

FTAA-2602-1174: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 2 decisions

Project Name: SL1 Houchens Development

Date submitted:	21 May 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-01217	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decision on recommendations	28 May 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: FTAreferalls@mfe.govt.nz Approve the attached notice of decisions letter.
Number of appendices: 7	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework for making decisions 2. Application documents for SL1 Houchens Development and further information received 3. Stage 1 Briefing Note and decisions 4. Section 18 Report on Treaty settlements and other obligations 5. Comments received from all parties the Minister sought comments from 6. Further information received post-consultation from the applicant 7. Draft Notice of Decisions

Ministry for the Environment contacts

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

Project location



Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your decisions under section 21 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) on the application from Chinamans Hill Limited and Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership (the applicants) to refer the SL1 Houchens Development (the project) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. A copy of the application is in Appendix 2. This is the second briefing on this application. The first (Stage 1) briefing (BRF-26-BRF-00562) with your initial decisions annotated is in Appendix 3.
3. The project is to construct an approximately 145 hectare combined residential, retirement/aged care, and industrial development located on the southwestern fringe of Hamilton City (in the Waipa District), bounded by State Highway 3 (Ohaupo Road) and Houchens Road, within the Southern Links 1 growth area in the Waikato Region.
4. The project comprises:
 - a. approximately 1,300 residential lots
 - b. approximately 400-unit retirement village, including aged care facilities
 - c. two neighbourhood centres
 - d. approximately 25 hectares of light industrial land, comprising approximately 24-47 industrial lots; and
 - e. supporting green infrastructure, three waters infrastructure, and transport connections, including provision for a future Houchens Road connection and a future water reservoir.

5. While the applicant only proposes to lodge one substantive application for the project, the delivery is proposed to occur in the following phases:
 - a. short term (1–3 years): approximately 500–545 residential lots, 400 retirement and aged care units, and 11–22 industrial lots;
 - b. medium term (3–10 years): approximately 460 residential lots, with no additional industrial land; and
 - c. long term (10–30 years): approximately 100 residential lots and 13–25 industrial lots (noting that the applicant anticipates the SL1 Houchens development itself could be completed within approximately 10–15 years, subject to staging and infrastructure phasing).
6. The project will require the following proposed approvals¹:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991
 - b. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953
 - c. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.
7. We recommend you **accept** the referral application as the project meets the criteria set out in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity.
8. We seek your decisions on this recommendation and on the proposed directions to the applicants, the expert panel and notification of your decisions.

Assessment against statutory framework

9. The statutory framework for your decision-making is set out in Appendix 1. You must apply this framework when you are deciding whether to accept or decline the referral application and when deciding on any further requirements or directions associated with referral of the project.
10. Before accepting the project, you must consider the application (in Appendix 2), the section 18 Treaty settlements report (in Appendix 4), any comments from invited parties (in Appendix 5), any further information requested from the applicant, the relevant local authorities, or the relevant administering agencies (in Appendix 6) and any document that requires your consideration under section 16 and comply with any procedural requirements under section 16.
11. Following that, you may accept the application if you are satisfied that it meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act and if there are no reasons you must decline the application. We provide our advice on these matters below.

Section 18 Treaty settlements and other obligations report

12. The Section 18 report in Appendix 4 identifies Te Whakakitenga o Waikato, Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust, Waikato Raupatu River Trust, the Waikato River Authority (a statutory body established by a settlement), Ngaati Maahanga, Ngāti Tamainupō, Ngāti Wairere, Ngāti Koroki Kahukura,

¹ reference to a Freshwater Fisheries approval or dispensation (regulations 42–43) was included in the Stage 1 briefing and has been removed as it was included in error

Te Haa o te Whenua o Kirikiriroa, Ngaati Apakura, and Raukawa Settlement Trust as relevant to the project area.

13. The following Treaty settlements are relevant to the project area: Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995, Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010, and the Ngāti Hauā Claims Settlement Act 2014.
14. It is considered that a number of provisions of the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 apply to the project area. In accordance with section 7, Section 8 and section 16 of the Act, we recommend that in considering this application, you have particular regard to Te Ture Whaimana (Vision and Strategy) and have regard to the Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan.
15. The Ngāti Hauā settlement provides for a conservation relationship agreement which sets out a consultation process for certain categories of statutory authorisations, which currently includes the Wildlife Act 1953 approval sought by the applicant. You have invited Ngāti Hauā to comment on this application, and under section 53(2)(c) of the Act a panel will also be required to invite Ngāti Hauā to comment on any substantive application for this project. In doing so, the panel may wish to consider the consultation process in the conservation relationship agreement to inform their engagement with Ngāti Hauā.
16. None of the Māori groups invited to comment under section 17(1)(d) of the Act provided a response.
17. The Acting Minister for Māori Development and the Acting Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti support the application for referral, subject to the panel having regard to the relevant Treaty settlement legislation and associated documents and maintaining ongoing engagement with relevant Māori rūpu identified in Attachment 3 of the Section 18 report.
18. We do not consider there are any matters raised in this report which make it more appropriate for the proposed approvals to be authorised under another Act or Acts.

