



FTAA-2603-1183: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Waiheke Onsen

Date submitted:	8 April 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-00829	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	15 April 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 Waiheke Onsen project 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Ministry for the Environment contacts:

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

Project location



Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Waiheke Mon E Limited (the applicant) to refer the Waiheke Onsen 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.
3. The project is to develop and operate a hotel tourism facility, located at 32 Tiri Road, Oneroa, Waiheke Island.
4. The project comprises:
 - a. a hotel (approximately 180 rooms)
 - b. Japanese inspired Ryokan villas (approximately 10 villas)
 - c. a Japanese geothermal onsen, comprising communal hot pools (capacity up to 150 guests), private day pools (16 approximately), private saunas (4 approximately), a café/restaurant, spa with treatment rooms and pool, and a yoga and meditation pavilion
 - d. conference and wedding venue that can accommodate approximately 200 guests
 - e. associated facilities including carparking, staff accommodation, reception, changing rooms and service kitchen.
5. The project will require the proposed approvals:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991
 - b. approval under the Wildlife Act 1953.

6. The applicant indicates that earthworks in or around potential natural inland wetlands may be required, which could trigger a prohibited activity under the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater. Prohibited activity status is a reason you may decline a referral application under section 21(5)(f) of the Act. However, section 21(7) of the Act states that the presence of a prohibited activity does not, in itself, prevent you from accepting a referral application.
7. We have undertaken initial analysis of the application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
8. 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.
9. 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. relevant local authority – Auckland Council
 - b. the Minister for the Environment
 - c. relevant portfolio Ministers – the Minister of Conservation and the Minister for Tourism
 - d. relevant administering agency – the Department of Conservation
 - e. the identified Māori groups from section 18(2) of the Act. The parties are listed in Appendix 3.
10. 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(5) of the Act being:
 - a. the Minister for Regional Development
 - b. the Minister for Economic Growth
 - c. the Minister for Resources as the project may involve the extraction of geothermal water.
11. We recommend that under section 20 you request further information from the applicant as detailed in Table A.

Action sought

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

Signature



Ben Bunting
Acting Manager – Fast-track Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Location			
	Waiheke Onsen	Waiheke Mon E Limited c/- Barker and Associates Limited (Agent)	Approximately 50,300 m ² at 32 Tiri Road, Oneroa, Waiheke Island, Auckland (Western Waiheke Island, located between Ocean View Road and Tiri Road, approximately 700 m from the Matiatia Ferry Terminal). Record of Title: NA5D/65 Legal description: Lot 8 Deposited Plan 53686			
Project description	<p>The project is to develop and operate a hotel tourism facility, located at 32 Tiri Road, Oneroa, Waiheke Island. The project comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a hotel (approximately 180 rooms) Japanese inspired Ryokan villas (approximately 10 villas) a Japanese geothermal onsen, comprising communal hot pools (capacity up to 150 guests), private day pools (16 approximately), private saunas (4 approximately), a café/restaurant, spa with treatment rooms and pool, and a yoga and meditation pavilion conference and wedding venue that can accommodate approximately 200 guests associated facilities including carparking, staff accommodation, reception, changing rooms and service kitchen. <p>The project will require the proposed approvals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 approval under the Wildlife Act 1953 <p>The applicant describes the project as a <i>geothermal onsen</i>; however, preliminary temperature testing of water from the existing bore indicates that the water does not currently meet the statutory threshold to be defined as geothermal water under the Resource Management Act 1991¹. While some recorded temperatures exceeded 20 degrees Celsius, they remained below the 30 degrees Celsius threshold. The applicant has advised that further investigations, including deeper drilling, are intended to be undertaken to support a substantive application, which may result in water meeting the geothermal temperature threshold. This is noted for transparency regarding the description and scope of the project, the relevant approvals that may be required, and potential effects.</p>					
Consultation undertaken	As required by section 11, the applicant has consulted with:					
	<i>Relevant local authorities</i>	<i>Relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities</i>	<i>Relevant MACA groups</i>	<i>Ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou</i>	<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	<i>Holder of land to be exchanged</i>
	Auckland Council	Relevant iwi authorities Ngāti Pāoa Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Ngāti Tamaoho Ngāti Te Ata Ngāti Maru Ngāti Tamaterā Ngāti Whanaunga Te Patukirikiri Relevant Treaty settlement entities Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau (Tāmaki Collective) Ngāti Pāoa Settlement interests Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Settlement interests Ngāti Tamaoho Settlement interests	N/A	N/A	Department of Conservation	N/A
Section 22 assessment criteria						
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	<p><i>The Minister must 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.</p> <p>You may consider any of the following matters, or any other matters you consider relevant: <i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i> The applicant relies on an Economic Assessment to demonstrate that Waiheke Onsen will deliver substantial economic benefits at a regional scale, and states that these benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total direct capital expenditure (excluding land) of \$483.9 million 					

