

FTAA-2602-1174: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: SL1 Houchens Development

Date submitted:	13 March 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-00562	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	20 March 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 SL1 Houchens Development 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		
A/Manager	Ben Bunting	s 9(2)(a)	✓
General Manager	Ilana Miller	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location



Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Chinamans Hill Limited and Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership (the applicant) to refer the SL1 Houchens Development 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 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 around 24-47 industrial lots; and
 - e. supporting green infrastructure, three waters, 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.
6. The project will require the proposed approvals:
 - 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.
 - d. an approval or a dispensation that would otherwise be applied for under regulation 42 or 43 of the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 in respect of a complex freshwater fisheries activity
7. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
8. The applicant indicates that, on a precautionary basis, 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 (NESF). 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 states that the presence of a prohibited activity does not, in itself, prevent you from accepting a referral application.
9. 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.
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(1) of the Act being:
 - a. Waikato Regional Council and Waipā District Council as the relevant local authorities
 - b. the Minister for the Environment
 - c. the Associate Minister of Housing, the Minister for Seniors, the Minister of Conservation, and the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage as other relevant portfolio ministers
 - d. the Department of Conservation, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agencies
 - e. the identified Māori groups referred to in section 18(2) of the Act as listed in Appendix 3.

11. We recommend that you invite written comments from the following persons under section 17(5) of the Act:
- a. the Chief Executive of Hamilton City Council as a cross-boundary council likely to be impacted by the development
 - b. the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) – as the project involves access to and integration with the state highway network, including State Highway 3 and the Southern Links Road of National Significance
 - c. the Minister for Regional Development
 - d. the Minister for Economic Growth.
12. We recommend that under section 20 you request further information from the applicant as detailed in Table A.

Action sought

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

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. W. Bunting'.

Ben Bunting
Acting Manager, Fast-track Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

Project details	Project Name		Applicant		Project Location			
	SL1 Houchens Development		Chinamans Hill Limited and Ohaupo Land Limited Partnership c/- Authorised Agent § 9(2)(a) § 9(2)(a) Barker and Associates Limited		Approximately 145 hectares located on the Southwestern fringe of Hamilton City, bounded by SH3 (Ohaupo Road) and Houchens Road, within the Southern Links 1 growth area. 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 — Ōhaupō 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, 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 provision for a future Houchens Road connection and a future water reservoir. The delivery is proposed to occur in phases over up to 30 years with: - 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. 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 - an approval or a dispensation that would otherwise be applied for under regulation 42 or 43 of the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 in respect of a complex freshwater fisheries activity							
Consultation undertaken	As required by section 11, the applicant has consulted with:							
	Relevant local authorities		Relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities		Relevant MACA groups	Ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou	Relevant administering agencies	Holder of land to be exchanged
	- Waipā District Council - Waikato Regional Council		- Ngāti Hauā, - Ngāti Wairere, - Ngāti Maahanga, - Ngāti Koroki Kahukura, - Ngāti Tamainupō, - Ngāti Apakura - Waikato-Tainui		N/A	N/A	- Department of Conservation - Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga	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)]	The Minister <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)] 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. You may consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant: 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)] 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. Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)] The applicant states that the project enables the delivery and continued functioning of regionally and nationally significant infrastructure, rather than delivering a standalone piece of nationally significant infrastructure itself. In particular, the applicant relies on the following points:							

	- the project is located within the SL1 Growth Cell, which is spatially integrated with the Hamilton Southern Links, identified as a Road of National Significance (RoNS) in the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport - the project does not preclude, and actively enables, the delivery and operation of Southern Links, including provision for a future Houchens Interchange, supporting regional freight, employment access and housing growth - the scale and staging of the development supports the efficient use and sequencing of strategic three waters infrastructure, including the Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant and a strategic water reservoir, which are critical to servicing southern Hamilton and wider regional growth - by delivering housing and employment land at scale in a coordinated location, the project strengthens the business case and continued functioning of these strategic transport and water infrastructure investments. <i>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)]</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. <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. <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 Waipā District Council and Hamilton City Council 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.		
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 states that the ability to apply for a comprehensive range of consenting requirements within one application, to be considered by one panel, offers significant efficiencies in planning and specialist inputs into managing and navigating the consenting process. This would enable development commencing sooner and the economic, social and wider positive benefits to be realised sooner than under the traditional Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) path. The applicant further states that these efficiencies would enable development to commence sooner, allowing the associated economic, social, and wider benefits of the project to be realised earlier than would be likely under the traditional Resource Management Act 1991 pathway. However, the application does not quantify the extent of the time or cost savings anticipated when compared with a conventional RMA consenting and plan change process. Quantification of the expected time savings would assist in demonstrating the extent to which the project meets the section 22(1)(b)(i) criterion. <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 SL1 Houchens 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.		
Minister invites comments	<i>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i> Relevant local authorities: - Waikato Regional Council - Waipā District Council	<i>You may copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:</i> the Minister for Regional Development	<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>

	The Minister for the Environment Relevant portfolio Minister(s): - the Associate Minister of Housing - the Minister for Seniors - the Minister of Conservation - the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Relevant administering agencies: - the Department of Conservation - Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Māori groups identified in Attachment 3	- the Minister for Economic Growth - the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) – as the project involves access to and integration with the state highway network, including State Highway 3 and the Southern Links Road of National Significance - the Chief Executive of Hamilton City Council because it is a cross-boundary council which will be impacted by the project, and the project area will eventually be included in the Hamilton City Council boundary following a boundary adjustment.	- the applicant: 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 - quantification of the expected time to be saved by using the Act rather than the standard process.
Recommendations			Minister's decision
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.		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 SL1 Houchens Development 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 Regional Council and Waipā District Council as the relevant local authorities under section 17(1)(a) ii. Minister for the Environment under section 17(1)(b) iii. the Associate Minister of Housing, the Minister for Seniors, the Minister of Conservation, the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage as the relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b) iv. the Department of Conservation, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga 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): i. the Minister for Regional Development ii. the Minister for Economic Growth iii. the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi iv. the Chief Executive of Hamilton City Council		Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
i.	Agree to seek further information from the applicant: 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. ii. to provide a quantified estimate of the anticipated time savings expected to be achieved through use of the Act.		Yes / No 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 SL1 Houchens Development 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 for customary fisheries regulations (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	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Tamainupō	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Wairere	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Koroki Kahukura	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))
Ngaati Apakura	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Raukawa Settlement Trust	Any other Māori groups with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))