

14 November 2025

Chinamans Hill Limited & Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership

C/o s 9(2)(a) , Barker & Associates Ltd

SL1 Houchens Road Fast Track Referral

Introduction and Project Description

Chinamans Hill Limited & Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership are applying under the Fast Track Approvals Act (2024) for consent to undertake residential and industrial development referred to as the SL1 Houchens Development, at 3134 Ohaupo Road, Hamilton ('The Site'). The proposal is a combined residential and industrial development including the establishment of associated works, roads and infrastructure over an area of approximately 141 ha within the wider Southern Links 1 ('SL1') growth cell area. The Site is located at the most southeastern portion of the SL1 area, and it has been strategically planned to serve as a natural extension from Southern Links (RONs) and alignment with the southern development of Hamilton.

The Site lies at the interface between Hamilton City's urban boundary and rural landscapes administered by the Waipa District Council (Figure 1). Chinamans Hill Limited & Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership are the landowners of the site and are part of a well-established group of developers involved in a consortium that has been established for some time that represent the bulk of the SL1 growth cell.

Approach to Effects Management

Ecological Solutions Ltd. were engaged to undertake the initial terrestrial and aquatic ecological assessment of the proposal including the identification of any actual or potential effects. A suitably qualified and experienced ecologist(s) will prepare a description of the current ecological values, provide an assessment of the actual or potential effects of the proposal and set out the methods to avoid, remedy, mitigate and offset/compensate those effects on the values identified at the substantive application stage.

Specific detailed ecological management plans required to address any adverse effects on ecological values will be prepared, including applications for any statutory authorisations (e.g., Wildlife Act Authorisation). Once the necessary resource consents are obtained, appropriately qualified and experienced ecologists will also assist with implementation of any ecological management plans as required.



Figure 1: The Site within SL1 Growth Cell.

Background Analysis and Receiving Environment

The northern end of the Site is bound by Ohaupo Road and the western end is bound by Houchens Road. The Site is south east of the Hamilton Urban edge and is currently used to run livestock and grow crops.

Information on which to assess the ecological values of the Site has been gathered from a range of desk-top sources including Waipa District and Waikato Regional Council reports, national databases such as the New Zealand Freshwater Fish Database, the Department of Conservation's Herpetofauna and Bat databases, eBird, Waikato Regional Council's Long-tailed bat distribution map, and Southern Links Road transport project reports.

In addition to the desk-top assessment, an initial site ecological survey involving watercourse and wetland classifications, qualitative vegetation, bird, bat, lizard and bat habitat assessments and a fish survey were undertaken in July 2025.

Terrestrial Ecological Values

The terrestrial ecological features of the Site are presented in Figure 2. There are no Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) located within or directly adjacent to the SL1 Houchens Development. Vegetation cover across the Site was as expected for farmland in the peri-urban area and dominated by exotic pasture, exotic hedgerow vegetation and a stand of exotic trees (gum and pine) contained within a gully. Given the lack of established indigenous vegetation on the Site, minimising adverse effects on vegetation values is not expected to be an ecological constraint.

With respect to indigenous fauna within and surrounding the Site, native birds include exotic and common open habitat species (eBird records). During the site visit pied stilt were observed around surface water ponding from recent rainfall.

Copper skink (*Oligosoma aeneum*) (At Risk – Declining) (Hitchmough et. al. 2021) have been recorded within 15 km of the Site. If present within the Site, copper skink are likely to be restricted to the areas of habitat associated with hedgerows, overgrown/rank grass along

fence lines and the understorey of the exotic tree stand. With the implementation of suitable mitigation measures, to be outlined in a lizard management plan, including salvage and relocation to suitable release sites with adequate predator control and protection security, minimising adverse effects on lizards is not expected to be a significant ecological constraint.

Long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) (Threatened – Nationally Critical) (O'Donnell et al. 2022) activity has been previously recorded within the Site during radio tracking as part of the Southern Links Baseline project in 2019 (Davidson-Watts 2019 and DOC National Bat Database). The extent to which long-tailed bats roost, forage or fly over the SL1 Houchens Development will need to be investigated further to assess the extent of use by bats and identify any potential or actual adverse effects. With the implementation of suitable effects management measures, in accordance with a bat management plan, any adverse effects on bats will be effectively managed and therefore, bats are not considered a significant ecological constraint.

