
MINUTE 3 OF THE PANEL CONVENER

Conference Directions

[FTAA-2607-1260]

24 September 2026

[1] Hughes Developments seeks approvals to subdivide and develop 154 hectares of rural-zoned land adjoining Darfield in the Selwyn District.

- (i) the proposal provides for 743 residential allotments of varying sizes, and
- (ii) a network of roads, reserves, waterways, and three-waters infrastructure.

[2] A conference was held on Wednesday, 23 September 2026, at 10 am. I am grateful for the consideration given to this application in the detailed memoranda filed. A list of those who attended the conference is attached and marked “A”. The EPA will provide the memoranda to the panel after it is appointed; they will serve as a snapshot of the current topics and issues.

Principal issues in contention

[3] The provision of wastewater and drinking water services are among the principal issues in contention.

[4] Selwyn Water Ltd, a water services entity, advises that modelling is required to demonstrate whether allocation is available within its water permit for use by Hughes Developments Ltd. If not, the applicant will need either to apply for a permit authorising a community water supply or to apply to transfer an existing water permit.

[5] If a new water permit or a transfer is required, a decision will need to be made as to whether the processing of the substantive application be suspended under s 62.

[6] Selwyn Water Ltd further advises that there is currently there is no available capacity at the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant for any new development within the region. Its infrastructure programme *may*¹ allow for additional inflows from 2031. It is not clear whether additional conveyance and treatment capacity if, prioritised for servicing of committed growth areas, will include this project. It may be if, as the applicant advises, that intensified growth at this site is anticipated under the 2031 Long-term Growth Strategy, the Outline Development Plan in the partially operative District Plan and the Melvern Area Plan. Of course, these are matters for Selwyn Water Ltd and I anticipate prioritisation of demand servicing will need to be addressed in detail in its comments on the application.

[7] In what seems to be an oversimplification of infrastructure planning, I was told that the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant has the benefit of being able to “be continually added on to and upgraded”. On that basis the applicant submits that consent could be granted subject to conditions staging the development contingent upon future wastewater capacity being available and, on the applicant, agreeing to a capital contribution towards wastewater upgrade. While the factual context is different, I referred participants to Auckland Council’s appeal on Delmore 2 where a similar approach is under appeal.

[8] Taken together, the timing and sequencing of wastewater and drinking water services give rise to the following issues -

- (a) whether the project will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment;
- (b) whether there is a sufficient evidential basis for the panel to be

¹ This is subject to confirmation.

satisfied that adequate wastewater and drinking water services can be delivered in time to each stage of the project; and

- (c) the extent and projected timing of the project's net benefits.

[9] In addition, there appear to be potentially significant differences between the applicant's and Selwyn District Council's experts² in their reporting on the extent of the project's benefits. The issues that arise include:

- (a) what economic assessment tool should be used to model and quantify the difference between the project's net benefits (i.e. benefits less costs) and its impacts (e.g. adverse effect on the environment, effect on people in the neighbourhood and wider community etc);
- (b) whether the counterfactual is agreed and what benefits accrue in addition to the counterfactual; and
- (c) whether the project has costs.

Engagement

[10] The applicant expressed surprise on learning last week that capacity arises in relation to wastewater and drinking water services. It appears that the availability of these services has changed since the applicant consulted with the District Council on the referral application.

[11] At the risk of repeating myself, although participants have experience with the Resource Management Act 1991, the Fast-track Approvals Act requires a different way of working. Ongoing engagement, with local authorities is essential because the Act contains no equivalent to section 92 of the Resource Management Act 1991: a panel cannot place the application on hold pending further information. The decision-making timeframe is fixed and ought not be taken up resolving requests for information or, for that matter, diverted by matters capable

² The views of the District Council's expert are referred to in the applicant economic assessment (Appendix 15).

of earlier resolution.

Where to from here

[12] I will not appoint the panel until the drinking water allocation modelling is completed. The modelling is expected to take one day. Selwyn District Council and the applicant will report on whether an allocation of drinking water is available under the District Council's water permit. If an allocation is not available, the applicant is to state whether it intends applying for a water permit or do something else.

[13] I make no direction in relation to the issue whether there is available capacity at the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant and the timing and prioritisation of additional conveyance and treatment capacity. It is my expectation that Selwyn Water Ltd will provide comprehensive comments on the issues noted above.

[14] I will direct that the applicant provides the results of downstream modelling for significant flood events requested by the Regional Council. I am told that this work is underway and will be completed within the week.

[15] The decision to appoint the panel and on timeframe for its work, will follow confirmation that the applicant has carried out the directions.

Directions

[16] By **Thursday 1 October 2026**:

- (a) Selwyn District Council will report whether the modelling set out in paragraph [12] above has been completed to the satisfaction of Selwyn Water Ltd.
- (b) The applicant will state what is proposed if an allocation of drinking water is not available under the water permit held by the District Council. If an application for a new approval is proposed, the

applicant will address s 62 of the Act.

- (c) The Regional Council will advise whether it has the received downstream modelling requested for significant flood events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane'.

Jane Borthwick

Panel convener for the purpose of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

Appendix A:

Hughes Developments Limited	• Rachel Murdoch • Mark Brown • Jake Hughes
Environment Canterbury	• Joanne Mitten • Amy Wells
Selwyn District Council	• Geoff Deavoll • Emily McDonald
Department of Conservation	• Terry Calmeyer • Jen Vella