



14 August 2026

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform & Infrastructure
Parliamentary Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister Bishop,

Fast Track residential development – request for a pause and review

As the mayors of Tier 1 growth councils, we are writing to support the call from Auckland Mayor Wayne Brown and Queenstown Lakes Mayor John Glover for a pause on Fast-track decisions for large-scale housing developments, until a review of how the Fast Track pathway is being applied to district/cities with significant capacity already for residential growth.

Both Selwyn and Waimakariri are experiencing ongoing and persistent growth – and have done since before the Canterbury earthquakes. Our councils have planned for that growth, investing considerable time and resources considering where that growth should occur and what infrastructure would be needed/is ready to support it.

Waimakariri's District Plan has been well thought out, with support and engagement from our communities, and has been considered by a highly experienced hearings panel to deliver structured growth that prioritises affordability and delivers up to 17,000 new dwellings over the next 30 years. In population terms that is just shy of 50,000 new residents. StatsNZ note that Waimakariri is a high-growth district.

Our concern is that the current Fast-track process is being utilised to bypass established planning processes and enable growth outside the areas identified, sequenced and planned for through our respective District Plans. These documents have been developed with significant community consultation, input from developers, consider councils' infrastructure pipelines, and have only recently been adopted following review from independent hearing commissions.

Specifically, we are concerned Fast-track is being used as a pathway to progress projects that sit outside this planned growth, including, in some instances, projects that have already been tested and declined through established planning processes.

In Waimakariri, one example is the proposed Ōhoka development, which is seeking Fast-track approval for approximately 850 new dwellings.

Previous investigations have determined this land is unsuitable for large-scale development. This was due to significant constraints, including historical flooding issues, the absence of supporting transport infrastructure, and widespread community opposition.

This project has been reviewed independently twice and has been declined both times.

Likewise, the proposed development of the Pegasus Golf Course also raises significant concerns about cumulative growth.

With a further 1,500 homes already proposed nearby at Gressons Road, adding up to 1,000 more homes at Pegasus would place additional pressure on an already constrained transport network, exacerbated by delays with the Woodend Bypass, and would create significant demand for infrastructure and services that have not been planned for.

This area is a special purpose recreation zone, prime for economic development which would benefit the community. To develop this into residential housing would put pressure on our roading network, local school rolls, public transport, as well as raise concerns about flood mitigation. Again, for these reasons there is also significant community opposition.

In Selwyn, the issue is not a lack of land identified for residential growth. Selwyn is one of New Zealand's fastest-growing districts and our recently reviewed District Plan already provides significant development capacity to accommodate projected growth over the next 30 years. Council's residential growth modelling projects demand for approximately 32,760 additional dwellings over that period.

That growth has been deliberately planned and sequenced alongside the infrastructure required to support it. Council's long-term investment decisions for transport, water, wastewater, stormwater and community infrastructure are based on where and when that growth is expected to occur.

We are now facing multiple Fast-track residential proposals which, collectively, have the potential to add approximately 8,000 additional houses outside that planned growth pathway. Many are outside areas where Council has planned or sequenced infrastructure investment.

Our concern is the cumulative impact of multiple large developments being considered individually through Fast-track, without sufficient consideration of what they collectively mean for the District's growth pattern, infrastructure networks and existing ratepayers.

In practice, large residential developments approved outside planned growth areas require roads, water, wastewater, stormwater, community facilities and other infrastructure that sit outside councils' planned investment programmes yet are vital to supporting growing communities. Fast-tracking housing does not necessarily fast-track those supporting investments.

Both of our Districts have planned for growth and already have significant capacity to meet the government's housing objectives.

Where we are concerned, is that Fast-track is being utilised to enable unplanned growth which puts significant financial pressure on councils by requiring us to invest in infrastructure earlier than anticipated, bring forward capital expenditure, and accelerate borrowing. Some of these projects have the potential to create perverse outcomes on our natural and urban environments.

Even when costs are ultimately recovered over time, they are often borne by the existing ratepayers up-front, and the timing and location of growth can create significant funding, financing and delivery pressures for councils and communities.

It is important that our communities remain at the centre of growth decisions because, while central government can make the decision to enable development, local government and local ratepayers are left to fund and service the consequences.

We support the idea and purpose of Fast-track where it is used to enable major infrastructure and development projects of genuine national or regional significance.

We question, however, whether large-scale residential developments should routinely have access to the same pathway, particularly where councils have already provided substantial housing capacity through recently completed planning processes.

Given these risks, we believe it is timely to step back and consider whether Fast-track's application to large-scale residential development is now extending beyond the original intent, and whether stronger safeguards are needed to ensure growth remains properly planned, serviced and funded.

For those reasons, we are therefore asking the Government to:

- pause further Fast-track approvals for residential developments in districts/cities with significant capacity already while the approach is reviewed;
- review whether Fast-track residential development is consistent with the original purpose of the legislation;
- recognise and respect locally developed District Plans and growth strategies, and infrastructure sequencing when considering residential Fast-track applications; and
- require the cumulative impact of Fast-track residential developments within a district, settlement or infrastructure catchment to be considered, rather than assessing each proposal in isolation; and
- ensure that the infrastructure and service costs generated by fast tracked development are not transferred to existing ratepayers.

We see a pause on Fast-track decisions for large-scale housing developments as an opportunity to strengthen community support for the Fast-track consenting pathway by ensuring it retains public confidence, provides certainty for councils, developers and communities, and supports development that is sustainable - not only at the point of approval, but over the decades that follow.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you and to work constructively with the Government on a Fast-track process that delivers on its intended purpose while supporting sustainable and properly planned growth.

Yours sincerely



Mayor Dan Gordon
Waimakariri District Council



Mayor Lydia Gliddon
Selwyn District Council

Copy to:

Mayor Wayne Brown, Auckland City Council and Mayor John Glover Queenstown Lakes District Council.

Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Regional Development Minister Hon Shane Jones, Local Government Minister Hon Simon Watts, Andy Foster MP, New Zealand First Spokesperson for Local Government Andy Foster MP.

Hon Matt Doocey MP for Waimakariri, Hon Nicole Grigg MP for Selwyn
Dan Rosewarne Labour List MP