Section 16 Effects of Treaty settlements and other obligations on decision-making

19. Based on paragraph 14 above, there are documents and procedural requirements under section 16 that apply to your consideration of the application.
20. We consider you have complied with some of the relevant procedural requirements in the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010, including providing notice to the Waikato River Authority and information to the Waikato Raupatu River Trust (under the joint management agreement provisions). However, these and other procedural requirements must continue to be met throughout the process.
21. Under section 16(2)(c) of the Act, you must, where relevant, direct any panel considering a substantive application to comply with applicable requirements. Accordingly, should you decide to accept this referral application, we recommend you direct any panel to comply with the requirements identified at paragraph 75 of the section 18 report (Appendix 4), namely to:
 - a. have particular regard to Te Ture Whaimana;
 - b. give notice to the Waikato River Authority of the application (which may be fulfilled by an invitation to comment under section 53 of the Act);
 - c. consider the provisions for appointing hearing commissioners from the register maintained by the Waikato River Authority as they may be applied to appointing a panel under the fast-track process

- d. have regard to the Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan, including how to provide for continued partnership with Waikato-Tainui (as a consistent theme running through the plan); and
- e. consider the detailed information-sharing provisions of the Joint Management Agreements (JMAs), as they may be applied to the fast-track process.

Written comments received

22. Comments were received from Waikato Regional Council (WRC), Waipā District Council (WDC), the Minister for Seniors, the Department of Conservation (DOC), Hamilton City Council (HCC) and NZ Transport Agency (NZTA). The key points of relevance to your decisions are summarised in Table A below.
23. The key points from the comments are:
 - a. WRC commented on the project's potential regional benefits but highlighted long-term infrastructure uncertainty, cumulative effects from multiple SL1 fast-track proposals, and sufficient existing plan-enabled capacity, requiring integrated staging and careful management of infrastructure constraints
 - b. WDC noted the project is reliant on major transport and three-waters infrastructure not expected to be operational for around 10 years and questioned the suitability of the fast-track process given infrastructure timing and cross-boundary servicing risks
 - c. the Minister for Seniors supported referral, having considered the project against section 22(2)(a)(iii) and being satisfied it is likely to increase housing supply, address housing needs, and contribute to a well-functioning urban environment, particularly given the scale of residential development and the proposed retirement village
 - d. the Associate Minister of Housing considers the proposal would increase housing supply but is not aligned with current plans or infrastructure timing, while having no objection to it progressing.
 - e. the Minister for Economic Growth noted the scale of the project's economic benefits, while quantified economic benefits are primarily concentrated during development and construction, longer-term economic value arises from coordinated provision of housing and serviced industrial land in a strategically recognised growth area, supporting employment growth and broader urban functioning.
 - f. DOC identified no ineligibility, Treaty or compliance issues, or competing applications, and noted that ecological effects can likely be managed through enforceable conditions, subject to baseline assessment at the substantive stage
 - a. NZTA supported referral in principle, noting reliance on State Highway 3 (SH3) and the unfunded Hamilton Southern Links components, and they expect a substantive application to address these through robust transport conditions, infrastructure-linked staging, within a comprehensive Integrated Transport Assessment
 - g. HCC noted the project is reliant on strategic transport and three-waters infrastructure with uncertain timing and capacity, unresolved waters jurisdiction and commercial arrangements, and potential adverse effects on a nearby planned suburb and existing investment.

Further information provided by applicant, relevant local authorities, relevant administering agencies

24. In response to your request for further information under section 20 of the Act the applicant provided further information on:
- a. the certainty of delivery of the components of the project proposed to be delivered over 10-30 years, including the risk of changes to design and/or scope over time, and how this would impact the significant regional or national benefits of the project.
 - i. The applicant responded stating while the wider SL1 Growth Cell is described over a 10–30-year horizon, the applicant expects the project to be delivered over a 10-15-year period, with early stages potentially proceeding ahead of key strategic infrastructure through interim servicing solutions. Staging, phasing and infrastructure requirements will be refined at the substantive application stage, and the applicant considers that development benefits will be progressively realised through staged delivery.
 - b. a quantified estimate of the anticipated time savings expected to be achieved through use of the Act.
 - i. The applicant quantified that they estimate a conventional RMA pathway would take approximately 5 years (including a private plan change and consenting), compared with around 18 months under the Act, representing an anticipated time saving of approximately 3.5 years.
25. You must consider all information received within the specified timeframe. We have taken this information into account in our analysis and advice, and it is presented in Table A.

Reasons to decline

26. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the situations where you must decline the application for referral under section 21(3).
27. You may also decline the application for any other reason under section 21(4). The Act gives some guidance on matters you could consider when deciding whether to decline an application and these are set out in Appendix 1.
28. The applicant has identified, on a precautionary basis, that earthworks in or near potential natural inland wetlands may be required at a later stage, which could trigger a prohibited activity under the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F). While this is a potential ground for declining a referral application under section 21(5) of the Act, section 21(7) clarifies that the presence of a prohibited activity does not, in itself, preclude referral.
29. No comments from invited parties raised concerns about significant effects on natural inland wetlands that could not be appropriately managed or mitigated
30. Given the precautionary nature of the identified prohibited activity, and the potential for it to be avoided or addressed through detailed design and assessment, we do not consider it a sufficient basis to decline the referral application.
31. We have considered the matter above and this is discussed in Table A, and we do not consider you should decline the project for this reason.

