



FTAA-2603-1193: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 2 decisions

Project Name: University of Auckland Student Centre and Library

Date submitted:	11 June 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-01545	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decision on recommendations	18 June 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz Approve the attached notice of decisions letter.
Number of appendices: 6	Appendices: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Statutory framework for making decisions2. Application documents for the University of Auckland Student Centre and Library project3. Stage 1 Briefing Note and decisions4. Section 18 Report on Treaty settlements and other obligations5. Comments received from invited parties6. Draft notice of decisions

Ministry for the Environment contacts

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author	Rebecca Burton		
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General Manager	Ilana Miller	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location

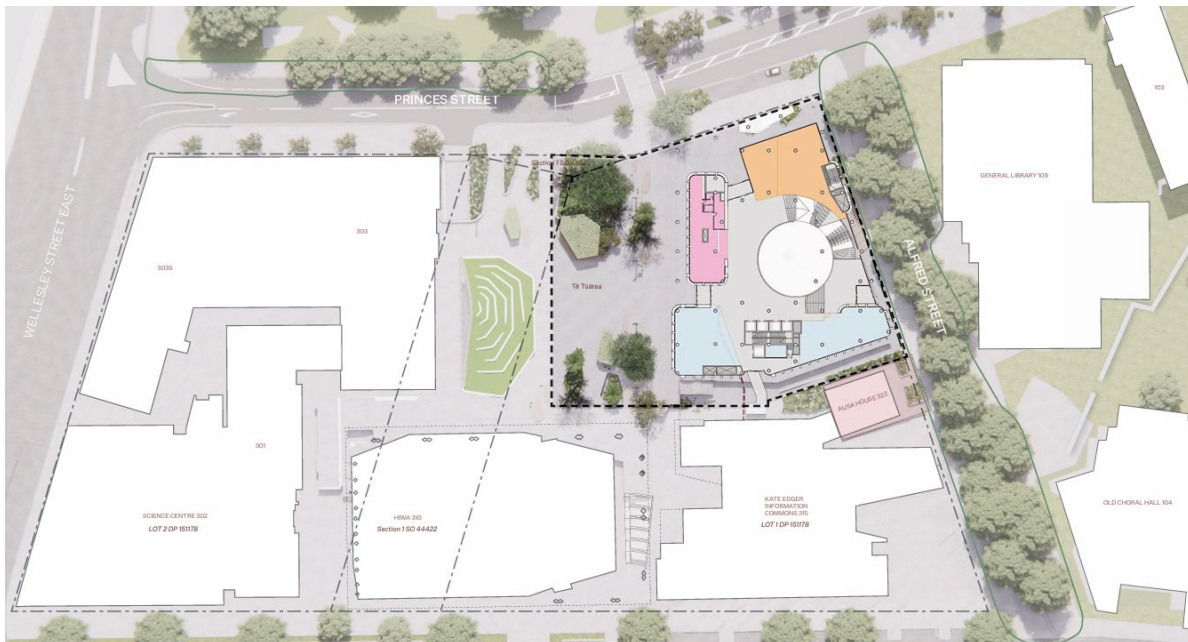


Image 1: Project plan

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your decisions under section 21 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) on the application from University of Auckland (the applicant) to refer the University of Auckland Student Centre and Library project (the project) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. A copy of the application is in Appendix 2. This is the second briefing on this application. The first briefing (Stage 1 – BRF-00938) with your initial decisions annotated is in Appendix 3.
3. The project involves the construction of a new student centre and library within the existing Auckland University campus, on the corner of Princes Street and Alfred Street, Auckland.
4. The key components of the project include:
 - a. demolition of the existing Student Union complex
 - b. construction of a new building that will accommodate:
 - i. a range of high-quality student study, teaching and learning, social and event spaces and food, beverage and retail
 - ii. a new library; and
 - iii. a visitor hub containing welcoming spaces and an exhibition space
 - c. landscaping, and a large-scale public plaza which will serve as a gathering and event space
 - d. supporting infrastructure and associated works including earthworks and servicing.
5. The project will require the proposed approvals under the fast-track approvals process:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

- b. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 (HNZPTA).
6. We recommend you **accept** the referral application as the project meets the criteria set out in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity.
 7. We seek your decisions on this recommendation and on the proposed directions to the applicants and the expert panel, as well as the notification of your decisions.

Assessment against statutory framework

8. The statutory framework for your decision-making is set out in Appendix 1. You must apply this framework when you are deciding whether to accept or decline the referral application and when deciding on any further requirements or directions associated with referral of the project.
9. Before accepting the project, you must consider the application (in Appendix 2), the section 18 Treaty settlements report (in Appendix 4), any comments from invited parties (in Appendix 5) and any document that requires your consideration under section 16 and comply with any procedural requirements under section 16. Following that, you may accept the application if you are satisfied that it meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act and if there are no reasons meaning you must decline the application. We provide our advice on these matters below.