Wetland Values

The Site is located within the former Rukuhia Swamp with a high percentage of fibric organic/peat soils (Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research 2024). Based on the initial site survey there are small, fragmented areas associated with drains and micro depression areas that may qualify as natural inland wetlands (NPS-FM 2020) in addition there are some areas that have wetland features and are located in gullies where natural wetlands would be expected (Figure 2).

All potential wetland areas had been affected, to varying extents, by historic vegetation removal, drainage and livestock. As a result, they were highly modified and degraded. Wetland vegetation was generally dominated by introduced pasture grasses, rushes and herbs. The presence and delineation of any natural inland wetlands will need to be confirmed during field surveys and the effects management via the application of the effects management hierarchy.

Freshwater Ecological Values

One watercourse within the northern portion of the Site appears to be connected to Mangakōtukutuku Stream which flows in a northerly direction through Hamilton City and discharging to the Waikato River at Victoria Street in Whitiāra.

Due to the historic and current land use, the remaining watercourses within the Site were classified as artificial, highly modified farm drains in accordance with the Waikato Regional Plan (Figure 2). These farm drains were modified through vegetation removal, and channelisation associated with ongoing farm maintenance. As a result, the habitat values of the drains were considered low. The gully system on the northern end of The Site contains natural watercourses which have higher ecological values.

The New Zealand Freshwater Fish Database did not contain any records within the SL1 Houchens Development. Black mudfish (*Neochanna diversus*) (At Risk – Declining) have been recorded in the wider SL1 area and could be present within artificial drains on the Site. Black mudfish are patchily distributed in wetlands and drains with suitable habitat and hydrological conditions throughout the Waikato. Some watercourses within the Site appear to be suitable potential black mudfish habitat and further mudfish surveys will be undertaken for the substantive application and so the effects management hierarchy can be applied.

No black mudfish fish were captured in the trapping at the Site in July 2025 and eDNA detected only shortfin eels.

With the implementation of suitable effects management measures in accordance with a fish management plan, it is anticipated that any adverse effects on indigenous freshwater fish can to be managed and therefore, fish are not considered a significant ecological constraint.

Actual and Potential Ecological Effects

The proposed Houchens Development will involve works with the potential for both positive and adverse effects on ecological values (Figure 3). Anticipated effects include:

- The potential for watercourse, riparian and wetland restoration, removing exotic and pest plant species and in turn increasing the amount of native vegetation within the Site, and enhancing habitat for native fauna.
- The potential for higher quality water discharging from the site over the long term through the removal of stock and a change in land use leveraging stormwater management strategies.
- Removal of poor quality, predominantly exotic terrestrial vegetation and habitats and the effects of this loss on any terrestrial fauna (e.g., birds, lizards, bats) resident within the project area.
- Unavoidable loss of low-quality wetland habitat, if present (i.e., via groundwater draw down and/or earthworks).
- Unavoidable loss or modification (i.e., via groundwater draw down and/or earthworks) of some artificial drains which may provide habitat for black mudfish and other native fish such as eels.
- Potential adverse effects on short-term water quality and aquatic life due to sediment and/or contaminant discharges.
- Potential disturbance of fish migration and spawning during the works, depending on timing.
- The potential for the temporary restriction of fish passage.
- The potential for introduction of weed and pest species.

The general approach to addressing each of these effects is set out in the following section.