Reasons to accept

32. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the reasons you can accept a project for referral
33. Our assessment of these matters is summarised in Table A. We consider the project meets the requirements of section 22, as:
- a. it is a development project to subdivide and develop land for residential and industrial use
 - b. it would have significant regional or national benefits because it:
 - i. will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment, and
 - ii. will deliver significant economic benefits
 - c. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes because the timeframes under the Act are significantly shorter than under the RMA, the Act precludes public and limited notification and appeal rights are limited
 - d. it is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because this project is not novel in the New Zealand context and is similar to the type of application that expert panel members are experienced in dealing with under the RMA.
34. If you disagree, you must decline the referral application under section 21(3)(a) of the Act.

Other matters

35. We have identified two issues further to the matters identified above and our analysis of these is in Table A.
36. Three waters servicing for the project remains at a preliminary stage, with no current reticulated supply, limited existing capacity, and reliance on major water, wastewater, and transport infrastructure not expected to be operational for up to 10 years. Interim staging options are constrained and uncertain.
37. We note that parts of the project site are classified as Class 2 highly productive land under the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL), which will require assessment of effects on the availability and use of land for primary production.
38. We do not consider these matters to be a basis to decline the application but note they will require further detailed assessment at the substantive stage. We also recommend you direct the applicant to provide certain information with their substantive application to address the infrastructure concerns.

Conclusions

39. We consider the project meets the section 22 criteria and you may accept the application under section 21 of the Act and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process with the specifications outlined below,

40. We consider that if you decide to refer the project, you should specify under section 27 of the Act the following requirements that should apply to the project:
- a. the applicant must submit a wastewater and water infrastructure assessment with the substantive application for the project
 - b. the applicant must submit a transport infrastructure assessment with the substantive application for the project
 - c. Hamilton City Council and NZ Transport Agency as persons or groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to those specified in section 53
41. The above restrictions are required for the following reasons:
- a. to ensure that sufficient, robust and integrated information on wastewater, water and transport servicing is available at the substantive stage to enable proper assessment of infrastructure capacity, servicing feasibility, funding arrangements, and long-term ownership and maintenance responsibilities
 - b. these parties are included to ensure sufficient information is provided at the substantive stage for a robust assessment of infrastructure, integration, and staging, and to recognise HCC's and NZTA's roles in infrastructure planning and state highway management.

Next steps

42. The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) must give notice of your decisions on the referral application, and the reasons for them, to the applicant(s) and anyone invited to comment under section 17 and publish the notice on the Fast-track website.
43. In your notice of decisions, you must direct a panel to comply with any requirements identified in section 16 as specified in paragraph 21.
44. If you decide to refer the project, the Ministry must also give notice of your decision to:
- a. the panel convener
 - b. any additional iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities that you consider have an interest in the matter other than those invited to comment under section 17
 - c. the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
 - d. the relevant administering agencies
45. You must also provide all of the information you received that relates to this application to the EPA and the panel convener, including:
- a. the referral application
 - b. any comments received under section 17
 - c. the report obtained under section 18
 - d. if a report was obtained under section 19, that report
46. We will undertake this action on your behalf.
47. We have attached a notice of decisions letter to the applicant based on our recommendations (refer Appendix 7) and we will provide it to all relevant parties. We will provide you with an amended letter if required.
48. Our recommendations for your decisions follow.

Recommendations

49. We recommend that you:

- a. **Note** section 21(3) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) requires you to decline the referral application from Chinamans Hill Limited and Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership (the applicants) if you are satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity, or you consider that you do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section or if you are not satisfied that the SL1 Houchens Development project (the project) meets the referral criteria in section 22 of the panel convener.

Noted

- b. **Agree** that before deciding on the application for project referral under section 21(1) of the Act you have considered:

- i. the application in Appendix 2
- ii. the report obtained under section 18 in Appendix 4
- iii. any comments and further information sought under sections 17 and 20 and provided within the required timeframe (if you have received any comments or further information after the required timeframe you are not required to consider them but may do so at your discretion) in Appendices 5 and 6.

Yes / No

- c. **Agree** to exercise your discretion under section 17(7)(b) to consider the late comments received from the Associate Minister of Housing and the Minister for Economic Growth after the time frame specified under section 17 (6) of the Act

Yes/ No

- d. **Note** that under section 16: - in considering this application, you must have particular regard to Te Ture Whaimana (Vision and Strategy) and have regard to the Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan, in accordance with sections 7, 8 and 16

Noted

- e. **Agree** you are satisfied the project will meet the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act as:

- i. it is a development project to subdivide land and develop a residential and industrial development that would have significant regional benefits because it:
 1. will deliver significant economic benefits by:
 - (a) generating a one-off boost of approximately \$741 million in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
 - (b) around 5,100 full-time equivalent years of employment during construction, and
 - (c) sustaining at full build-out approximately 953 full-time positions, contributing around \$128 million annually to GDP, and generating approximately \$75 million in annual wages and salaries through the operation of industrial activities
 2. will increase the supply of housing by:

- (a) providing approximately 1,300 residential lots, and
- (b) a 400-unit retirement village, including aged care facilities

- ii. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes because the timeframes under the Act are significantly shorter than under the Resource Management Act 1991, the Act precludes public and limited notification and appeal rights are limited
- iii. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because this project is not novel in the New Zealand context and is similar to the type of application that expert panel members are experienced in dealing with under the Resource Management Act 1991

Yes / No

- f. **Agree** there is no reason the project must be declined under section 21(3)

Yes / No

- g. **Agree** to accept the referral application under section 21(1) and refer all of the project to a panel under section 26(2)

Yes / No

- h. **Agree** to specify Chinamans Hill Limited and Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership as the persons who are authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project.