Section 18 Treaty settlements and other obligations report

10. Section 18(2) of the Act requires that the report provide a list of relevant Māori groups, including relevant iwi authorities and Treaty settlement entities.
11. Auckland has a complex Treaty settlement landscape with many overlapping interests. Some groups have settled while others are still in settlement negotiations with the Crown for both individual group and collective redress. Accordingly, there are a significant number of relevant Māori groups for this project area, which are listed in Attachment 3 of the Section 18 report.
12. The Treaty settlements and other arrangements relevant to the project area are:
 - a. Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Claims Settlement Act 2012
 - b. Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Redress Act 2014
 - c. Te Kawerau ā Maki Claims Settlement Act 2015
 - d. Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Claims Settlement Act 2018
 - e. Ngāti Tamaoho Claims Settlement Act 2018
 - f. Ngāti Pāoa Claims Settlement Act 2025
 - g. Te Ākitai Waiohua deed of settlement
 - h. Te Patukirikiri deed of settlement.
13. The Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Redress Act 2014 provides for a 'right of first refusal', in favour of Whenua Haumi Roroa o Tāmaki Makaurau Limited Partnership, over the land within the project area. However, the application does not entail the disposal of this land that would otherwise trigger the right of first refusal.
14. None of the Māori groups invited to comment under section 17(1)(d) of the Act provided a response.

15. We do not consider there are any matters raised in this report which make it more appropriate for the proposed approvals to be authorised under another Act or Acts.

Section 16 Effects of Treaty settlements and other obligations on decision-making

16. There are no matters or obligation identified within the attached Section 18 report that are required to be taken into account or may have an effect on the decision-making for this project.

Written comments received

17. Comments were received from Auckland Council (AC), the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and the Minister for Māori Development, and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT).

18. The key points relevant to your decision-making are outlined in Table A, with a summary provided below:

19. The key points from the comments received are:

- a. AC do not support the referral of the application on the basis of insufficient information. AC noted that the project would provide essential social infrastructure to the University and align with the intent of the city centre and learning precinct within the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP). However, specific concerns raised by AC relate to the methodology used for the applicant's Economic Impact Assessment, the demolition of a historic building, and the need for a Built Heritage Assessment.
- b. the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and the Minister for Māori Development support the application progressing and encourage the applicant and the panel to have due regard to relevant Treaty settlement legislation and instruments; and any feedback received from relevant Māori groups.
- c. HNZPT note that in addition to the recorded archaeological site (R11/833, the former site of the Albert Barracks) to being modified or destroyed, there is a small potential to encounter further archaeological material or sites causing an archaeological authority to be required. HNZPT highlights that the project area is of significance to Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and in the vicinity of the project are former Māori settlement sites which have cultural and archaeological values.

Further information

20. You did not request any further information from the applicant, relevant local authorities, or relevant administering agencies under section 20 of the Act.

Reasons to decline

21. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the situations where you must decline a referral application under section 21(3).

22. You may also decline the application for any other reason under section 21(4). The Act gives some guidance on matters you could consider when deciding whether to decline an application and these are set out in Appendix 1.

23. We have considered the matters above and this is discussed in Table A, and we do not consider you should decline the project for any of these reasons.

Reasons to accept

24. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the reasons you can accept a project for referral. Our assessment of these matters is summarised in Table A. We consider the project meets the requirements of section 22 as:

- a. it is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional benefits because it:
 - i. will enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)] as it:
 - (1) will ensure the University can continue to operate and provide services and provide for the changing needs and demands of current and future populations
 - (2) can enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure, noting that universities fall within the definition of 'additional infrastructure' within the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure
 - (3) is considered critical to accommodate current student demand and future growth and will play a key role in enhancing the student experience, fostering academic success, and supporting research and collaboration, thereby contributing to the University's regional and national impact.
 - ii. will 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)] as it:
 - (1) will be highly accessible to existing and planned public transport links, along with existing cycleways and shared paths
 - (2) will deliver positive public realm, street activation, and campus connectivity outcomes
 - iii. will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)] as it:
 - (1) will contribute approximately \$463.3 million in GDP for the Auckland region over the five-year development timeframe, supporting a total of 3,471 full-time equivalent (FTE) years over that period
 - (2) will help sustain and potentially expand the university's already significant contribution to the Auckland regional economy and New Zealand's national education and knowledge economy.
 - iv. is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)] as it:
 - (1) aligns with the Auckland Regional Policy Statement and, Auckland Unitary Plan, aims to shape a city centre that is more connected, liveable, sustainable, and economically prosperous and seeks to improve the physical connections between the university, the city centre, and the city fringe
 - (2) aligns with the Auckland Plan 2050 Spatial Plan which directs growth toward a quality compact urban form, concentrating intensification within the existing urban area.
- b. the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes because:

- i. securing the requisite approvals through the fast-track instead of through the standard RMA and HNZPTA processes will enable the project to be progressed in a more timely and cost-effective way
 - ii. given the scale of the project, the applicant anticipates that an application for resource consent would be notified under the RMA, at least on a limited basis – notification of the application would substantially increase the potential for delays to the commencement of the project
 - iii. obtaining approvals under the Act could result in the project being approved up to three years earlier than it might otherwise be under the RMA.
- c. it is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because:
- i. the only approvals being sought are resource consent and an archaeological authority reducing the complexity of the project
 - ii. the substantive application for the project will be supported by comprehensive technical assessments.

Conclusions

25. We consider the project meets the section 22 criteria and you may accept the application under section 21 of the Act and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process with the specifications outlined below.
26. We recommend specifying that the substantive application for the project should include a built heritage assessment to enable the adverse effects associated with the project on the heritage fabric of the Auckland City Centre to be considered by the expert panel.

Next steps

27. The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) must give notice of your decisions on the referral application, and the reasons for them, to the applicant and anyone invited to comment under section 17 and publish the notice on the Fast-track website.
28. If you decide to refer the project, the Ministry must also give notice of your decision to:
- a. the panel convener
 - b. any additional iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities that you consider have an interest in the matter other than those invited to comment under section 17
 - c. the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).
29. You must also provide all of the information you received that relates to this application to the EPA and the panel convener, including:
- a. the referral application
 - b. any comments received under section 17
 - c. the report obtained under section 18.
30. We will undertake this action on your behalf.

31. We have attached a draft notice of decisions letter to the applicant(s) based on our recommendations (refer Appendix 6) and we will provide it to all relevant parties. We will provide you with an amended letter if required.
32. Our recommendations for your decisions follow.

Recommendations

33. We recommend that you:

- a. **Note** section 21(3) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) requires you to decline the referral application from the University of Auckland (the applicant) if you are satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity, or you consider that you do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section or if you are not satisfied that the University of Auckland Student Centre and Library project (the project) meets the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act.

Noted

- b. **Agree** that before deciding on the application for project referral under section 21(1) of the Act you have considered:

- i. the application in Appendix 2
- ii. the report obtained under section 18 in Appendix 4
- iii. any comments and further information sought under sections 17 and 20 and provided within the required timeframe (if you have received any comments or further information after the required timeframe you are not required to consider them but may do so at your discretion) in Appendix 1.

- c. **Agree** you are satisfied the project will meet the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act as:

- i. the project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits because it:

- (1) will enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)] as it:

- (i) will ensure the University can continue to operate and provide services and provide for the changing needs and demands of current and future populations

- (ii) can enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure, noting that Universities fall within the definition of 'additional infrastructure' within the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure

- (iii) is considered critical to accommodate current student demand and future growth and will play a key role in enhancing the student experience, fostering academic success, and supporting research and collaboration, thereby contributing to the University's regional and national impact.

- (2) will 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)] as it:

- (i) will be highly accessible to existing and planned public transport links, along with existing cycleways and shared paths


- (ii) will deliver positive public realm, street activation, and campus connectivity outcomes

- (3) will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)] as it:
 - (i) will contribute approximately \$463.3 million in GDP for the Auckland region over the five-year development timeframe, supporting a total of 3,471 full-time equivalent (FTE) years over that period
 - (ii) will help sustain and potentially expand the University's already significant contribution to the Auckland regional economy and New Zealand's national education and knowledge economy
 - (4) is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)] as it:
 - (i) aligns with the Auckland Regional Policy Statement and Auckland Unitary Plan, aim to shape a city centre that is more connected, liveable, sustainable, and economically prosperous and seeks to improve the physical connections between the university, the city centre, and the city fringe
 - (ii) aligns with The Auckland Plan 2050 Spatial Plan which directs growth toward a quality compact urban form, concentrating intensification within the existing urban area.
 - ii. the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes because:
 - (1) securing the requisite approvals through fast-track instead of through the standard RMA and HNZPTA processes will enable the project to be progressed in a more timely and cost-effective way
 - (2) given the scale of the project, the applicant anticipates that an application for resource consent would be notified under the RMA, at least on a limited basis – notification of the application would substantially increase the potential for delays to the commencement of the project
 - (3) obtaining approvals under the Act could result in the project being approved up to three years earlier than it might otherwise be under the RMA.
 - iii. it is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because:
 - (1) the only approvals being sought are resource consent and an archaeological authority reducing the complexity of the project
 - (2) the substantive application for the project will be supported by comprehensive technical assessments.
- Yes / No
- d. **Agree** to accept the referral application under section 21(1) and refer the project to a panel under section 26(2).
- Yes / No
- e. **Agree** to specify the University of Auckland as the person who is authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project.