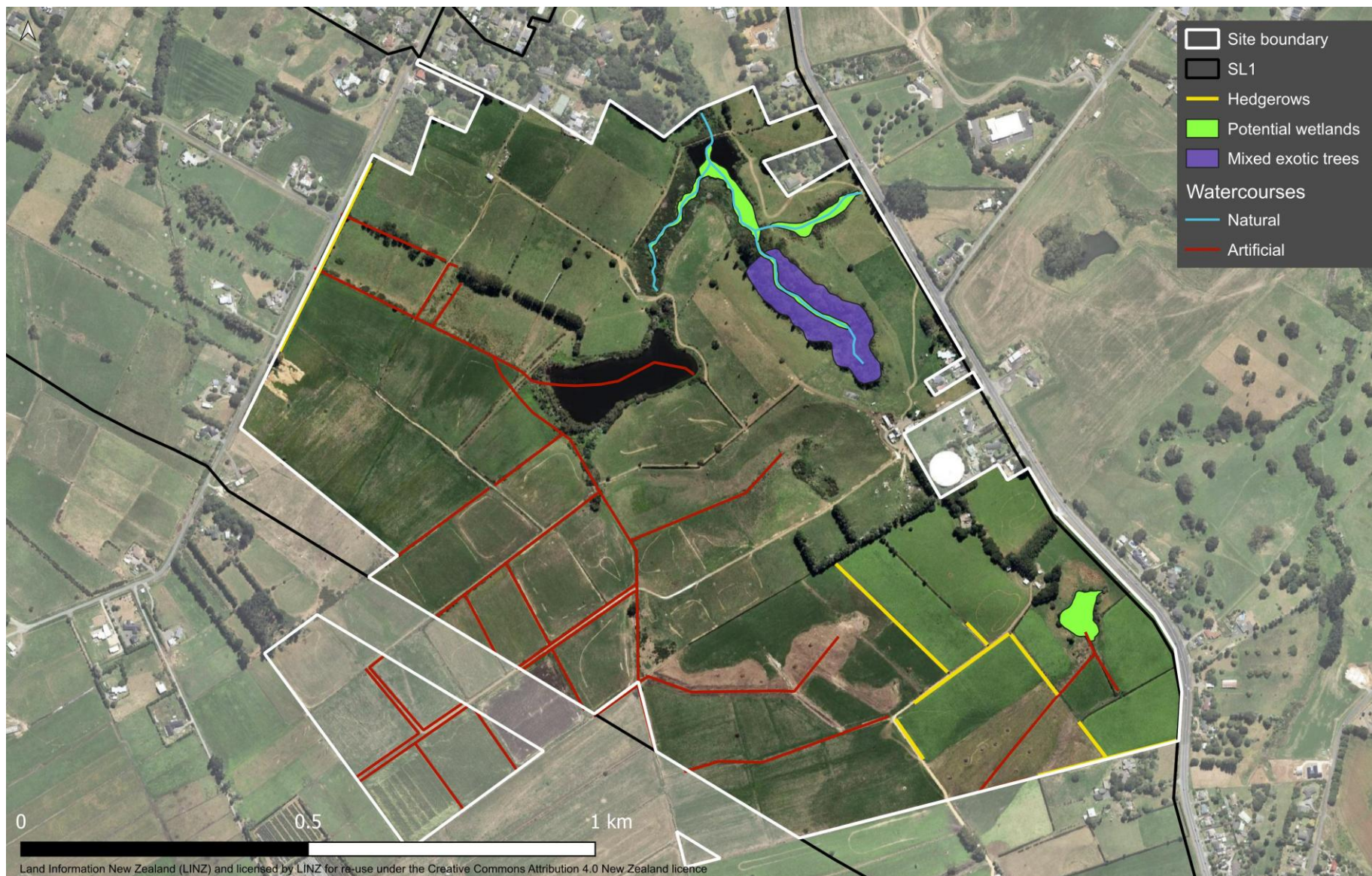


Figure 2: Ecological features at the Site.