Yes / No

- i. **Agree** pursuant to section 16(2)(c), to direct any panel considering a substantive application for the project to comply with the applicable requirements identified in the section 18 report with regard to the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010, namely to:

- i. have particular regard to Te Ture Whaimana
- ii. give notice to the Waikato River Authority of the application (which may be fulfilled by an invitation to comment under section 53 of the Act)
- iii. consider the provisions for appointing hearing commissioners from the register maintained by the Waikato River Authority as they may be applied to the fast-track process
- iv. have regard to the Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan, including how to provide for continued partnership between the applicant and Waikato-Tainui (as a consistent theme running through the plan); and
- v. consider the detailed information-sharing provisions of the joint management agreements, as they may be applied to the fast-track process including:
 - 1. timely provision of application information to Waikato-Tainui (via the Waikato Raupatu River Trust);
 - 2. enabling Waikato-Tainui to request further information and provide views on the application (including adequacy of information and notification);
 - 3. early engagement processes, including participation in pre-application discussions where appropriate;

4. consideration of Waikato-Tainui advice in decisions on notification and further information requests; and
5. to address outstanding matters and recognise potential effects on the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River

Yes / No

j. **Agree** to specify under section 27(3)(b) of the Act:

- i. the deadline for lodging the application is two years from the date of issue on the notice of decision.
- ii. the following information that the applicant must submit with the substantive application:
 1. an assessment of the relevant infrastructure for wastewater and water services that:
 - (a) identifies the existing condition and capacity of that infrastructure; and
 - (b) identifies any upgrades to that infrastructure that are required in connection with the subdivision and development stages; and
 - (c) identifies any funding required to carry out those upgrades (including who will provide that funding); and
 - (d) provides details of ongoing ownership and maintenance responsibilities; and
 - (e) contains information on any discussions held, and any agreements made, between the authorised person and the relevant infrastructure provider about the relevant infrastructure
 2. an integrated transport assessment that:
 - (a) assesses the effects on the surrounding transport network of both the project while it is carried out and the resulting development stages; and
 - (b) contains modelling showing the effects on traffic flows and key intersections along the project area, and
 - (c) identifies any upgrades/interventions to transport infrastructure that are required in connection with the subdivision and development; and
 - (d) identifies any funding required to carry out those upgrades/interventions (including who will provide that funding); and
 - (e) contains information on any discussions held, and any agreements made, between the authorised person and the relevant infrastructure provider about integrated transport (including discussions and agreements about the matters referred to in subparagraphs (c) and (d))
- iii. the following persons or groups from whom a panel must invite comments in addition to those specified in section 53:
 1. Hamilton City Council
 2. NZ Transport Agency

Yes / No

k. **Agree** that the Ministry for the Environment will provide your notice of decisions to:

- i. anyone invited to comment on the application including local authorities and relevant Māori groups
- ii. the panel convener
- iii. the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
- iv. the following relevant administering agencies:
 - 1. Department of Conservation
 - 2. Heritage Pouhere Taonga

Yes / No

- l. **Approve** the draft notice of decisions letter to the applicants attached in Appendix 7.

Yes / No

- m. **Note** that should you decide to accept the referral application, our recommendations for appropriate directions to a panel (relating to consultation) and the applicant (relating to information to be supplied with the substantive application) are included in Table A.

