

To Hunua Quarry Development Expert Panel
From Phil Heffernan, Project Manager, Winstone Aggregates
Date 8 September 2026
Subject FTAA-2603-1185 - Hunua Quarry - Panel Minute 8 Process and reasons for selecting the Meremere offset site

Purpose and conclusion

At the ecology workshop on 3 September 2026, the Panel requested a short explanation of why the Meremere site was selected and of the work undertaken before that decision. I coordinated the property review for Winstone Aggregates. The search and evaluation occurred over approximately eight months and began with a preference to locate offsetting as close as practicable to Hunua Quarry.

I disagree with Auckland Council ecologist Mr. Russock's assertion that Meremere was selected for convenience, simply because it was available within the Fletcher Concrete and Infrastructure Limited (FCIL) portfolio. I confirm that the site was selected after closer options had been investigated and used to the extent practicable. The final package is deliberately distributed: approximately 75% of the proposed 85.62 ha of revegetation is at Hunua Quarry, on adjoining Hunua Road and Judge Richardson Drive properties, or in the Hunua Ranges. Meremere supplies the remaining 21.12 ha (approximately 25%) where it can provide a substantial, integrated and legally secure ecological gain. Site selection and development of offset proposals were undertaken with input and advice from Winstone's expert ecology team. That process took approximately six months to develop the package now before the Panel.

Search process and alternatives considered

Local land first. The first step was to test the quarry landholding and the immediate surrounding area. The package uses the practicable opportunities found there: 25.8 ha of later rehabilitation planting in the pit, 3.7 ha at Judge Richardson Drive and 15 ha across 484, 397 and 411 Hunua Road. This local component also protects existing bush, restores riparian and wetland habitat, and expands pest and weed control.

Wider Hunua and Franklin search. We then considered potentially suitable farms and other properties across the wider catchment, including privately owned land, iwi-owned land, Department of Conservation or defence land, and other public land. No available farm or third-party site was identified that combined the required scale, ecological suitability, additional gain, workable tenure and delivery certainty. Much of the closer indigenous land was already protected by QEII or other covenants, reducing the additional gain available or in more fragmented ownership. Defence and other public land depended on third-party approvals and operational priorities, while substantial land toward Drury is committed to future urban or industrial development.

Hunua Regional Park. Discussions with Auckland Council Regional Parks were constructive and produced in-principle support dated 23 March 2026. More than 20 ha of revegetation, over 15 ha of weed removal, 2 ha of wetland work and 2,580 m of Mangatawhiri River planting are included there. However, Regional Park land could not supply the whole requirement.

FCIL portfolio review. Following early feedback through the Fast-track process from the EPA and other Fast Track applicants that applicants should secure control of the land relied on for effects management and have legal certainty over the ability to use those sites confirmed before commencing the Panel process, we reviewed the wider FCIL property portfolio. Pukekawa and Meremere Quarries were examined, alongside the land around Hunua Road and Judge Richardson Drive. Although Pukekawa is closer, ecological advice was that Meremere offered the better practicable restoration opportunity, including land capable of substantial indigenous planting and linked terrestrial, stream and wetland improvement.

Why Meremere was selected

Ecological similarity and landscape context. Meremere lies in the Hapuakohe Ecological District, adjoining the southern boundary of the Hunua Ecological District. The two areas have comparable greywacke landforms, volcanic ash-derived clay soils, warm-humid climate and representative podocarp-broadleaf and kauri-hard beech forest types. The project ecologists therefore assessed Meremere as sufficiently similar to provide like-for-like forest restoration, with likely overlap in wide-ranging fauna such as long-tailed bats, kākā and kererū.

Scale, additionality and integrated outcomes. The selected footprint provides 21.12 ha of indigenous revegetation, enhancement of 7.53 ha of existing bush, and weed and pest management across 29.4 ha. It also provides 0.6 ha of riparian planting along 400 m of stream and 0.15 ha of wetland work. Restoration of this degraded headwater land, together with removal of a severe perched culvert, improves access to at least 1,915 m of upstream habitat and the quality of water leaving the site toward the Whangamarino system. These gains could not be assembled at the same scale on the closer sites that remained available.

Cultural and planning considerations. The restoration footprint has been configured to avoid the mapped Site and Area of Significance to Māori (ID 221). The proposed conservation activity is permitted under the applicable planning framework. The land is part of the wider Meremere holding, but the defined offset footprint is not proposed for quarrying. Its future use will instead be constrained by the ecological obligations and registered protection.

Control and enforceability. FCIL ownership was a delivery criterion, not a substitute for ecological suitability. It enables Winstone to control timing, access, planting, pest management, monitoring and remedial work without depending on a third-party owner's changing programme. This is important because the offset is fundamental to effects management. The Kings Quarry process similarly demonstrates the Panel's concern that relied-on offsets must be sufficiently investigated and capable of delivery, and that enforceable mechanisms may be needed where separate land or approvals are involved (Kings Quarry decision¹).

Selection outcome and long-term protection

The selection of Meremere reflects the outcome of a broad and sequential assessment process. The search began with land at and near Hunua Quarry, extended to potentially suitable third-party and publicly owned properties, and included a review of the wider FCIL property portfolio. Suitable opportunities closer to the quarry have been incorporated and comprise the majority of the overall package. Meremere was selected to meet the remaining requirement because it provides a sufficiently large and ecologically appropriate area that can be restored early and managed securely over the long term.

The proposed conditions provide certainty that these outcomes will be delivered and maintained. Conditions 157–160 require the offset package to be implemented through the Ecological Management Plan. They also require conservation covenants under section 106 of the RMA and section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977 over Focus Areas 1 and 2, registered against the relevant records of title. The protection would therefore attach to the land and could not be altered solely at FCIL's discretion. Any future change would be subject to the applicable statutory and legal processes. The proposed covenant provides the Panel with a durable and enforceable mechanism for securing the ecological outcomes relied on as part of the Project.

¹ (Kings Quarry Expansion – Stage 2, Record of Decision of the Expert Consenting Panel, 17 December 2025, at [431]–[435]).