

EXPERT PANEL — SUBMISSION LETTER

Application reference: 188 Beaumont Street (FTAA-2604-1205)

[REDACTED]

I write to urge the Expert Panel to reject the preliminary Fast Track approval for the 188 Beaumont Street project, and to recommend instead that it be assessed under the established AUP / Wynyard Quarter Master Plan guidelines, which permit an apartment tower to a maximum height of 62 metres. My reasons follow.

Many New Zealanders believe our housing market is over-regulated, and Fast Track was created to cut through that red tape. But in truncating the normal review process, Fast Track confers a privileged status on the projects it accepts. That privilege demands vigilance: Fast Track approval must be reserved for developments that rigorously meet — if not exceed — the criteria set out in Section 22 of the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024.

A housing-focused Fast Track application should, one assumes, help address Auckland's profound affordable-housing shortage. The 188 Beaumont Street project does nothing of the sort. It proposes 215 luxury apartments at the very top of Auckland's market. In qualitative terms, it offers nothing to the housing crisis the Act was meant to relieve.

In quantitative terms, the case is weaker still — and here the applicant's own reviewers agree. The Ministry for the Environment's internal review team recommended that the Minister **decline** this application, concluding that it does not meet the Section 22 criteria. The reviewers found that, if referred, the project "would represent the lowest number of residential units to date for an Auckland project where the primary or sole activity is residential." Comparable Fast Track housing projects in the region propose between roughly 1,000 and 4,500 units; at 215 apartments, 188 Beaumont Street is an order of magnitude smaller. The team acknowledged only "localised benefits," not the significant regional or national benefits the Act requires.¹

Judged by either measure — the housing market it targets or the yield it delivers — the project is not a compelling candidate for Fast Track approval. To approve it regardless would only confirm the fear held by many residents: that the Fast Track process has been bent toward partisan ends.

The zoning and planning history of 188 Beaumont Street is equally troubling for its lack of transparency. Independent Hearing Panel minutes from April 2024 (associated with Plan Change 78) record Orams Marine actively lobbying to build its tower to a height of 72 metres, and Auckland Council representatives rejecting that height. Yet sometime in 2025 the permissible height was quietly raised to 62 metres by a non-notified consent decision.

The 62-metre consent might have been the end of the matter. But with the Fast Track Approvals Act enacted in 2024, the development team applied for Fast Track approval signalling an 80-metre tower. I

¹See BRF-00187, 188 Beaumont Street — Stage 2 briefing, Ministry for the Environment (redacted), at https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/18048/BRF-00187-188-Beaumont-Street-Stage-2-Briefing_Redacted.pdf

believe the decision to propose 80 metres was made chiefly to improve the project’s chances of qualifying — on the apparent assumption that a taller tower would lift the unit yield above some presumed threshold for Fast Track viability.

What is lost in this history of opaque dealings — beyond the reach of public disclosure and civic debate — is public confidence. A project that could have won broad support across the Wynyard Quarter’s residential communities is instead mired in controversy. Let me be categorical: the objections that I and many fellow residents have raised about the Fast Track process are not merely self-serving. Yes, we are concerned about the impact of an 80-metre tower on our homes. My fellow 30 Madden residents Rob and Robyn Pryor will submit a separate statement setting out why the project’s environmental assessments are seriously flawed.

I want to speak directly to the public expectation that the Fast Track review of this project meet the highest standard of rigour. Exceptions to standard zoning and planning practice should be granted only where the benefits are substantial and the adverse effects acceptably minor.

The 188 Beaumont Street proposal does not clear that threshold. The site is exceptionally sensitive. It sits at the intersection of three defining features of the Wynyard precinct:

- to the immediate west, the harbour’s edge and the Hauraki Gulf beyond it;
- to the immediate north, the collection of legacy silo structures, all within a 35-metre height range; and
- to the immediate east, Silo Park, the iconic playground that draws hundreds of families.

In recognition of these height and mass sensitivities in the precinct’s north-west corner, no building north of Pakenham Street West rises above 40 metres. Those restrictions affirm the value of low-rise, human-scale architecture as the precinct transitions from its centre to its waterfront. The 62-metre exception at 188 Beaumont Street already acknowledges the site as a designated marker-building location. Against a backdrop of heights that step down judiciously toward the water, it is difficult to see how legitimate concerns of building legibility could require a marker taller than 62 metres.

Nor is the tower the only exceedance. The other two buildings in the plan also breach their permissible heights — most strikingly the Marina Building at the water’s edge. The table below sets out the increases across all three buildings against the AUP / Wynyard Precinct limits codified as recently as 2025.

Permissible Height Comparisons — AUP / Wynyard Precinct versus Fast Track Proposal

Building	AUP / Wynyard Precinct	Fast Track proposal	Percent variance
Marina Building	18 m	31 m	72% increase
Apartment Tower	62 m	80 m	29% increase
Beaumont Building	31 m	37 m	19% increase

These increases are highly contestable. They repudiate the Wynyard Precinct design principles that have thoughtfully guided planning and development here for two decades. Were it not for the Expert Panel's decision to invite submissions from 30 Madden owners, they would have gone unchallenged in public debate — this despite a Ministry review that recommended the application be declined. The claim that the development's benefits align comfortably with Auckland's urgent housing needs is specious, and it mocks the good intentions of the Fast Track legislation.

Let me restate my position. I welcome development at the 188 Beaumont Street site; the precinct would benefit greatly from the transformation of a vacant lot into a distinctive mixed-use suite of buildings. But I urge the Expert Panel to reject this project as a legitimate Fast Track proposition, and to honour and safeguard the provisions of the Act by interrogating with fidelity the application's worthiness against the Section 22 criteria — as the Ministry's own reviewers did when they recommended that it be declined.

Respectfully yours,

Richard B. Greissman

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