Yes / No

- f. **Agree** to specify under section 27(3)(b) of the Act, the following information that the applicant must submit with the substantive application:
- i. a built heritage assessment that identifies and assesses the effects of the project and the demolition of the existing Student Union Building. Specifically, the assessment shall include:
 - consideration of the objectives and policies of the Auckland Unitary Plan and the identification of any effects on the amenity, character and historic fabric of the City Centre.
 - identification of any effects, including shading, by new buildings on adjacent scheduled historic heritage places, including their settings, and their historic heritage values.
- Yes / No
- g. **Agree**, under section 27(3)(b)(i) of the Act, to specify a deadline of two years from the date of the notice of decisions for lodging the substantive application.
- Yes / No
- h. **Agree** that the Ministry for the Environment will provide your notice of decisions to:
- i. anyone invited to comment on the application including local authorities, relevant administering agencies, the Minister for the Environment and other relevant portfolio Ministers, and the relevant Māori groups
 - ii. the panel convener
 - iii. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).
- Yes / No

Signatures



Stephanie Frame
Manager – Fast-track Operations

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Table A: Stage 2 analysis

Recommendation	<u>Accept</u> the referral application and refer the project to the fast-track approvals process.		
Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Location
	The University of Auckland Student Centre and Library (the project)	University of Auckland (the applicant)	Princes Street and Alfred Street, Auckland City Legal description: Lot 1 DP 151178, Section 1 SO Plan 46532, Section 1 SO Plan 44422
Project description	<p>The project involves the construction of a new student centre and library within the existing University of Auckland (UoA) campus.</p> <p>Key components of the project include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the demolition of the existing Student Union complex b. construction of a new building that will accommodate: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. a range of high-quality student study, teaching and learning, social and event spaces and food, beverage and retail ii. a new library; and iii. a visitor hub containing welcoming spaces and an exhibition space c. landscaping, and a large-scale public plaza which will serve as a gathering and event space. d. supporting infrastructure and associated works including earthworks and servicing. <p>The project area is located within a recorded archaeological site, being the Albert Barracks Wall, causing an archaeological authority to be required for works in and around this area.</p> <p>The project will require the proposed approvals under the fast-track approvals process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) b. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 (HNZPTA). 		
Minister invites comments / requests information	Comments from invited parties		
	<p>Local authorities</p> <p><i>Auckland Council (AC)</i> AC do not support the referral of the application on the basis of there being insufficient information provided. An overview of the specific concerns is provided below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Benefits AC have raised concerns with the methodology used within the Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) stating that an EIA does not enable economic benefits to be assessed with it treating all activity (i.e. jobs) as additional economic activity, rather than noting that such activity may already exist elsewhere. AC have requested that a cost benefit analysis be completed, this being able to confirm if the project is likely to have significant economic benefits. - Urban Environment AC have noted that the project has the potential to deliver positive public realm, activation, and campus connectivity outcomes. AC also considers that the project is unlikely to result in significant adverse landscape and/or visual effects and will likely result in overall positive effects for both the university and the city centre urban landscape. However, AC note that there is further information required that should be provided for the substantive application to clearly demonstrate and understand the built form, building height and frontage height infringements, shading, and architectural outcomes. AC questions the design rational and long-term viability for the project to locate large trees on the roof terraces of the proposed building and state that further information around cultural narratives should be provided along with a review by the Auckland Council Urban Design Panel. AC considers a comprehensive comparative shading study should be provided to assess the effects of permitted versus additional shading on Albert Park. AC note that the project has the potential to expand social infrastructure within the existing city centre and University of Auckland campus. - Climate Change AC highlights that the existing Student Union Building contains significant amounts of embodied carbon, defined as the emissions generated during the construction of the building. This embodied carbon will be lost when the building is demolished. retaining and reusing the existing building reduces the demand for new construction materials, lowering embodied carbon emissions. AC also note that the project is located within the city centre and is well serviced by public and active modes of transport, which contribute to climate change measures. AC notes that the applicant will have the opportunity to promote climate change mitigation as part of the substantive process. - Built Heritage AC considers that the demolition of the Student Union Building, a Category B Scheduled Historic Heritage Place, would have significant adverse effects on the historic heritage values of the site, as well as significant urban and environmental effects that cannot be mitigated. AC considers the applicant has not demonstrated that the significant regional or national economic benefits that they have identified can be achieved without the demolition of the scheduled historic heritage place. AC requests that the applicant provide a built heritage assessment of the project and considers the effects, including shading, of any new buildings on adjacent scheduled historic heritage places. 		