DRAFT For Discussion

Block and Roading Plan

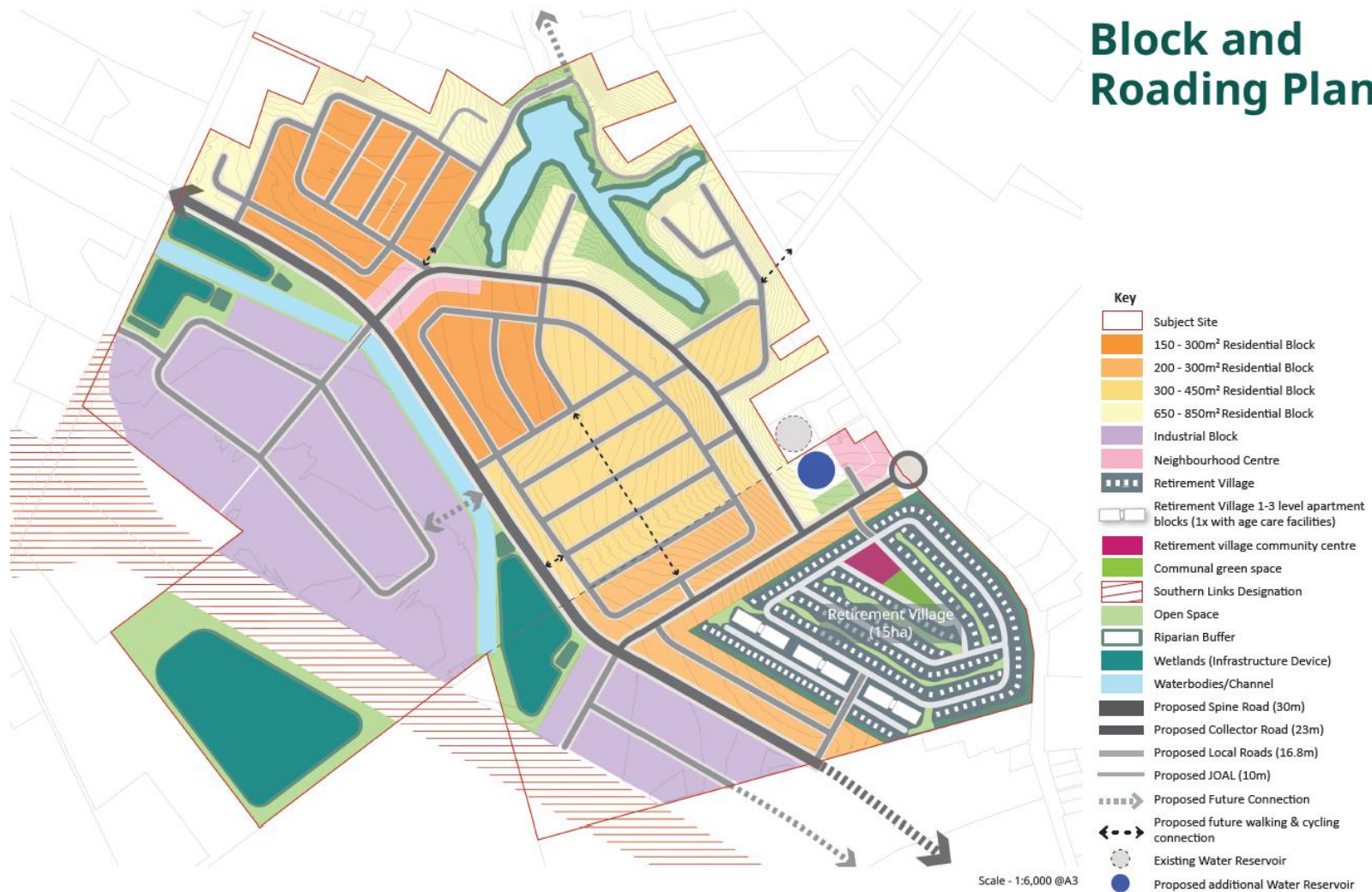


Figure 3: Draft Masterplan.

Approach to Addressing Effects

The general approach to addressing potential effects are outlined below:

- The removal of any vegetation (or habitats) can be managed to avoid adverse effects on native fauna. A management plan approach is proposed to address any effects on birds, lizards and bats so that they are avoided or adequately mitigated. Management of fauna would be subject to the provisions of the Wildlife Act 1953, and the management of lizards specifically, would require a Wildlife Act Authority (WAA) from the Department of Conservation, if present. Acquisition of a WAA for the management lizards at this site is not expected to be a risk or constraint.
- The loss of low quality natural inland wetland habitat (if present) will be addressed via avoidance where practicable, and where loss cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated in accordance with the effects management hierarchy, biodiversity offsetting and/or aquatic compensation will be implemented. In addition to any specific offsetting or compensation, stormwater treatment wetlands constructed as part of the development would be designed to maximise their ecological value as habitat for native species. The potential for wetland loss and the approach to wetland offsetting is discussed in further detail in the following section.
- The loss of potential black mudfish habitat, if present, will need to be addressed through application of the effects management hierarchy process, including offsetting/compensation. Precedence for offsetting black mudfish habitat loss has occurred recently for the Rotokauri Greenway project that was consented through the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast Track Consenting) Act 2020.
- The magnitude of adverse effects on water and aquatic habitat quality will be substantially reduced via best practice approaches to the timing of works and through careful construction methodologies and erosion and sediment control measures implemented in accordance with existing Waikato Regional Council guidelines.
- Construction within the SL1 Houchens Development will involve instream works and physical habitat changes which have the potential to disrupt migration and spawning for native fish. These effects will be reduced by managing the timing of the works and use of well-designed temporary diversion channels as required to allow fish passage around any active works. Adverse effects on indigenous fish during instream works will be managed through the implementation of a fish management plan.
- Any proposed watercourse crossings have the potential to impact fish passage. Culverts will be designed in accordance with best practice solutions to provide fish passage by drawing on the New Zealand Fish Passage Guidelines, version 2.0 (NIWA 2024).
- The potential for the introduction of weeds and pests can be managed via a weed management plan which includes biosecurity protocols (e.g., for earthworks machinery entering the site) and including weed and pest management as part of habitat restoration.