Signatures



Stephanie Frame
Manager – Fast-track Operations

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Table A: Stage 2 analysis

Recommendation	<u>Accept</u> the referral application and refer the project to the fast-track approvals process		
Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Location
	SL1 Houchens Development	Chinamans Hill Limited and Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership	Located on the southwestern fringe of Hamilton City, bounded by SH3 (Ohaupo Road) and Houchens Road, within the Southern Links 1 growth area (Waipā District), within the Waikato region. • Lot 1 DPS 84715 — Chinamans Hill Limited • Lot 4 DPS 59241 — Chinamans Hill Limited • Lot 1 DPS 29779 — Chinamans Hill Limited • Lot 2 DP 569695 — Ohaupō Land Limited Partnership
Project description	The project is to construct an approximately 145 hectare combined residential, retirement/aged care, and industrial development located on the southwestern fringe of Hamilton City (in the Waipa District), bounded by State Highway 3 (Ohaupo Road) and Houchens Road, within the Southern Links 1 growth area The project comprises: • approximately 1,300 residential lots • approximately 400-unit retirement village, including aged care facilities • two neighbourhood centres • approximately 25 hectares of light industrial land, comprising around 24-47 industrial lots; and • supporting green infrastructure, three waters, and transport connections, including enabling for a potential future Hamilton Southern Links Houchens Road interchange and a future water reservoir. While the applicant only proposes to lodge one substantive application for the project, the delivery is proposed to occur in the following phases: • short term (1–3 years): approximately 500–545 residential lots, 400 retirement and aged care units, and 11–22 industrial lots; • medium term (3–10 years): approximately 460 residential lots, with no additional industrial land; and • long term (10– 30 years): approximately 100 residential lots and 13–25 industrial lots (noting that the applicant anticipates the SL1 Houchens development itself could be completed within approximately 10–15 years, subject to staging and infrastructure phasing). The project will require the proposed approvals: • resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 • wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 • archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014		
Minister invites comments / requests information	Comments from invited parties		
	Local authorities Waikato Regional Council (WRC) - considers the project has the potential to deliver regional benefits but notes that current proposals within the SL1 area are fragmented, with effective delivery dependent on the coordinated provision of strategic infrastructure across the wider area to avoid piecemeal outcomes. It highlights that key infrastructure, including the Hamilton Southern Links and major transport upgrades, is unlikely to be delivered within the next decade, creating uncertainty for project timing and delivery and requiring careful long-term planning and investment. WRC also identifies risks associated with cumulative residential and industrial land supply, noting existing plan-enabled capacity over a 30-year horizon. It considers that any substantive application would need to demonstrate alignment with Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato, include appropriate infrastructure staging and management planning, and provide detailed assessment of hazards, geotechnical constraints, highly productive land, biodiversity, stormwater, transport, and infrastructure capacity constraints, including servicing. WRC is not aware of any competing applications or any section 124C or 165ZI matters that would apply. Waipā District Council (WDC) - states that full build-out of the proposal is dependent on major transport, water, and wastewater infrastructure that is not expected to be operational for approximately 10 years and that infrastructure constraints materially affect assessment of economic benefits. WDC identifies inconsistencies with the Operative Waipā District Plan, Rural Zone and Large Lot Residential Zone objectives and policies and considers the project would be subject to the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL), with parts of the site classified as LUC Class 2 land. WDC emphasises the need for coordinated cross-boundary infrastructure servicing, funding, and ownership arrangements, including managing risks associated with future boundary change. WDC questions whether the fast-track approvals process is appropriate given infrastructure timing and dependency. Ministers The Minister for Seniors supports project referral. She has considered the project against section 22(2)(a)(iii) of the Act and is satisfied it is likely to increase housing supply, address housing needs, and contribute to a well-functioning urban environment, noting in particular the scale of residential development and the proposed retirement village. The Associate Minister of Housing considers the project would deliver a significant amount of housing, including a range of housing typologies and retirement accommodation, and would contribute to increasing overall housing supply within the wider region. However, the scale and timing of urban development proposed is not currently aligned with the operative Waipā District Plan, Waipā 2050 Growth Strategy, or Ahu Ake – the Waipā Community Spatial Plan, which “emphasise staged and sequenced growth. They note that project is also dependent on major transport and wastewater infrastructure, which is not yet funded or committed, with related infrastructure and funding matters to be addressed at the detailed consenting stage. They have no objection to this progressing for assessment at the substantive stage.		

	The Minister for Economic Growth considers the project would deliver a one-off increase in GDP of approximately \$741 million over 15 years and support approximately 5,100 FTE job-years, with economic benefits concentrated during construction, and longer-term value arising from coordinated provision of housing and serviced industrial land in a strategically recognised growth area supporting employment growth and urban functioning. Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage has advised that he has no comment on this referral application Relevant Māori Groups <i>No comments were received from any of the relevant Māori groups invited.</i> Administering agencies The Department of Conservation (DOC) does not consider the project involves any ineligible activities, any Treaty settlement inconsistencies, compliance concerns, or competing applications. They have assessed the referral information and consider it adequate for a referral decision, but note substantive application will require robust baseline ecological assessments. They note that any substantive application should address impacts on wetlands, freshwater fisheries, bats, birds, lizards, and other threatened or at-risk species. Other persons or groups Hamilton City Council (HCC) note the project is within the SL1 Growth Cell and is reliant on strategic transport and three waters infrastructure with uncertain timing and capacity, unresolved waters jurisdiction and commercial arrangements, and potential adverse effects on Peacocke (a nearby planned suburb) and existing investment, meaning any Fast-track consent could not be fully given effect to for some time and a conventional planning process may be more appropriate. NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) commented that the project relies on access to SH3 and delivery of the Hamilton Southern Links (HSL), which has no committed construction funding, creating timing uncertainty and transport effects on SH3 that will require applicant mitigation, with development scale and staging explicitly linked to transport infrastructure delivery. While NZTA supports referral in principle, this is subject to clear, enforceable transport conditions, NZTA involvement at the substantive stage, and a comprehensive Integrated Transport Assessment. Further information from the applicant Under s20 of the Act you requested that the applicant provide further information: <i>On the certainty of delivery of the components of the project proposed to be delivered over 10-30 years, including the risk of changes to design and/or scope over time, and how this would impact the significant regional or national benefits of the project</i> The applicant states that although elements of the wider SL1 Growth Cell are described over a 10–30-year horizon, the project itself is expected to be delivered within a 10–15-year period, subject to appropriate staging and infrastructure phasing. Early stages (including two Stage 1 options) are anticipated to proceed prior to delivery of key strategic infrastructure such as the HSL, Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant, and a southern water reservoir, using interim or alternative servicing solutions where required. The applicant advises that the development does not rely on strategic infrastructure being in place at the outset, and that staging, phasing and infrastructure triggers will be confirmed through detailed modelling at the substantive application stage and secured through conditions and private development agreements. While acknowledging delivery risks typical of large-scale projects and the possibility of refinements to design or staging over time, the applicant considers that the core land use mix and scale will remain materially unchanged, and that changes would not diminish the project's regional or national benefits. Benefits are described as progressive and cumulative, with meaningful housing, employment and economic outcomes delivered in early stages regardless of ultimate infrastructure timing. <i>To provide a quantified estimate of the anticipated time savings expected to be achieved through use of the Act.</i> The applicant estimates that, under conventional Resource Management Act processes, the project would likely require a developer-led private plan change (around 3 years) followed by a further 12–18 months of resource consenting, resulting in an overall timeframe of approximately 5 years before works could commence. By contrast, the applicant estimates that the fast-track process would enable referral, substantive application and determination within approximately 18 months, allowing works to commence significantly earlier. On this basis, the applicant estimates that use of the Act would provide an anticipated time saving of around 3.5 years compared with the standard RMA pathway.
The Minister must decline an application if the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity [section 21(3)(b)]	We consider you can be satisfied that the project does not involve an ineligible activity because it: - would not occur on identified Māori land, Māori customary land or a Māori reservation as confirmed by the relevant records of title and consultation with iwi authorities - would not occur in a customary marine title area or protected customary rights area as it is not in the coastal marine area - is not an aquaculture activity or activity that is incompatible with aquaculture activities that would occur in an aquaculture settlement area and for which the applicant is not authorised to apply for a coastal permit because it will not occur in the CMA - would not require an access arrangement which cannot be granted under the Crown Minerals Act (including s61(1A)) because it does not include an access arrangement, would not occur on Schedule 4 land - would not be prevented by section 165J, M, Q, ZC or ZDB of the RMA because it will not occur in the CMA - would not occur on Schedule 4 land as confirmed by the records of title - would not occur on a national reserve as confirmed by the records of title - would not occur on a reserve held under the Reserves Act 1977 that is managed by or vested in someone other than the Crown or a local authority and that person has not consented in writing as confirmed by the record of title - is not a prohibited activity or decommissioning activity under the EEZA, 15B or 15C of the RMA - is not for the purpose of an offshore renewable energy project. because it will not occur offshore or involve renewable energy production No comments raised by parties invited to comment have indicated that the project would be ineligible for referral.