- **Transport**
Auckland Transport (AT) considers that a comprehensive assessment of the potential effects of the project on existing public transport services should be provided, including any temporary or permanent disruptions to bus routes, stops, or operations, and the extent of impacts on service reliability, safety, and accessibility for passengers.
The applicant should provide an estimate of heavy vehicle movements associated with construction, proposed haulage routes, an assessment of the potential effects on the transport network, a Pavement Impact Assessment (PIA), and a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).
- **Local & Regional Planning Documents**
AC states that the project aligns with the intent of the Business –City Centre Zone and Learning Precinct of the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP), with the City Centre Zone seeking to ensure Auckland plays a leading role as a primary international centre for business and culture, while the Learning Precinct identifies the unique requirements of tertiary education providers.

AC considers that the project appears to be inconsistent with the AUP Historic Heritage Overlay, which seeks the protection of scheduled places from inappropriate use and development. While AC notes the applicant's site requirements, the project does not demonstrate that the building is incapable of adaptive reuse or that the loss is necessitated by exceptional circumstances. As such, AC considers that the total demolition of the heritage building results in significant adverse effects that cannot be mitigated.

AC notes that the NPS-UD directs local authorities to enable increased intensification and high-density development within city centre zones and areas with high accessibility to tertiary education facilities. While the proposed Student Union Building supports this direction, AC considers that the project does not contribute to a well-functioning urban environment from a heritage perspective due to the protection of cultural heritage identified as part of being a well-functioning urban environment by international literature.

AC highlights that the Auckland Plan 2050 seeks to ensure that as Auckland grows, its unique cultural and historic heritage is protected and conserved for future generations, while simultaneously providing for the social and economic well-being of its people. While the project supports the intent of the Learning Precinct and provides essential social infrastructure, AC considers that the total demolition of a Category B Scheduled Historic Heritage Place is inconsistent with the direction to protect and manage Auckland's heritage assets.

AC states that the City Centre Master Plan provides a 20-year vision for Auckland's city centre, including strengthening the integration of tertiary institutions into the city fabric to enhance social and economic vitality. While the project successfully delivers essential social infrastructure for the University of Auckland, AC again notes that the total demolition of a Category B Scheduled Historic Heritage Place is inconsistent with the CCMP's objective to conserve the city centre's heritage fabric.

Ministers

Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and Minister for Māori Development

The Minister supports the application progressing and encourages the applicant and the panel to have due regard to:

- relevant Treaty settlement legislation and instruments; and
- any feedback received from relevant Māori groups, as set out in Treaty settlements and
- in the section 18 report prepared by the Ministry for the Environment.

Administering agencies

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT)

HNZPT acknowledges the applicant has provided an archaeological assessment that identifies one recorded archaeological site (R11/833, the former site of the Albert Barracks) within the project area. HNZPT note that in addition to being modified or destroyed, there is a small potential to encounter further archaeological material or sites causing an archaeological authority to be required.

HNZPT highlights that the project area is of significance to Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and in the vicinity of the project are former Māori settlement sites which have cultural and archaeological values.

If the project is referred, HNZPT anticipates further engagement with the applicant to ensure all relevant documentation is provided with a substantive application, including:

- an archaeological assessment;
- appropriate methodologies and strategies proposed;
- appropriate draft management plan and research strategy;
- evidence of appropriate consultation with tangata whenua; and
- appropriate proposed conditions.

The Minister must decline an application if the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity [section 21(3)(b)]

We consider you can be satisfied that the project does not involve an ineligible activity because it:

- would not occur on identified Māori land, Māori customary land or a Māori reservation as confirmed by the relevant records of title.
- would not occur in a customary marine title area or protected customary rights area as it is not in the coastal marine area (CMA).
- is not an aquaculture activity or activity that is incompatible with aquaculture activities that would occur in an aquaculture settlement area and for which the applicant is not authorised to apply for a coastal permit because it will not occur in the CMA.
- would not require an access arrangement which cannot be granted under the Crown Minerals Act (including s61(1A)) because it does not include an access arrangement and does not occur on Schedule 4 land.
- would not be prevented by section 165J, M, Q, ZC or ZDB of the RMA because it will not occur in the CMA
- would not occur on Schedule 4 land as confirmed by the records of title.
- would not occur on a national reserve as confirmed by the records of title.
- would not occur on a reserve held under the Reserves Act 1977 that is managed by or vested in someone other than the Crown or a local authority and that person has not consented in writing as confirmed by the records of title.
- is not a prohibited activity or decommissioning activity under the EEZA, 15B or 15C of the RMA
- is not for the purpose of an offshore renewable energy project.

No comments raised by parties invited to comment have indicated that the project would be ineligible for referral.