¹ Geothermal water is defined under section 2(1) of the Resource Management Act 1991 as water heated by geothermal energy and having a temperature of 30 degrees Celsius or greater.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct employment of 793 Full Time Equivalent years (FTE-years) • total indirect or induced employment of 884 FTE-years. <p>In addition to these quantified benefits, the applicant states that the project represents a strategically important opportunity to accelerate Auckland's tourism rebound and strengthen long-term economic performance, through the creation of a unique and differentiated tourism asset. The applicant further identifies qualitative benefits including increased visitor spend, spillover demand for local businesses and services, and reduced seasonality in tourism activity, contributing to more stable revenue and employment outcomes across Waiheke Island and the wider Auckland region.</p> <p><i>Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]</i> The applicant states that Waiheke Onsen will support climate change mitigation by being designed to reduce reliance on private motor vehicles and encourage more sustainable transport modes. The Planning Memorandum highlights the site's proximity to the Matiatia Ferry Terminal and Oneroa Village, as well as its servicing by multiple bus routes connecting the site to key areas and attractions on the island. The applicant considers that this level of accessibility will assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with travel to and from the site and support broader climate change mitigation outcomes.</p> <p><i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> The applicant considers that the proposal is generally consistent with relevant local and regional planning documents, as detailed in the Planning Memorandum. At a strategic level, the applicant identifies consistency with the Auckland Regional Policy Statement, having regard to the site's proximity to Oneroa Village and the ferry terminal, its accessibility by public transport, and its role as an integrated visitor development supporting regional economic outcomes.</p> <p>The applicant acknowledges that, under the Hauraki Gulf Islands District Plan, the proposal would be assessed as a non-complying activity within the Rural 1 (Landscape Amenity) land unit.</p> <p><i>Any other matters that may be relevant [s22(b)]</i> While the applicant acknowledges that Waiheke Onsen is not identified as a priority project in a central government, local government, or sector plan or strategy (in terms of s22(2)(a)(i)), they state that the proposal aligns with the strategic intent to attract business and investment in the Auckland region. In support of this, the applicant's Planning Memorandum refers to a letter of support from Auckland Council's Economic Development Office, which identifies the project's role in enhancing the visitor experience, providing accommodation and conference facilities of scale, delivering employment, and representing a substantial investment in the region.</p>		
Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	<p><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 states that the fast-track process will enable the project to be processed in a more timely and cost-efficient manner than under the normal process, for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expert panels will consider required approvals as a single application package, as opposed to the standard process where several applications would be required for the different activities and to different authorities. • public and limited notification is precluded, and expert panels are only permitted to invite comments from specified persons who have a short timeframe to provide comment. Given the scale of this development, the applicant considers it would likely be a fully notified application under the Resource Management Act 1991, which would significantly slow down the consenting process and add to cost, taking into account the appeal rights enabled under the standard RMA process. • timeframes are shorter and stricter than those of the normal process, resulting in significantly less time required for obtaining resource consent and efficiencies for the project • the applicant has their resourcing in place to process their side of the application efficiently and provide certainty around timeframes to ensure the project remains shovel-ready. <p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i> The applicant states that project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process. The applicant states that their assessment of the proposal is considered to be relatively straightforward and unlikely to require additional resourcing given it does not raise novel issues, and the effects are known and easily quantifiable.</p>		
Minister invites comments	<p><i>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant local authorities: Auckland Council Minister for the Environment Relevant portfolio Minister(s): Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, Minister of Conservation Relevant administering agencies: Department of Conservation Māori groups identified in Appendix 3 	<p><i>You may copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Economic Growth Minister for Regional Development Minister for Resources - as the Minister responsible for New Zealand's Geothermal Strategy (as the project may involve the extraction of geothermal water) 	<p><i>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.</i></p> <p>As the applicant has only provided the construction economic benefits and there is only general information on any ongoing economic benefits.</p> <p>The applicant – To provide further information and supporting evidence to substantiate and quantify the economic benefits of the proposed ongoing operation, including the underlying metrics, assumptions, and methodology used, as well as the anticipated scale, geographic extent, and duration of those benefits.</p>
Recommendation		Minister's decision	
<p>a. Note that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the relevant local authorities, the Minister for the Environment, any relevant Ministers, any relevant administering agencies and the Māori groups identified in the list provided.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	
<p>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.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	
<p>c. Note that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	
<p>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.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	

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 Waiheke Onsen 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Auckland Council as the relevant local authority under section 17(1)(a) ii. The Minister for the Environment under section 17(1)(b) iii. The Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, and the Minister of Conservation as the relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b) iv. Department of Conservation as the relevant administering agencies under section 17(1)(c) v. The parties in Appendix 3 as the 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): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Minister for Economic Growth ii. The Minister for Regional Development iii. The Minister for Resources 	Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
i. Agree to seek further information from the applicant: To provide further information and supporting evidence to substantiate and quantify the economic benefits of the proposed ongoing operation, including the underlying metrics, assumptions, and methodology used, as well as the anticipated scale, geographic extent, and duration of those benefits.	Yes / No
j. Note that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence, other than to Ministers.	Noted
k. 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 and relevant portfolio Ministers
 - c. the relevant administering agencies
 - d. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - e. the owners of Māori land in the project area:
 - f. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.

Appendix 2: Application documents for Waiheke Onsen project:

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

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Ngāti Tamaoho Settlement Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāti Tamaoho Claims Settlement Act 2018)
Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Claims Settlement Act 2018)
Ngāti Pāoa Iwi Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāti Pāoa Claims Settlement Act 2025)
Ngāti Maru Rūnanga Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Te Patukirikiri Iwi Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Tamaterā Settlement Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngaati Whanaunga Ruunanga Trust	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngaati Whanaunga Incorporated Society	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a))
Hako Tūpuna Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Te Ata Claims Support Whānau Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Taonga o Marutūāhu Trustee Limited / Marutūāhu Rōpū Limited Partnership	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d)), other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Tūpuna Taonga o Tāmaki Makaurau Trust/Whenua Haumi Roroa o Tāmaki Makaurau Limited Partnership	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Hauraki Māori Trust Board	Other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))