Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions & Transport

FTAA-2607-1270: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Stillhaven

Date submitted	20 August 2026	**Tracking**	26-BRF-02462
Security level	In-Confidence	**Priority**	Urgent

To	Action sought	Response by
Hon Chris Bishop **Minister for Infrastructure**	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	27 August 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 Stillhaven project 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Ministry contacts

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

Project location

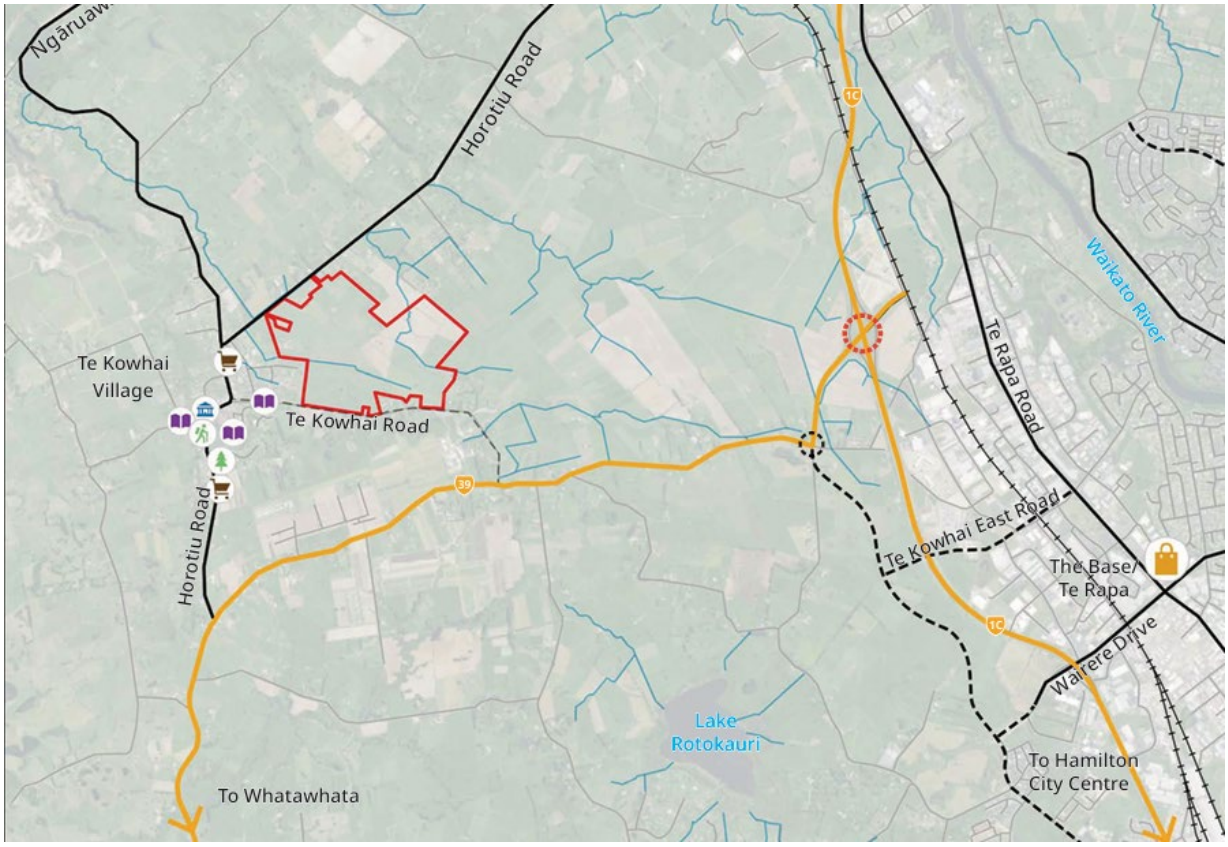


Figure 1: *Project area (red outline) and surrounding features in the wider Te Kowhai area*



Figure 2: *Proposed masterplan for the Stillhaven project*

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Stillhaven Limited (the applicant) to refer the Stillhaven 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 is for the construction and establishment of a mixed-use urban development on approximately 104 hectares of rural land near the existing Te Kowhai township in the Waikato District. The project area is accessed from Te Kowhai Road and Horotiu Road and is located approximately 16 kilometres north-west of Hamilton.
4. The project comprises:
    a. approximately 700 residential dwellings across a range of housing densities
    b. a retirement village across approximately 11 hectares of land, comprising approximately 200 retirement units, 40 to 50 aged care beds, and associated facilities
    c. two commercial areas totalling approximately 5,000m², with approximately 1,500m² of commercial floor space for local services and amenities
    d. public open space, including stormwater management areas, recreation areas, and ecological enhancements
    e. transport, stormwater, wastewater, water supply, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructure, including upgrades to existing infrastructure and construction of new infrastructure.
5. The applicant seeks the following approvals via the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project, including some approvals sought at this stage on a precautionary basis, subject to further investigations prior to any substantive application:
    a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
    b. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953
    c. 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.