<p>The Minister must decline an application if the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision [section 21(3)(c)]</p>	<p>We consider that you have sufficient information to inform your decision on the referral application</p>
<p>Relevant considerations and procedural requirements in Treaty settlement, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, joint management agreement, or the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 or the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 [section 16]</p>	<p>We have not identified any matters under section 16 of the Act relevant to the application.</p>
<p>Section 22 assessment criteria</p>	
<p>The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]</i> The only current GPS is the Government Policy Statement on Grocery Competition. As this project does not involve a supermarket development or grocery-related activities, there is no GPS relevant to your decision.</p> <p>The Minister <u>may</u> consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant:</p> <p><i>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)]</i> The project itself is not provided for or identified as a priority project by central or local government. However, the applicant has assessed the project against the Government's International Education Going for Growth Plan 2025 (IEGGP) which aims to double the value of international education by 2034, increasing its direct contribution to GDP from \$3.6b to \$7.2b.</p> <p>The applicant notes that the UoA is New Zealand's top-ranked university and is best positioned to deliver on the IEGGP vision. The applicant considers that the proposed Student Centre and Library will support the national vision as identified in the IEGGP by maintaining and strengthening UoA's regional and national significance, ensuring its ongoing contribution to the region and the country's economic, social, and knowledge-based outcome.</p> <p>AC have noted that the project aligns with the intent of the City Centre Zones and Learning Precinct of the AUP by helping to ensure Auckland plays a leading role as a primary international centre for business and culture, while the Learning Precinct identifies the unique requirements of tertiary education providers.</p> <p>We are unclear on the level of contribution a new Student Centre & Library will have with increasing student enrolments at the University but acknowledge that ensuring suitable facilities to support the needs of a university and their students is likely to contribute to a positive student experience and enhance the reputation of the university as an educational provider. This is highlighted in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2025 which states that 'To remain competitive and achieve the Government's goal of doubling the value of international education by 2034, New Zealand needs a more strategic, coordinated approach. This includes targeted promotion in key markets, system-wide improvements to the student experience'. The TES then outlines actions available to achieve student growth, one of these including 'Supporting sector experience and capability to increase capacity for growth'.</p> <p>We note that the intent of the project is to increase capacity, establish a vibrant student hub, enlarge and activate surrounding open spaces, and create a recognisable gateway between the City Campus and the central city. The application also states that the design of the building will enable the project to adapt to changing needs, with flexibility provided in the built form to adapt to the changing expectations of a modern learning environment. This addresses a number of the challenges outlined within the TES and the IEGGP and the TES including Technological change is continuing to transform the economy and society. Rapid advances in digital tools and artificial intelligence are reshaping how people work, live and learn. These changes present challenges but also open new opportunities for innovation, including in how education and research are delivered and applied.</p> <p>Overall, we consider that the project has the ability to align with the intent of the Government's International Education Going for Growth Plan 2025, and the Tertiary Education Strategy 2025. However, as the project is not listed as a priority the project cannot be referred under s22(2)(a)(i) of the Act.</p> <p><i>Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]</i> The applicant has noted that universities fall within the definition of 'additional infrastructure' within the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure (NPS-I). The applicant has described the UoA as the highest ranked university in New Zealand and one of the top 100 universities in the world, and stating the university is both a regionally and nationally significant educational infrastructure asset.</p> <p>The applicant considers the project to be a critical component of a university, saying that a modern and well-facilitated student centre and library is critical to accommodate current student demand and future growth. The application goes on to state that quality student centre and library facilities play a key role in enhancing the student experience, fostering academic success, and supporting research and collaboration, thereby contributing to the University's regional and national impact.</p> <p>The applicant considers that the project will ensure the UoA can continue to operate and provide services and provide for the changing needs and demands of current and future populations. Given the important role that the project is deemed to have within the efficient operation of a university, the applicant considers the project can enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure.</p> <p>Auckland Council have concluded that the project does not include any infrastructure. While this may align with the definition of infrastructure under the AUP, it is noted that the definition within the NPS-I does include universities as highlighted by the applicant. The comments provided from AC do mention how the project will provide essential social infrastructure for the university. Upon review of the NPS-I we agree that universities are intended to be considered as infrastructure under the NPS-I. As such the project has the ability to uphold intent of the NPS by supporting the efficient operation and resilience of the university, and the social and cultural wellbeing of students as required by Objective 1 of the NPS-I.</p>

Given that the university is New Zealand's largest university and is ranked 1st within New Zealand and 65th internationally (out of 1500 institutions) it is considered that the UoA can be considered both regionally and nationally significant. We recommend that the project can be referred under section s22(2)(a)(ii).

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)]

The applicant states that the project will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment by being highly accessible to existing and planned public transport links, along with existing cycleways and shared paths. The applicant highlights that the project is adequately sized to meet the current and future needs of the University, including catering to the current student population of approximately 47,000 students while providing sufficient size for future growth.

