



29 October 2024

OIAD-1333

9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 21 October 2024 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

I am making this request under the Official Information Act. Can I please have:

- 1. All documentation and external and internal communications regarding the criteria used by the Independent Advisory Group and officials to assess the suitability of Winton Land Ltd's Sunfield as one of the 149 projects included in the Fast-track Approvals Bill.*
- 2. All documentation and external and internal communications regarding the criteria used by the Independent Advisory Group and officials to assess the suitability of Mill Road as one of the 149 projects included in the Fast-track Approvals Bill.*
- 3. All documentation and external and internal communications regarding any joint assessment of Sunfield and Mill Road as suitable Fast-track Approvals Bill projects, given Mill Road would run across and alongside the Sunfield site.*

Ministers recently received a report from an independent Advisory Group with their recommendations on the suitability of projects for inclusion in Schedule 2 of the Bill. Due to the high public interest in the Bill, the Ministry has proactively released the report on our website at the following link: <https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/acts/fast-track-approvals-bill/>. The report includes an overview of the terms of reference for the Advisory Group, and a summary of all assessed project applications, both successful and unsuccessful. It also details the criteria that was used in assessing applications.

The full terms of reference, which details the criteria used by the Advisory Group, are also publicly available on the Ministry's website at: <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Package-2-Letters-of-Appointment-Terms-of-Reference-for-Advisory-Group.pdf>.

I would also encourage you to review the information that the Minister Responsible for RMA Reform, Hon Chris Bishop, has released on the Beehive website relating to the Bill. Hon Chris Bishop's press releases can be found at: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/minister/hon-chris-bishop>.

Due to the public interest in the Fast-track Approvals Bill and projects that applied to be considered for inclusion within the schedules of the Bill, the Ministry plans to proactively release material we hold relating to all applications on our website by 28 November 2024, including any assessment the Ministry completed regarding the projects named in your request. Once published, you will be able to navigate to them through our website at: <https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/acts/fast-track-approvals-bill/>.

Therefore, the Ministry must refuse your request at this time under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information requested is soon to be publicly available.

Please note that the material proactively released on our website is likely to include redactions made under section 9 of the Act, particularly under the following withholding grounds:

- 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.
- 9(2)(b)(ii) to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.

Cabinet has approved the inclusion of 149 projects in Schedule 2 of the Bill. Once the Bill is passed into law, these projects will be required to seek consent through Expert Panels (the Panels).

The fast-track process streamlines multiple approval steps for infrastructure and development projects that provide significant national or regional benefits. This process offers a consolidated, 'one-stop-shop' approach, ensuring more efficient decision-making. The Panels will have the authority to make final decisions on approvals for these projects and can impose conditions, including to manage environmental impacts.

The Ministry for the Environment is responsible for the Bill, while the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) will provide secretariat and administrative support to the Panels. Further information on the projects in the process of going through the Panels will be made available in due course on the EPA's website: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/fast-track-consenting/>.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decision to refuse this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Please note that due to the public interest in our work the Ministry for the Environment publishes responses to requests for official information on our [OIA responses page](#) shortly after the response has been sent. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Ministerial Services team: ministerials@mfe.govt.nz

Nāku noa, nā



Max Gander-Cooper
Acting Manager, Fast Track Consenting
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao