

Response ID ANON-URZ4-5FQX-S

Submitted to Fast-track approval applications
Submitted on 2024-05-03 14:20:44

Submitter details

Is this application for section 2a or 2b?

2A

1 Submitter name

Individual or organisation name:
Whangarei District Council

2 Contact person

Contact person name:
Simon Weston

3 What is your job title

Job title:
Chief Executive

4 What is your contact email address?

Email:
s 9(2)(a)

5 What is your phone number?

Phone number:
s 9(2)(a)

6 What is your postal address?

Postal address:

9 Rust Avenue, Whangarei

7 Is your address for service different from your postal address?

Yes

Organisation:

Contact person:

Phone number:

Email address:

Job title:

Please enter your service address:

Section 1: Project location

Site address or location

Add the address or describe the location:

The Project extent can broadly be described as the non-residential area of the city from Alexander Street, located to the south to the Whangarei Boys High School, all of Rust and Selwyn Avenues, the civic, medical and commercial land between State High 1 and Bank Street, and the Water Street and Vine Street at grade carpark areas.

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Do you have a current copy of the relevant Record(s) of Title?

No

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Who are the registered legal land owner(s)?

Please write your answer here:

The applicant is landowner of a significant portion of the area. The finalised project extent is likely to be significantly refined, following consultation and agreement with interested parties, and consultation with and hapu and the public in accordance with the Local Government Act 2002 requirements. The support of legal owners of all parcels of land will be confirmed through those processes.

Detail the nature of the applicant's legal interest (if any) in the land on which the project will occur

Please write your answer here:

The applicant is landowner of a significant portion of the area. The finalised project extent is likely to be significantly refined, following consultation and agreement with interested parties, and consultation with and hapu and the public in accordance with the Local Government Act 2002 requirements. The support of legal owners of all parcels of land will be confirmed through those processes.

Section 2: Project details

What is the project name?

Please write your answer here:

Future Knowledge Hub Project

What is the project summary?

Please write your answer here:

The application for Fast Track listing relates to a future project within what is described as our "Knowledge Hub Precinct (the Precinct)". The Precinct is one of four precincts identified in the Whangarei City Centre Plan. (WCCP). It will be a high-level spatial plan covering multiple landowners and outcomes within the rohe of hapu Te Parawhau and Ngati Kahu o Torongare and the jurisdictions of the Whangārei District and Northland Regional Councils.

What are the project details?

Please write your answer here:

The Precinct Plan is at the early stages of engagement and development and the WCCP provides the overall strategic direction over 30 years of which the Knowledge Project responds / will respond:

- Outcome 1: Experience: the city centre will be a busy and vibrant city centre with a range of retail, entertainment, arts and cultural facilities that offer a unique and authentic experience.
- Outcome 2: Connectivity: the city centre will be an easily accessible and safe city centre that is well connected to our surrounding district centres.
- Outcome 3: Living: the city centre will be a vibrant city centre community with a choice of homes, services and amenities to meet resident's changing needs
- Outcome 4: Employment & Education: the city centre will be a dynamic and innovative city centre which attracts success through job creation, knowledge and economic transactions
- Outcome 5: Design: the city centre will be renowned for its exciting, unique and well designed buildings and spaces for work and relaxation.

The Precinct Plan covers a large area; there are multiple landowners; multiple outcomes sought. It will be developed with the community, hapū and stakeholders building social license and ensuring the community has the opportunity to engage. Importantly, it informs investments and decisions from Council and partners entities including central government, tertiary education providers, Regional Council, investment funds and private developers.

In parallel with the Precinct Plan development, key stakeholders from the education and business sector have been working with some councillors on a concept for a Knowledge, Education and Arts Hub within the central portion of the Precinct. This comprises educational institutions, student accommodation, cultural facilities, and community resources across a number of properties primarily owned by the Councils and the University of Auckland (UoA) site on Alexander Avenue. While not a Council developed concept, with proposals having to be considered through the Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan process, this provides an example of how this area could evolve.

At this early stage, the likely outcomes and Regional Benefits include:

- An educational response to addressing Northland's socio-economic challenges by strengthening regionally-based vocational education, training, university education, and research
- Providing regionally accessible tertiary educational opportunities and outcomes for the regional population

- Providing housing accommodation suitable for students and closer to their whanau support networks
- Supportive facilities for students and inner-city residents
- A vibrant, down-town and active urban environment with good quality space and design
- Regional carparking facilities and improved active and public transport connections

These outcomes align strongly to the strategic direction provided for the Precinct within the WCCP. However, confirmation of the project scope and timeframes is pending the outcomes of consultative processes and subject to the Local Government Act processes being satisfied. This includes engagement with the multiple partners, stakeholders and legal interests in the Precinct area. This is intended to occur and there is sufficient time for it to occur, between Listing and Referral of this Project. In support of this Council has resolved to submit a placeholder application for a future project associated with the Knowledge Hub Precinct, and to form a Project Advisory Group to assist in progressing the Precinct Plan. This is a placeholder application for a future project arising from that process, following due process having been met.