Highly productive land and prohibited activity status

6. The applicant identifies that the project area comprises entirely Land Use Capability (LUC) Class 2 land and is therefore classified as highly productive land under the National Policy Statement for

Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL), which seeks to protect highly productive land for land-based primary production.

7. The applicant confirms the project will involve the subdivision of high-class soils and will likely require consent as a prohibited activity under SUB-R41 of the Waikato District Plan (Operative in Part).

8. 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

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

10. 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.

11. 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. Waikato Regional Council and Waikato District Council as 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. the Minister of Conservation, the Associate Minister of Housing, and the Minister for Seniors as the other relevant portfolio Ministers

    d. the Department of Conservation as the relevant administering agency

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

12. We recommend that you invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5) of the Act, for the reasons detailed below:

    a. the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, as the project area is near State Highway 39 and the project may generate additional traffic movements that could affect the surrounding transport network

    b. the Chief Executive of First Gas Limited, as the holder of an easement for the gas pipeline traversing the project area, who may be able to provide input on whether any additional approvals may be required and any potential implications for project delivery

    c. the Chief Executive of IAWAI – Flowing Waters Limited, as the council-controlled organisation responsible for delivering water services across the Waikato district from 1 July 2026

d. the Chief Executive of Watercare Services Limited, as Watercare's contract to operate and maintain Waikato District Council's water services infrastructure continues until 2028, despite IAWAI assuming responsibility for water services from 1 July 2026, and Watercare has previously been involved in consultation on the project.

e. the Minister of Agriculture, as the project area comprises HPL, being LUC Class 2 land, and the Minister may be able to provide input on the project's implications under the NPS-HPL

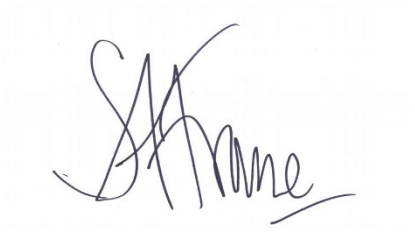
f. the Minister for Regional Development, as the project involves a potentially significant regional development

g. the Minister for Economic Growth, as the applicant considers the project will generate significant economic benefits.

Action sought

13. 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>Project Area</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stillhaven (the project)</td><td>Stillhaven Limited (the applicant)</td><td>Approximately 104 hectares of rural land located north-east of Te Kowhai village in the Waikato region. The project area is accessed from Te Kowhai Road and Horotiu Road and is located approximately 16 kilometres north-west of Hamilton.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project description</td><td colspan="3">The project is for the construction and establishment of a mixed-use urban development on approximately 104 hectares of rural land near the existing Te Kowhai township in the Waikato District.

The project comprises:
a. approximately 700 residential dwellings across a range of housing densities
b. a retirement village across approximately 11 hectares of land, comprising approximately 200 retirement units, 40 to 50 aged care beds, and associated facilities
c. two commercial areas totalling approximately 5,000m², with approximately 1,500m² of commercial floor space for local services and amenities
d. public open space, including stormwater management areas, recreation areas, and ecological enhancements
e. transport, stormwater, wastewater, water supply, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructure, including upgrades to existing infrastructure and construction of new infrastructure.

The applicant seeks the following approvals via the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project, including some approvals sought at this stage on a precautionary basis, subject to further investigations prior to any substantive application:
a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), including a prohibited activity under the Waikato District Plan for the subdivision of land resulting in additional allotments containing high-quality soils, as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act)
b. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 as described in section 42(4)(h) of the Act
c. 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="4">As required by section 11, the applicant has:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Notified in writing and/or consulted, the relevant local authorities</td><td>Notified in writing and/or consulted, the relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities, and other identified groups</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>– Waikato District Council
– Waikato Regional Council</td><td>– Te Whakakitenga o Waikato / Waikato-Tainui
– Ngāti Reko
– Ngaati Maahanga
– Ngāti Tamainupō</td><td>– Department of Conservation</td><td>– Not applicable to this project</td><td>– Not applicable to this project</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Section 22 assessment criteria</td></tr>
<tr><td>The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]</td><td colspan="3">The Minister must consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]
The only current GPS relates to grocery competition. Although the project includes two commercial areas, there is no indication that these would accommodate supermarket or grocery-related activities. Accordingly, we consider there is no GPS relevant to this 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 benefits, for the reasons outlined below:

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 states that the project will increase housing supply by delivering approximately 700 dwellings across a range of lot sizes and housing typologies, together with a retirement village comprising approximately 200 independent living units and 30 to 50 aged care beds, supported by associated facilities, amenities, and a neighbourhood commercial centre. The applicant considers this will contribute to addressing housing demand in the Waikato District, which is projected to experience significant population growth and housing capacity shortfalls, and that the project will provide a material increase in serviced greenfield housing capacity within the lower Waikato housing market.

Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]
The applicant considers the project will deliver significant economic benefits through increased economic output, employment generation, and household expenditure. The applicant states the project will generate a total GDP impact of approximately $136 million to $173 million and support between 1,344 and 1,816 modified employee count (MEC) years during development, with construction of the dwellings generating a further estimated $420 million in direct and indirect GDP. The applicant also states that, once operational, the project is expected to generate at least $49 million in annual household expenditure, including approximately $23 million in annual retail spending, supporting local businesses, services, and the Te Kowhai township while expanding the local rating base.</td></tr>
</table>

	Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)] The applicant states that the project will support climate change mitigation by seeking to minimise greenhouse gas emissions during construction and through the master-planned design of the project. The applicant considers emissions will be reduced through measures such as retaining earthworks material on-site to minimise truck movements, while the completed project will support lower emissions through multi-modal transport corridors, active transport connections, local services and amenities, and a development pattern that reduces the need for vehicle travel.		
Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	*Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]* The applicant considers the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project by enabling the required resource consents and approvals to be considered through a single process and by a single panel, providing efficiencies in consenting, stakeholder engagement, and specialist input. The applicant also notes that subdivision associated with the project is anticipated to be a prohibited activity under the relevant planning framework and considers the fast-track approvals process is the only available pathway through which that activity could be considered without a plan change, making the process integral to progressing the project. *Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]* The applicant considers the project is consistent with the purpose and intent of the fast-track approvals process, which is designed for regionally and nationally significant projects requiring multiple approvals. The applicant states the project would not materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process and instead would demonstrate the value of a consolidated consenting pathway for projects of this nature and scale.		
Minister invites comments	*You **must** copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:* a. relevant local authorities: – Waikato District Council – Waikato Regional Council 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: – Minister of Conservation – as the project potentially involves approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 and complex freshwater fisheries activities – Associate Minister of Housing – as the project predominantly involves a residential development – Minister for Seniors – as the project involves a retirement village d. relevant administering agency: – Department of Conservation e. the Māori groups identified in Appendix 3.	*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, as the project area is near State Highway 39 and the project may generate additional traffic movements that could affect the surrounding transport network b. the Chief Executive of First Gas Limited, as the holder of an easement for the gas pipeline traversing the project area, who may be able to provide input on whether any additional approvals may be required and any potential implications for project delivery c. the Chief Executive of IAWAI – Flowing Waters Limited, as the council-controlled organisation responsible for delivering water services across the Waikato district from 1 July 2026 d. the Chief Executive of Watercare Services Limited, as Watercare's contract to operate and maintain Waikato District Council's water services infrastructure continues until 2028, despite IAWAI assuming responsibility for water services from 1 July 2026, and Watercare has previously been involved in consultation on the project e. the Minister of Agriculture, as the project area comprises HPL, being LUC Class 2 land, and the Minister may be able to provide input on the project's implications under the NPS-HPL f. the Minister for Regional Development, as the project involves a potentially significant regional development g. the Minister for Economic Growth, as the applicant considers the project will generate significant economic benefits.	*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 initial stage.

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 Stillhaven 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. Waikato District Council and Waikato Regional Council as the relevant local authorities under section 17(1)(a) 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) iii. the Minister of Conservation, the Associate Minister of Housing, and the Minister for Seniors as the other relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b) iv. the Department of Conservation as the relevant administering agency under section 17(1)(c) v. the parties in Appendix 3 as the identified Māori groups under section 17(1)(d) vi. any parties you are required to invite comments from under section 17(1)(d) and (e) who may be subsequently identified	 Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No 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 ii. the Chief Executive of First Gas Limited iii. the Chief Executive of IAWAI – Flowing Waters Limited iv. the Chief Executive of Watercare Services Limited v. the Minister of Agriculture vi. the Minister for Regional Development vii. the Minister for Economic Growth	 Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
i. **Note** that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence, other than to Ministers.	Noted
j. **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 Stillhaven project

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

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Te Whakakitenga o Waikato	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a); Treaty settlement entity – Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995 and the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 (s18(2)(a)); negotiating mandate (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a); Treaty settlement entity – Ngāti Hauā Claims Settlement Act 2014 (s18(2)(a))
Waikato Raupatu River Trust	Treaty settlement entity – Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 (s18(2)(a)); representing tangata whenua in relation to a customary fisheries area (s18(2)(h)); iwi authorities and groups that represent hapū that are parties to any relevant Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or joint management agreements (s18(2)(j))
Waikato River Authority	Treaty settlement entity – Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 (s18(2)(a))
Ngaati Maahanga/Ngaa Uri o Maahanga	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngaati Hourua	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Reko	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Wairere	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Tamainupō	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Te Haa o te Whenua o Kirikiriroa (THaWK)	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))