The Minister must decline an application if the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision [section 21(3)(c)]	We consider you have sufficient information to inform your referral decision.
Relevant considerations and procedural requirements in Treaty settlement, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, joint management agreement, or the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 or the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 [section 16]	Section 16(2)(c) of the Act requires that you must, where relevant, in your notice of decisions on the referral application, direct any panel that considers a substantive application for the project to comply with any applicable requirements. Accordingly, should you decide to accept this referral application, we recommend you direct any panel considering a substantive application for the project to comply with the applicable requirements identified at paragraphs 70 to 72 of the section 18 report in Appendix 4, namely to: • have particular regard to Te Ture Whaimana; • give notice to the Waikato River Authority of the application (which may be fulfilled by an invitation to comment under section 53 of the Act); • consider the provisions for appointing hearing commissioners from the register maintained by the Waikato River Authority as they may be applied to appointing a panel under the fast-track process; • have regard to the Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan, including how to provide for continued partnership with Waikato-Tainui (as a consistent theme running through the plan); and • consider the detailed information-sharing provisions of the relevant joint management agreements, as they may be applied to the fast-track process including: ○ timely provision of application information to Waikato-Tainui (via the Waikato Raupatu River Trust); ○ enabling Waikato-Tainui to request further information and provide views on the application (including adequacy of information and notification); ○ early engagement processes, including participation in pre-application discussions where appropriate; ○ consideration of Waikato-Tainui advice in decisions on notification and further information requests; and ○ to address outstanding matters and recognise potential effects on the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River.
Section 22 assessment criteria	
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	<i>The Minister <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]</i> The only current relevant GPS is the Government Policy Statement on Grocery Competition. The project does not include commercial activities will include a supermarket development or grocery related activities; therefore, we consider the Government Policy Statement on Grocery Competition is not relevant to your decision. The Minister <u>may</u> consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant: <i>The project has been identified as a priority project in a central or local government, or sector plan or strategy or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)]</i> The applicant notes that the project is not expressly identified as a priority project in a central government infrastructure priority list. However, the site is located within the SL1 Growth Cell, which is recognised in regional and sub-regional strategies, including Future Proof and the Hamilton–Waikato Metropolitan Spatial Plan, as a strategically significant growth area for housing and employment, and the project gives effect to those strategies. No party invited to comment identified the project as a priority project, with WRC and WDC noting it is not identified or sequenced as a priority in regional or district strategies, and HCC emphasising alignment with SL1 concept planning rather than priority status. We do not recommend referral on this criterion. <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 states that the project will increase the supply of housing, address identified housing needs and contribute to a well-functioning urban environment within the meaning of Policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD). In particular, the applicant notes that the project: • will deliver approximately 1,300 new residential lots and a 400-unit retirement village, making a significant contribution to housing supply in the southern Hamilton / Waipā area; • provides a range of housing typologies and densities, including smaller and medium-density residential lots, to respond to identified housing demand and affordability pressures; • is located within the SL1 Growth Cell, a strategically planned growth area, enabling coordinated, compact urban development contiguous with the existing urban area; • integrates housing, employment land, neighbourhood centres, open space, active transport and infrastructure, supporting accessibility to jobs, services and amenities; and • aligns with the outcomes sought by Policy 1 of the NPS-UD, including efficient land use, integrated infrastructure, and supporting a well-functioning urban environment. The Associate Minister of Housing considers the project would deliver a significant amount of housing, including a range of housing typologies and a retirement village, and increase overall housing supply in the wider region, while noting it is not aligned with current plans or growth sequencing and is dependent on major infrastructure that is not yet funded or committed; the Minister for Seniors also supports referral on the basis that the scale of residential development and proposed retirement village will increase housing supply and address housing needs. In contrast, WRC notes that sufficient plan-enabled residential capacity already exists over a 30-year horizon and does not support the project as a necessary response to housing demand. WDC considers that infrastructure constraints and long lead times materially affect the delivery and timing of housing benefits, while HCC emphasises that housing outcomes are dependent on uncertain infrastructure delivery and alignment with integrated growth planning, meaning benefits may not be realised for some time. We consider the project would provide a significant and varied increase to housing supply, including the retirement village component, which could help meet housing demand and support a well-functioning urban environment. While acknowledging that the timing and delivery of these benefits are dependent on supporting infrastructure and staging, these matters can be addressed at the substantive application stage by the applicant. We recommend referral on this criterion. <i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i> The applicant states that the project will deliver significant regional economic benefits through direct investment, employment creation, and efficient use of infrastructure. In particular, the applicant identifies the following outcomes:

	Substantial direct investment in large-scale: • residential development • retirement development • industrial development • associated infrastructure Employment generation across the life of the project, including: • jobs created during construction • employment at full build-out • ongoing jobs supported by industrial land, neighbourhood centres, and the retirement village Provision of approximately 25 hectares of serviced light industrial land, intended to support business growth and address identified industrial land shortages in the southern Hamilton area. The applicant also states that the project will make efficient use of existing and planned infrastructure, thereby strengthening the economic return on strategic transport and three-waters investments within the SL1 growth area. As set out in the applicant's Economic Assessment, the project is estimated to: • generate a one-off boost of approximately \$741 million in GDP, • support around 5,100 full-time equivalent (FTE) years of employment during development, and • sustain approximately 953 ongoing full-time jobs at full build-out. WRC recognises the potential for regional economic benefits but notes that sufficient plan-enabled residential and industrial capacity already exists over a 30-year horizon and that benefits are contingent on long-term delivery of strategic infrastructure across the wider SL1 Growth Cell. WDC considers that infrastructure constraints and long lead times to delivery materially affect the assessment of claimed economic benefits. HCC notes that reliance on infrastructure with uncertain timing and capacity means economic benefits may not be realised for some time. No other commentators specifically addressed economic benefits in their submissions. The Minister for Economic Growth noted the scale of the project's economic benefits, and while the quantified economic benefits are primarily concentrated during the development and construction phase, the proposal's longer-term economic value arises from the coordinated provision of housing and serviced industrial land in a strategically recognised growth area, supporting employment growth and broader urban functioning. We acknowledge that the project has the potential to deliver significant regional economic benefits, given the scale of proposed residential, retirement and industrial development, forecast investment, employment generation, and provision of serviced industrial land. However, we note that realisation and timing of these economic benefits is contingent on the delivery of strategic transport and three-waters infrastructure, which several local authorities advise is subject to long lead times and uncertainty. Accordingly, while the criterion can be considered met, to address the concerns raised by the Council we recommend that any referral is accompanied by direction for the applicant to provide further information on how the project will be serviced by necessary infrastructure, including how that infrastructure will be funded. We recommend referral on this criterion. <i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> The applicant states that the project is consistent with local and regional planning documents and spatial strategies, including those identifying the SL1 Growth Cell as a strategically significant area for coordinated urban growth. In particular, the applicant notes that the project: • is located within the SL1 Growth Cell, which is subject to a Strategic Boundary Agreement between WDC and HCC and is identified for future urban development supported by planned infrastructure, housing and employment outcomes; • is identified in the Future Proof Strategy and related spatial planning documents as a priority area for residential and employment growth; • supports the planned sequencing and integration of housing, industrial land and infrastructure in southern Hamilton; and aligns with the strategic intent of those documents by delivering development at scale in a coordinated, infrastructure-supported manner The applicant has also noted that the site includes highly productive land, with LUC 2 soils identified within the project area. The application acknowledges the relevance of the NPS-HPL and relies on the pathway for urban rezoning, including demonstrating the need for additional development capacity, the lack of feasible alternative locations, and that the benefits of development outweigh the loss of highly productive land. WRC considers the project is inconsistent with regional and sub-regional spatial strategies, including the Future Proof Strategy and the Waikato Regional Policy Statement, stating the proposal is out-of-sequence given sufficient existing plan-enabled capacity. Waipā District Council identifies inconsistencies with the Operative Waipā District Plan, including Rural Zone and Large Lot Residential Zone objectives and policies, and notes the application of the NPS-HPL. HCC notes the site sits within the SL1 Growth Cell and emphasises that any development must align with the SL1 Growth Cell concept plan and be seamlessly integrated with Hamilton's urban form. Other commenting parties did not raise inconsistency issues against planning documents. Overall, while the applicant identifies alignment with strategic growth planning documents, council feedback presents a mixed view, with concerns raised regarding sequencing, zone consistency, and the presence of highly productive land. On balance, these matters do not, in our view, warrant declining the application, but will require careful assessment at the substantive stage, particularly in relation to consistency with planning frameworks and management of land use constraints. We do not recommend referral on this criterion
Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	<i>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)]</i> The applicant considers that consolidating approvals into a single application considered by one panel would deliver significant efficiencies, enabling earlier project delivery and earlier realisation of economic, social, and wider benefits. The applicant estimates that a comparable RMA process would take around five years, compared to approximately 18 months under the Fast-track process, representing a time saving of around 3.5 years. We agree with the applicant's statement that the use of the fast-track process would facilitate the project in a more timely and cost-effective manner than under the conventional RMA consenting pathways. <i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i>