Describe the staging of the project, including the nature and timing of the staging

Please write your answer here:

The indicative staging of components of the project are over a 10 year period and taking into account concepts and early staging from the Knowledge, Education and Arts Hub proponents, a high level/indicative list of components and timeframes are below:

2025 - Precinct Plan completion

2026 – Student Facilities

2027/2030 – Student Accommodation (staged development)

2027/2030 – Campus (staged development)

2028 – Campus Grounds

2030 – Business Innovation Centre

2030 – New Theatre

2032 – Carparking facilities

As outlined above these are indicative only with the components and timings being subject to changes through the Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan process. While having multiple parties to the development creates some complexity, it has the benefit of spreading the funding load. Funding is not yet confirmed but the need for this development has been established through early discussions with key stakeholders, and having consents in place give investor confidence. Procurement and detailed design will likely occur in tandem with funding being worked through by relevant parties and agencies (including Local Government Act 2002 processes in the case of Councils).

It is expected that in order to achieve referral, a clearly defined project scope and concept designs will occur. Based on the timeframes in the Bill, this would need to occur within 2 years of the Bills enactment.

What are the details of the regime under which approval is being sought?

Please write your answer here:

The Project is at an early concept stage and incorporates multiple land uses across multiple land parcels and zones

RMA s9 Approvals will cover the majority of statutory approvals required to authorise land use activities associated with the Project

There may be approvals required under:

RMA s11 Subdivision

RMA s13 Beds of Rivers

RMA s15 Discharge of Contaminants

RMA s177(2) relating to existing KiwiRail and Ministry for Education designations.

Reserves Act relating to works in Reserves in the Precinct area

If you seeking approval under the Resource Management Act, who are the relevant local authorities?

Please write your answer here:

Whangarei District Council and Northland Regional Council

What applications have you already made for approvals on the same or a similar project?

Please write your answer here:

No previous applications associated with this project have been made.

Is approval required for the project by someone other than the applicant?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The project is at conceptual stage. A need for the Project has been established and the Local Authority is signalling its support for this as a Priority. Securing approvals will support delivery through providing partner and investor certainty, with funding and approvals being worked through by relevant parties and agencies (including Local Government Act 2002 processes in the case of Councils).

If the approval(s) are granted, when do you anticipate construction activities will begin, and be completed?

Please write your answer here:

The indicative staging of components of the project are over a 10 year period and taking into account concepts and early staging from the Knowledge, Education and Arts Hub proponents, a high level/indicative list of components and timeframes are below:

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As outlined above these are indicative only with the components and timings being subject to changes through the Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan process.

Section 3: Consultation

Who are the persons affected by the project?

Please write your answer here:

Northland Regional Council

Te Pukenga

University of Auckland

Forum North Trust

Te Parawhau and Ngati Kahu o Torongare

Detail all consultation undertaken with the persons referred to above. Include a statement explaining how engagement has informed the project.

Please write your answer here:

Staff note that key Elected Members, supported by members of the education and business community, have had targeted discussions with potential occupants and development partners. This has resulted in confidential Memoranda of Understanding with:

- Forum North Trust
- Te Pukenga

Alongside this there have been initial discussions with the University of Auckland who have expressed an interest in the Forum North site. Auckland University of Technology have also contacted Council regarding the future of the Forum North site, with early discussions being held with Northland Regional Council staff. However, no formal position has been received from these agencies, with concepts and details yet to be worked through as part of the Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan process.

Engagement has been undertaken for the Knowledge Hub Precinct project by staff. This engagement has not had a relationship to this specific project and could not be used for this process.

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Describe any processes already undertaken under the Public Works Act 1981 in relation to the land or any part of the land on which the project will occur:

Please write your answer here:

No Public Works Act 1981 processes are underway.

Section 4: Iwi authorities and Treaty settlements

What treaty settlements apply to the geographical location of the project?

Please write your answer here:

Iwi in this area have not yet settled their Treaty claims. To this end, there are no legislative directions to tend to in the geographical area. There are no identified parcels of Maori land / marae or Wahi Tapū in the Precinct area. The area is outside the CMA.

Through the initial stages of the Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan WDC staff have engaged local hapū Te Parawhau and Ngati Kahu o Torongare as the two hapū entities which have expressed a cultural interest in the immediate area of interest for this Project.

Staff have met with these hapū members in the initial stages of Precinct Plan development to ascertain whether there is an interest from these entities.