AC have noted that the project has the potential to deliver positive public realm, activation, and campus connectivity outcomes. AC also considers that the project is unlikely to result in significant adverse landscape and/or visual effects and will likely result in overall positive effects for both the university and the city centre urban landscape. Further information has been requested regarding design elements, with these being able to be provided as part of the substantive process. While the project has been designed in a manner that contributes to a connected well-functioning environment, AC considers that the protection of historic heritage is a key element in providing a well-functioning urban environment and therefore raises concerns with the demolition of the existing student union building. AC's request for a built heritage assessment is able to be provided as part of the substantive process.

We have reviewed the definition of a well-functioning urban environment under the NPS-UD and note that the retention of historic buildings is not specified. Rather the focus is on providing for a variety of sites that can support a range of businesses and homes which have good accessibility and connectivity with the wider environment. Both the comments received from AC and the urban design assessment submitted as part of the application have acknowledged that the design of the project will increase connectivity and provide an active street frontage, this enhancing the amenity of the urban landscape.

We acknowledge the concerns raised regarding the loss of heritage and note that this will be assessed further through a heritage assessment completed for the substantive process. We have reviewed the AUP and consider that the heritage assessment should consider the objectives and policies of the AUP heritage overlay, specifically Policy 14 which intends to avoid the demolition of heritage buildings unless demolition is required to allow for significant public benefit. The heritage assessment needs to consider the public gains of the project against the adverse effects on the overall heritage fabric of the Auckland city centre.

Overall, it is considered that the project is able to contribute to a well-functioning environment, and we therefore recommend that the project can be referred under section 22(2)(a)(iii).

Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]

The applicant has stated that the project will help sustain and potentially expand UoA's already significant contribution to the Auckland regional economy and New Zealand's national education and knowledge economy. The Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) commissioned by the applicant concludes that the one-time construction and development activity is estimated to contribute approximately \$463.3 million in GDP for the Auckland region over the five-year development timeframe, supporting a total of 3,471 full-time equivalent (FTE) years over that period.

The EIA also states that there are several non-monetised regional and national benefits of the project, including enabling efficient use of existing education infrastructure, supporting international education growth, supporting student productivity, retention, and academic outcomes, and enhancing international education exports and associated expenditure. The application notes that the project is likely to have economic benefits that extend to a national level. One example given is that the UoA attracts international students, which further contributes to national GDP through an increase in spending.

AC have raised concerns with the methodology used within the Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) and have requested that a cost benefit analysis be completed, this confirming if the project is likely to have significant economic benefits.

We note that both the TES and the IEGGP clearly state that tertiary education provides a sustainable contribution to New Zealand's GDP, particularly where these facilities support and attract international students. The increased efficiency and capacity of the University have the ability to provide regional and potential national economic benefits as outlined within the submitted economic assessment. The methodology used to reach the conclusion is a matter to be considered by an expert panel as part of the substantive process.

Overall, it is considered that the project will deliver significant economic benefits and we therefore recommend that the project can be referred under section 22(2)(a)(iv).

Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]

The applicant outlines that the project has been informed by the University's Te Rautaki Aronga Toitū – Sustainability Strategy and Te Taumata Tukuwāro-kore – Net Zero Carbon Strategy, and therefore, the project will likely contribute to an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The applicant highlights that the existing Student Union and General Library buildings on site are old and perform poorly from an environmental perspective, while the new building is intended to be designed targeting the current 6-Star Greenstar Rating requirements, representing a significant improvement in the environmental performance.

AC has raised concerns that the building contains embodied carbon, defined as the emissions generated during the construction of the building. This embodied carbon will be lost when the building is demolished. retaining and reusing the existing building reduces the demand for new construction materials, lowering embodied carbon emissions. The council also note that the location of the project is well serviced by public and active modes of transport, which contribute to climate change measures. AC notes that the applicant will have the opportunity to promote climate change mitigation as part of the substantive process.

We note that the project intends to address climate change through the design of the building and consider the further discussion on this is able to be completed if deemed required by the panel as part of the substantive process. It is considered that the project will not result in regional climate change benefits from the project and therefore consider that the project cannot be referred under this section.

Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]

From a regional perspective the applicant has assessed the Auckland Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and Auckland Unitary Plan and considers the project to be consistent with the relevant objectives and policies.

The Auckland Plan 2050 is Auckland's long-term spatial plan which directs growth toward a quality compact urban form, concentrating intensification within the existing urban area. The applicant considers that the project will assist in meeting the aims of the Auckland Plan 2050, creating a facility that responds to the changing needs of the University and provides learning facilities that can attract and retain talent within Auckland.