Potential Residual Effects Management Approach

Should significant adverse residual effects be unavoidable (e.g., permanent loss of wetland), the quantum of specific residual effects management required to ensure 'no net loss' or a 'net gain' in extent or value will be determined using the Biodiversity Compensation Model (BCM) (Baber et al. 2021). Best practice habitat restoration activities will include a combination of the following activities:

- Retirement from livestock grazing/access.

- Planting of ecologically appropriate indigenous plant species.
- Pest plant and animal control.
- Formal legal protection (e.g., covenanting or similar).

Depending on the extent of the overall effects, areas outside of the Houchens Development may be required to mitigate or offset effects.

Conclusion

The anticipated adverse ecological effects attributable to the SL1 Houchens Development are manageable through the development and implementation of suitable conditions of consent and the use of site-specific ecological management plans for particular species (e.g., bats, lizards, black mudfish) and habitats (e.g., watercourses and wetlands). A Wildlife Act Authorisation will be required for the management of incidental injury or death of absolutely protect indigenous lizards during vegetation clearance and salvage and relocation measures. With respect to wetlands, any unavoidable loss may require biodiversity offsetting/compensation either within or near the SL1 Houchens Development. A detailed ecological assessment and ecological management/ offsetting plan will be included in the substantive application, should the application be accepted as a referred project.

Qualifications and Experience

Ecological Solutions Ltd. are expert freshwater and terrestrial environmental consultants with offices in Auckland, Tauranga, Northland and Nelson, from where we service our national client base. Richard Montgomerie is Ecological Solutions Managing Director and a freshwater ecologist with over 26 years' experience. Dr Gary Bramley is the terrestrial team lead and Nick Carter is the freshwater team lead, each with more than 20 years' experience managing a diverse range of environmental projects, including significant infrastructure and housing projects, throughout the country.

Ecological Solutions has extensive experience in the Waikato Region, having provided ecological services for numerous land development projects and primary sector clients for many years. Gary is currently the project manager for the Rotokauri Greenway Project (an EPA approved COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting Act 2020 project) together with Rebecca Bodley one of our senior terrestrial ecologists. Rebecca is also project managing the Brymer project (a Fast Track Approvals Act 2024 project) while Chad Croft, another of our senior ecologists has extensive experience in the land development sector in the Waikato Region including the Peacocks Structure plan area and is currently managing Ecological Solutions involvement in the greater Southern Links 1 project area.

Ecological Solutions are experienced in developing appropriate mitigation and biodiversity offset/compensation projects required to manage terrestrial, wetland and stream habitat loss for a range of flora and fauna, including wetlands and black mudfish for the Rotokauri Greenway Project and bats for various developments in the Peacocke area. The most recent example of black mudfish offsetting undertaken included the development and implementation of an enhancement plan for Lake Waiwhakareke to offset loss of habitat for black mudfish associated with another local project.

References

Baber, M, Dickson, J, Quinn, J, Markham, J, Ussher, G, Heggie-Gracie, S, and Jackson, S (2021). A Biodiversity Compensation Model for New Zealand – A User Guide (Version 1). Prepared by Tonkin & Taylor Limited. Project number 1017287.0000P.

Davidson-Watts Ecology (Pacific). (2019). Long-tailed bat trapping and radio tracking baseline report 2018 and 2019. Southern Links, Hamilton.

Department of Conservation, 2024, National Bat Database, accessed March 2024.

Hitchmough, Rob, Ben Barr, Carey Knox, Marieke Lettink, Joanne M. Monks, Geoff B. Patterson, James T. Reardon, Dylan van Winkel, Jeremy Rolfe and Pascale Michel. 2021. New Zealand Department of Conservation, August 2021.

Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research 2024. The New Zealand SoilsMapView. <https://doi.org/10.26060/9vfz-hw43>

NIWA. 2024. New Zealand Fish Passage Guidelines. Version 2.0. Prepared for Ministry for the Environment, June 2024. Unpublished NIWA Client Report No: 2024157HN version 2.0. July 2024. National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, Hamilton. 160pp + appendices.

O'Donnell, Colin F.J, Kerry M. Borkin, Jenny Christie, Ian Davidson-Watts, Gillian Dennis, Moira Pryde and Pascale Michel 2022. Conservation status of bats in Aotearoa New Zealand. New Zealand Department of Conservation, April 2023.