

25 March 2025

New Zealand Government  
Attn: Stephanie Frame  
Via: [Referral@fasttrack.govt.nz](mailto:Referral@fasttrack.govt.nz)

Tēnā koe Stephanie,

**Response to request for further information for referral of the Gordonton Country Estate Development project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024**

Thank you for your letter, circulated on 20 March 2025, which set out a request for further information arising from your review of the referral application for the Gordonton Country Estate Development project. The request is as follows:

***Please demonstrate how the benefits of the project would be regionally or nationally significant, as required by section 22(1)(a) of the Act.***

**Executive Summary**

This response demonstrates how the benefits of the project would be regionally significant, as required by Section 22(1)(a) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. This response will be structured as follows:

- Our interpretation of ‘regionally significant’;
- Gordonton Country Estate Development within the context of the Waikato region; and
- How the Gordonton Country Estate Development benefits would be regionally significant.

**Regionally Significant**

Based on our planning knowledge and interpretation of ‘regional significance’, we consider it to mean an activity in the region that is able to generate meaningful benefits of a regional scale. This may include social, economic, environmental or cultural benefits; however, they need to be beneficial beyond the immediate locality and facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development at pace.

It’s our professional view that Gordonton Country Estate Development is a regionally significant project.

It will deliver:

- Circa 659 retirement living units;
- Health care provisions; and
- An ecological buffer (along the Komakorau Stream) which will provide ecological betterment, that will incorporate thousands of trees and plants.

This will be further outlined in the subsequent sections.

### Gordonton Country Estate Development

Gordonton Country Estate has been developed for Waikato's demographic by delivering retirement living, specifically for the ageing population within the Waikato. The purpose of this project is to establish a retirement village/estate which has a *point of difference* to reflect the *rural values and attributes* of the site and surrounding locality and to provide much needed aged care living for the Waikato District and Region. It is this context that determines why Gordonton Country Estate is a **regionally significant** project that will deliver **regionally significant** benefits, specifically for the community of Gordonton Village (and surrounds) & Waikato Region.

### Regionally Significant Benefits of Gordonton Country Estate

The benefits of the Gordonton Country Estate Development would be regionally, and in some cases nationally significant, as:

- The project will generate a wide range of economic benefits that will be **regionally significant**, including but not limited to:

- In the next ten years, the project will support employment levels in the **region**, specifically for the construction industry.

Through consenting and design, the project will generate a number of jobs, that require expertise beyond the immediate locality of Gordonton, including from the Bay of Plenty, Waikato, and Auckland. This is anticipated to be ongoing as the project moves to detailed design, particularly as this is a staged development proposal.

The number of jobs generated will then increase once construction of the project begins. Given the scale of the project, construction workers will be required from outside of the immediate locality of Gordonton, from the wider Waikato and Bay of Plenty area.

- Once operational, the project will generate long-term employment through the retirement village with associated ancillary services and the commercial features (café) that will support ongoing economic generation for Gordonton Village. This provides diversity in employment opportunities, from aged care workers to hospitality workers.
  - Releasing Existing Housing to the Market, by providing housing options that cater specifically to older residents, this frees up existing housing for others. For example, older, larger dwellings could be made available for younger families or first homebuyers, for which they are likely to be better suited.
  - Boosting the Supply of Housing, the direct boost in dwelling capacity created by the proposal will help narrow the gap between future supply and demand. This will help the market be more responsive to growth in demand, thereby reducing the rate at which house prices grow over time (relative to the status quo).
- The project will generate a wide range of numerous socioeconomic benefits. including but not limited to:

- The project will enhance the wellbeing, support social connection, and often provide a continuum of care, enabling residents to move from independent living to managed care if/when required without the need to relocate.
- The project delivers circa 659 retirement living units that responds to the **national** housing shortage, by providing a range of housing typologies that are high quality, safe and warm for a significant number of people, now and into the future.
- Through consultation with Mana Whenua, the project will incorporate cultural values into the design to ensure the **regional** and **national** cultural narrative of Mana Whenua are reflected in the development. This may include Ngāti Wairere, art, and taonga, using Ngā Iwi-endorsed artists, indigenous planting schemes, and cultural naming.
- Within the retirement village are a number of aged care facilities, including assisted care apartments, which will provide necessary medical care to the **region**. This is a significant regional benefit as there are limited care facilities in Waikato District and the rural communities of Waikato.
- The project will generate a wide range of environmental benefits that will be **regionally** and **nationally** significant, including but not limited to:
  - The project directly responds to the **national** risk of climate change and natural hazards through the management of flooding hazards, via the stormwater management provided by the greenway, and the incorporation of measures to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, such as renewable electricity generation and promotion of walking and cycling.
  - The project integrates effectively with adjacent ecologically sensitive areas while reintroducing biodiversity into a relatively barren landscape. The project avoids encroachment on natural wetland areas and incorporates stormwater detention devices across the development which includes native plantings, contributing to a positive ecological outcome. This will support the environmental outcomes within the immediate locality, but also on a **regional** scale due to the location of the site to the Komakorau Stream which stems into the Waikato River that is part of the Waikato Catchment.
  - By preserving the natural wetlands, the project maintains critical habitat, supports biodiversity, and safeguards natural water filtration processes to benefit the **region**. The inclusion of stormwater management features helps mitigate runoff, capture sediment, and facilitate bioremediation, improving water quality. Additionally, the ecological buffer/ reserves with native plantings enhance **regional** ecosystems by creating wildlife corridors, improving air quality, and moderating urban temperatures.

## Conclusion

To conclude, as outlined above, Ashbourne delivers benefits of regional significance that demonstrate why this project should be referred under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. Given the locality of Gordonton Village to the Waikato Region, Gordonton Country Estate is a significant project for the **region** which will enable substantial job opportunities, deliver nationally needed housing supply, generate major economic revenue, and establish a well-functioning urban development for future residents and the community of Gordonton Village and its rural surrounds.

We trust that the above addresses your query, however please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely | Nā māua noa, nā

**Barker & Associates Limited**



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