the aspirations associated with the whenua in a more timely manner.

Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]
The applicant considers that referral of the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process. The applicant states that, while the project is large-scale and complex, the key technical matters are well understood and can be assessed using established methodologies, with preliminary reporting indicating no issues that would preclude progression through the process. The applicant states that an experienced consultant team and existing project knowledge will support efficient preparation and assessment. The applicant considers that the project does not introduce novel or unmanageable issues, and therefore would not materially impede the operation of the fast-track approvals process.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Minister invites comments</td><td>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:
a. relevant local authority:
– Auckland Council (including Watercare Services Limited and Auckland Transport)
b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
c. other relevant portfolio Ministers:
– the Minister of Conservation
– the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage
– the Associate Minister of Housing
d. relevant administering agencies:
– DOC
– HNZPT
e. the Māori groups identified in Appendix 3.</td><td>You may copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:
We recommend you invite comments from the following additional persons, for the specified reasons:
a. the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi – given the scale of the development and its proximity to State Highway 16
b. the Minister of Education – as the project proposes education activities, however limited detail has been provided on the nature and extent of these activities
c. the Minister of Defence – as the project area includes Designation 4311 (Whenuapai Airfield Approach and Departure Path Protection), for which the Minister of Defence is the requiring authority
d. the Minister for Auckland – as the project is a large-scale development within the Auckland Region</td><td>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.
We have not identified any further information to be sought at this stage.</td></tr>
</table>

		e. the Minister for Economic Growth – as the applicant considers the project will generate significant economic benefits.	

Recommendations	Minister's decision
a. **Note** that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the parties under section 17.	Noted
b. **Note** that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any written 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 Rangitoopuni Forest project to our Stage 2 analysis (invite written comments and request section 18 Treaty report).	Yes / No
g. **Agree** to provide the application to, and invite written comments from:	
i. Auckland Council (including Watercare Services Limited and Auckland Transport) as the relevant local authority under section 17(1)(a)	Yes / No
ii. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development under section 17(1)(b)	Yes / No
iii. the Minister of Conservation, the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and the Associate Minister of Housing as the other relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b)	Yes / No
iv. the Department of Conservation and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agencies under section 17(1)(c)	Yes / No
v. the parties in Appendix 3 as the identified Māori groups under section 17(1)(d)	Yes / No
vi. any parties you are required to invite comments from under section 17(1)(d) and (e) who may be subsequently identified.	Yes / No
h. **Agree** to provide the application to and invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5):	
i. the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi	Yes / No
ii. the Minister of Education	Yes / No
iii. the Minister of Defence	Yes / No
iv. the Minister for Auckland	Yes / No
v. the Minister for Economic Growth	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. **Agree** to send the email to invite written comments from Ministers.	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 s17(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, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
    c. any other relevant portfolio Ministers
    d. the relevant administering agencies
    e. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
    f. the owners of Māori land in the project area (if applicable)
    g. 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 the Rangitoopuni Forest project

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

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Te Kawerau Iwi Settlement Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Te Kawerau ā Maki Claims Settlement Act 2015))
Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara Development Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) - Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara Claims Settlement Act 2013)
Ngai Tai ki Tamaki Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Claims Settlement Act 2018)
Ngāti Tamaoho Settlement Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāti Tamaoho Claims Settlement Act 2018)
Te Runanga o Ngati Whatua	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Te Ākitai Waiohua Waka Taua Inc	iwi authority (s18(2)(a))
Te Akitai Waiohua Settlement Trust	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngati Maru Runanga Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Tamaterā Treaty Settlement Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Te Ata Claims Support Whānau Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Pāoa Iwi Trust	Other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust	Other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngaati Whanaunga Ruunanga Trust	Other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))