

24 August 2026

We, the undersigned group of Mayors, represent some of the largest and fastest growing parts of New Zealand.

We are calling on the government to pause existing greenfield housing fast-track applications and are asking all political parties to support legislation to remove residential development in rural areas from the Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024.

We support housing growth and recognise the need for efficient planning and consenting processes.

Our councils are investing heavily in infrastructure, enabling new housing through planning changes and working to support growth in a sustainable, well-coordinated way.

But we are increasingly concerned about the negative impacts of approving numerous greenfield housing developments in rural areas.

Fast-tracking these projects creates a range of problems:

- It forces growth into places where growth was never planned for, placing immense pressure on public infrastructure, potentially overwhelming pipes and roads.
- It shifts much of the costs of this growth from developers on to ratepayers and taxpayers, forcing them to subsidise billions of dollars' worth of infrastructure that would otherwise be invested elsewhere.
- It undermines the spatial plans that councils have worked on with communities in recent years (as well as future regional spatial plans), making a mockery of local democracy.
- While projects are approved quickly with limited scrutiny, developers are not required to build houses quickly, allowing them to land-bank and defeat the point of fast track.
- It does not prevent developers from gaining fast-track approval and immediately selling the land on at a profit, delivering no immediate housing growth or other benefits to communities.

Housing growth is important, but not all growth is equally valuable. Communities need smart growth that is supported by infrastructure, aligned with strategic planning, and paid for fairly.

Our councils have raised these issues with the government repeatedly and have largely been ignored.

The government's recent announcement about slightly improving the development contributions regime is welcome but does not go far enough.

A pause on existing greenfield housing fast-track applications and removing these developments from the fast-track system altogether is the only way forward.

By doing so, we will return the system to the main purpose it was originally intended to serve - cutting through red tape to get nationally and regionally infrastructure consented.

At minimum, any future greenfield housing fast-track projects should:

- Demonstrate clearly that they can fund 100% of the costs of the growth that they create so ratepayers and taxpayers are no worse off.
- Be given only 6 months after approval to commence construction, ensuring they are actually fast, otherwise they should simply use standard RMA re-zoning pathways.
- Be non-transferrable, ensuring that developers with no intention of completing the project themselves can not use the system.
- Be assessed against the cumulative effects that they will have alongside any other out-of-sequence housing projects in the same area, rather than in isolation.

We remain committed to working with the Government to deliver ambitious housing growth, but it must be growth that is infrastructure-ready, financially sustainable, and planned in partnership with local communities and councils.

New Zealand deserves housing development that creates lasting value, rather than transferring long-term costs and risks from greenfield housing developers to ratepayers and taxpayers.



Wayne Brown
Mayor of Auckland



Mayor John Glover
Queenstown Lakes District Council



Mayor Mahe Drysdale
Tauranga City Council



Mayor Lydia Gliddon
Selwyn District Council



Mayor Dan Gordon
Waimakariri District Council