

File No: 61 92 02A61 92 02A
Document No: 33976750
Enquiries To:

27 November 2025

Private Bag 3038
Waikato Mail Centre
Hamilton 3240
New Zealand

Hearing Panel
Ashbourne [FTAA-2507-1087]
EPA
Via email: substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

waikatoregion.govt.nz
0800 800 401

To the Hearing Panel

**WRC Response to Minute 3 - Ashbourne FT MINUTE 3 OF THE EXPERT PANEL Request for Information
Ashbourne [FTAA-2507-1087] (21 November 2025)**

The panel has requested further information from the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) as detailed within Minute 3.

Megan Wood on behalf of WRC has reviewed the request and her response is provided within the table below:

	Further Information Requested	WRC Response
2 (a)	The application material states that stormwater runoff from the proposed solar panels will infiltrate into the ground, thus not increasing the surface water runoff above existing from the solar farm sites. Is this a reasonable and accurate assumption? Is further investigation or assessment required to justify this assumption? Is it necessary to assess whether future groundwater levels may reach the ground surface at the proposed solar panel sites, which may affect infiltration of stormwater?	<p>Only a small portion of the ground under the solar panels is proposed to be sealed (5%), and hence the rain would run off the solar panels and be able to soak into the ground under the panels as per the pre-development scenario. This is a reasonable assumption and the same as what has been applied at other solar panel farms that Waikato Regional Council has authorized.</p> <p>It is not necessary to assess whether future groundwater levels may reach the ground surface at the proposed solar panel sites, because as per the comment above, only a small portion of the ground under the solar panels is proposed to be sealed. Hence close to the same condition would exist when comparing the amount of rainfall that will soak to ground for the pre- and post-development scenarios. This is different to the other land use types in this proposal where the ground is proposed to be sealed with impervious materials, hence less rainfall can</p>

		soak into the ground, and a larger runoff volume was proposed to be soaked to ground via dispersed and centralized soakage devices.
3	Are the calculations for stormwater runoff for existing land use for the proposed residential and retirement village development appropriate, taking into account the existing undulating topography and lack of drainage channels. This is of particular importance when assessing effects of proposed development on future runoff for the 100-year runoff event for flooding. If the calculations for runoff from existing land use over-estimate runoff then this will result in an under- estimation of the effect of proposed development on future flooding both on the site and downstream.	<p>The applicant has used standard methodology outlined in WRC's Waikato Stormwater Runoff Modelling Guideline to determine pre-development hydrology. The approach is considered acceptable.</p> <p>The selection of the Hydrological Soil Group (HSG) (based on site testing and guidance) takes into account the existing level of infiltration that is present at the site (HSG A represents the presence of high infiltration soils, through to HSG D which represents low infiltration). The applicant has adopted HSG B for the pre-development condition reflecting dense sands and stiff silts with sandy loam and loam textures. For the post-development condition, the applicant has adopted HSG C (less infiltration than HSG B) to reflect the compaction that occurs during earth-working. This is consistent with WRC's guideline.</p> <p>The assessment of hydrology also takes into account site topography with consideration of grades when determining the time of concentration.</p> <p>Note, there is additional conservatism in the assessment as climate change has been applied in the post-development assessment, but not included in the pre-development assessment, in accordance with WRC guidance.</p>
4	For future runoff from the proposed retirement village and residential development that discharges to the greenway, is providing detention such that flows are limited to 80% of predevelopment flows sufficient to ensure there are no adverse effects on flooding or stream channel erosion in the Waitoa River that may arise from the proposed development? Are further hydrological analyses required to address this matter?	The applicant has applied the design criteria from WRC's Waikato Stormwater Management Guideline around matching pre-development peak flows for the 2-year and 10-year ARI events and matching 80% of the pre-development peak flows for the 100-year ARI event. This is standard practice and consistent with requirements across New Zealand, hence is considered acceptable. No further hydrological analysis is required.

Yours faithfully
The above review is limited to whether the applicant has undertaken the proposal in accordance with the accepted guidelines being WRC's Waikato Stormwater Management Guideline. WRC has not reviewed the applicant's assumptions as these are reviewed and assessed in depth by the District Council. Therefore, WRC defers to the District Council's assessment on the assumptions made by the applicant.

WRC notes that the Panel has in its Minute at 27i) requested a response from the applicant in relation to a drain that is maintained by WRC's Integrated Catchment Services team. WRC considers that access to this drain must be maintained at all times as per rule 4.2.18.1 of the Waikato Regional Plan. Further, as WRC are the operators of the drain then the capacity of the drain must be maintained at or near to pre-development capacity should this proposal go ahead.

If you require further information with respect to this letter then please contact Sheryl Roa at [REDACTED] in the first instance.

Sincerely

[REDACTED]

AnaMaria d'Aubert
Manager – Regional Consents
Resource Use Directorate
Waikato Regional Council