The City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) is Auckland Council's guiding document for the central city, setting the strategic direction for the city over the next 20 years. The overarching aim is to shape a city centre that is more connected, liveable, sustainable, and economically prosperous. The Learning Quarter is one of eight transformational moves listed within the CCMP and seeks to improve the physical connections between the university, the city centre, and the city fringe by fully integrating the Learning Quarter into the heart of the city. The applicant considers that the project assists in the overall vision of the CCMP.

AC have provided comments confirming the project aligns with the intent of the of the city centre zone and learning precinct within the AUP, the NPS-UD, Auckland 2050 and the CCMP with the project successfully delivers essential social infrastructure for the University. The only exception to this is the loss of a heritage building, this stated to be inconsistent with these plans and strategies.

	<p>We note that the project supports the continued operation of the university's city centre campus. Its location will provide benefits to the city centre and uphold the intent of the learning precinct as outlined above. We note the concerns raised with regard to the loss of a heritage building and consider that further information will be provided as part of the substantive process to determine the scale of adverse effects and non-compliance with the AUP.</p> <p>Overall, we consider that the project is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies, and we therefore recommend that the project can be referred under s22(2)(a)(x).</p>
<p>Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]</p>	<p><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></p> <p>The applicant has listed the benefits of using the fast-track process for this project as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - securing the requisite approvals through the fast-track process instead of through the standard RMA and HNZPTA processes will enable the project to be progressed in a more timely and cost-effective way - given the scale of the project, the applicant anticipates that an application for resource consent would be notified under the RMA, at least on a limited basis. Notification of the application would substantially increase the potential for delays to the commencement of the project - obtaining approvals under the Act could result in the project being approved up to three years earlier than it might otherwise be under the RMA. <p>Overall, we agree with the applicant's reasoning and consider the project meets this criterion.</p> <p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i></p> <p>The applicant considers that the project will meet this criterion as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the only approvals being sought are resource consent and an archaeological authority reducing the complexity of the project - the substantive application for the project will be supported by comprehensive technical assessments. <p>Overall, we agree with the applicant's reasoning and consider the project meets this criterion.</p>
<p>Reasons to decline</p>	
<p>Minister <u>must</u> decline [section 21(3)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister <u>must</u> decline a referral application if:</i></p> <p><i>The application may not be accepted under subsection 1 (meets referral criteria)</i> We consider the project meets the section 22 criteria.</p> <p><i>The Minister is satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity</i> We consider you can be satisfied that the project does not include an ineligible activity.</p> <p><i>The Minister considers that they do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section</i> We consider you have sufficient information to inform your decision.</p> <p>We do not consider that you must decline the application under section 21(3) of the Act.</p>
<p>Minister <u>may</u> decline [section 21(4) and 21(5)(a-h)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister <u>may</u> decline a referral application for any other reason, whether or not it meets the criteria in section 22.</i></p> <p><i>Reasons to decline a referral application under subsection 4 include, without limitation:</i></p> <p><i>The project would be inconsistent with a Treaty settlement, Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, or a joint management agreement</i> There is no indication within the application, comments received from invited parties, or from the section 18 Treaty Settlements report, that the project would be inconsistent with these documents.</p> <p><i>It would be more appropriate to deal with the matters that would be authorised by the proposed approvals under another Act or Acts</i> No comments or reports indicated the project should be considered under another Act or Acts.</p> <p><i>The project may have significant adverse effects on the environment</i> The applicant has noted that the existing student building is a scheduled heritage building under the AUP, and its demolition could result in significant adverse effects as this cannot be mitigated or avoided. The applicant has provided an assessment which has concluded that the public benefits associated with the project outweigh the adverse effects caused by the loss of the building. AC have also stated that the loss of the building can be considered as a significant adverse effect on the heritage fabric of the Auckland city centre.</p> <p>We consider that this assessment and the stance of AC is one that needs to be considered by an expert panel, which would be supported by a built heritage assessment. We also note that an expert panel would have the ability to seek further information and impose conditions to ensure the management of potential adverse effects.</p> <p><i>The applicant(s) has a poor compliance history under a specified Act that relates to any of the proposed approvals</i> The applicant has advised that they do not have a poor compliance history and no information has been provided from any other person stating otherwise.</p> <p><i>The project area includes land that the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations considers necessary for Treaty settlement purposes</i> The project area does not include land necessary for Treaty Settlement purposes.</p>

The project includes an activity that is a prohibited activity under the Resource Management Act 1991
Based on the application submitted, the project does not include an activity that has a prohibited activity status.

A substantive application for the project would have one or more competing applications.
AC confirmed there are no competing applications within the project area.

In relation to any proposed approval of the kind described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consents), there are one or more existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a)
AC confirmed there are no existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a).

Any other matter
We have not identified any other matters as reasons to decline.

Conclusion
We have not identified any matters under section 21(4) or (5) that would be a reason you may decline the referral application.

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 the 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 (if applicable)
 - 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.