	The applicant states that the project is not considered to materially impact on the intent of the FTAA process, more so it would reinforce the value and opportunity that the FTAA presents for regionally and nationally significant projects, and reinforces the strategically significant and contiguous nature of wider development within the SL1 Growth Cell (including the listed SL1 Residential and Industrial and the referred Rogerson Block) projects. We agree that the project will not significantly impact the efficiency of the fast-track approvals process.
Reasons to decline	
Minister <u>must</u> decline [section 21(3)]	<i>The Minister <u>must</u> decline a referral application if:</i> <i>The application may not be accepted under subsection 1 (meets referral criteria)</i> We consider the project meets the referral criteria. <i>The Minister is satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity</i> We have not identified any ineligible activities included in the project. <i>The Minister considers that they do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section</i> We consider you have sufficient information to inform your referral decision. We do not consider that you must decline the application under this section.
Minister may decline [section 21(4) and 21(5)(a-h)]	<i>The Minister <u>may</u> decline a referral application for any other reason, whether or not it meets the criteria in section 22.</i> <i>Reasons to decline a referral application under subsection 4 include, without limitation:</i> <i>The project would be inconsistent with a Treaty settlement, Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, or a joint management agreement</i> There is nothing within the section 18 report, nor any comments from the relevant Māori groups to indicate the project would be inconsistent with any of these matters. <i>It would be more appropriate to deal with the matters that would be authorised by the proposed approvals under another Act or Acts</i> HCC and WDC both indicate that the matters authorised by the proposed approvals may be more appropriately addressed through conventional planning and consenting processes under other Acts, given the project's reliance on major transport and three-waters infrastructure with long lead times, unresolved jurisdictional and cross-boundary servicing arrangements, and the risk that development could not be fully given effect to for some time. Their comments suggest that standard statutory processes would better enable comprehensive effects assessment, infrastructure integration and mitigation alignment with delivery timeframes. Overall, while the councils raise legitimate concerns regarding infrastructure dependencies, these matters do not preclude referral and we consider these can be appropriately addressed at the substantive stage under the Act. We recommend you require the applicant to provide certain infrastructure assessments to support a panel in considering a substantive application. <i>The project may have significant adverse effects on the environment</i> WRC, HCC, and WDC highlighted risks relating to cumulative effects, infrastructure capacity constraints, and long-term development pressures. DOC notes that, while ecological effects may be significant given the scale of the proposal, these are likely to be capable of management through design measures and enforceable conditions, subject to detailed assessment at the substantive stage. Overall, while the potential for significant adverse effects has been identified, these are likely to be capable of being appropriately managed and assessed at the substantive stage. <i>The applicant(s) has a poor compliance history under a specified Act that relates to any of the proposed approvals</i> No commenting party or the applicants identified a poor compliance history under any specified Act relevant to the proposed approvals. <i>The project area includes land that the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations considers necessary for Treaty settlement purposes</i> No such land has been identified. <i>The project includes an activity that is a prohibited activity under the Resource Management Act 1991</i> The applicant has indicated that earthworks in or around potential natural inland wetlands may be identified at a later stage, which could trigger a prohibited activity under the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F); therefore for transparency they have included this as a precautionary approach. No commenting party identified that the project includes any additional prohibited activity under the Resource Management Act 1991. . We note that the presence of a potential prohibited activity does not, of itself, prevent acceptance of a referral application. <i>A substantive application for the project would have one or more competing applications.</i> No commenting party identified that a substantive application for the project would have one or more competing applications. <i>In relation to any proposed approval of the kind described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consents), there are one or more existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a)</i> No commenting party identified that there are existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a) in relation to any proposed resource consent approvals under section 42(4)(a). <i>Any other matter</i>

	The three waters servicing for the project remains at a preliminary stage, with no reticulated supply currently available and limited capacity within existing networks. Full delivery is dependent on major strategic infrastructure, including water supply, wastewater, and associated transport infrastructure, which is not expected to be operational for up to 10 years. While interim servicing solutions may enable limited staged development in the short to medium term, these options are constrained, contingent on further technical assessment and commercial arrangements, and subject to uncertainty in both capacity and timing. These matters will require further investigation and refinement, including confirmation of infrastructure capacity, staging and trigger points, at the substantive application stage by the applicant. We also note that these matters are appropriately addressed through detailed assessment at the substantive application stage, where a Panel will be able to consider infrastructure capacity, timing, and staging arrangements in assessing the project and determining any conditions of approval. We do not recommend you decline the application.
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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 the 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 (if applicable)
 - 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.