While they have responded positively to the development of the plan, and would like to be involved in any progressions, it has not been possible to discuss any specific project associated with the area given the plan is in its early stages, and the timeframes of the Fast Track Amendment Bill.

WDC will be inviting their representatives into the project governance and control groups. Staff note that this may affect Te Parawhau and Ngati Kahu o Torongare hapu including Ngapuhi iwi claims with the Crown. Engagement on any future project is to be undertaken as part of the Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan.

Are there any Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 principles or provisions that are relevant to the project?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Are there any identified parcels of Māori land within the project area, marae, and identified wāhi tapu?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Is the project proposed on any land returned under a Treaty settlement or any identified Māori land described in the ineligibility criteria?

No

Has the applicant has secured the relevant landowners' consent?

No

Is the project proposed in any customary marine title area, protected customary rights area, or aquaculture settlement area declared under s 12 of the Māori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004 or identified within an individual iwi settlement?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Has there been an assessment of any effects of the activity on the exercise of a protected customary right?

No

If yes, please explain:

Upload your assessment if necessary:

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Section 5: Adverse effects

What are the anticipated and known adverse effects of the project on the environment?

Please describe:

A detailed assessment of effects on the environment and consenting strategy can be prepared to inform the scope and concept design stage of the Project. The main anticipated and known effects that will need to be managed for this urban land redevelopment include:

- Impacts on urban amenity, streetscape and design and cultural landscape
- Impacts on adjacent residential land
- Impacts on adjacent parks and reserves
- Impacts on existing uses/users of civic facilities
- Impacts on existing Designations
- Traffic, parking and roading
- Three Waters provision

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Section 6: National policy statements and national environmental standards

What is the general assessment of the project in relation to any relevant national policy statement (including the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement) and national environmental standard?

Please write your answer here:

Due to the urban brownfield location of the Project, the majority of National Direction documents will not be relevant. Those that are include the NPS on Urban Development and the NES for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil to Protect Human Health.

The Project will likely be consistent with the NPS:UD through its provision of student housing and more intensive use of existing urban land supply. Consistency with the NES:CS can be achieved through a DSI in the design stage and conditions of consent if soil contaminants of concern are identified.

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Section 7: Eligibility

Will access to the fast-track process enable the project to be processed in a more timely and cost-efficient way than under normal processes?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Use of the consolidated and efficient fast track approval process will:

- Enable delivery of a likely complex programme of individual projects with multiple partners across multiple land parcels and deliver an overall more efficient and effective outcome compared to addressing individual elements in an ad hoc and piecemeal consenting manner
- Enable all approvals to be considered and approved concurrently and remove the ability for other non-RMA approvals to load additional cost and complexity that might jeopardise the project and programme
- Provide investor certainty to a longer programme of work so that when project elements are able to be funded, that funding can be drawn on quickly, rather than waiting for potentially protracted RMA approvals that risks investment funds being diverted elsewhere

What is the impact referring this project will have on the efficient operation of the fast-track process?

Please write your answer here:

The project is in an early concept stage, with this being a placeholder application for a future project to be defined through the Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan process. Listing this project will provide Project partners with the positive signal to invest time and resources in developing the scope and design to a sufficient level of detail that enables an expert panel to efficiently understand its effects and identify appropriate conditions to balance enablement of the Project with mitigation of its impacts on affected parties and the receiving environment.

Has the project been identified as a priority project in a:

Local government plan or strategy

Please explain your answer here:

The general concept of an Education hub in this location is signalled in the Whangārei City Centre Plan. The Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan will be a spatial strategy.

Will the project deliver regionally or nationally significant infrastructure?

Regional significant infrastructure

Please explain your answer here:

Social infrastructure investment in tertiary education is Regionally significant.

Will the project:

increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, contribute to a well-functioning urban environment

Please explain your answer here:

Student accommodation is included in the indicative concept, although it is likely that this would not be on a Council site. If the application is limited to Council land, then it will not increase the supply of housing.

Will the project deliver significant economic benefits?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Please refer to the Project Description.

Will the project support primary industries, including aquaculture?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Potentially indirectly if the education opportunities are offered.

Will the project support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Potentially indirectly if the education opportunities are offered.

Will the project support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

It is envisioned that through providing housing in an existing urban environment with good access to daily amenities, public transport options and active transport options. This is also an example of a brownfield development of a centrally located education facility.

Will the project support adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

If accompanied by sufficient stormwater infrastructure identified through the flood risk modelling proposed and the delivery of the Blue Green Network Strategy

Will the project address significant environmental issues?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Through appropriate design and conditions that will be proposed and refined by an expert panel.

Is the project consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The general concept of an Education hub in this location is signalled in the Whangārei City Centre Plan and the anticipated in the District Plan zones for this land. The Knowledge Hub Precinct Plan will be a spatial strategy.

Anything else?

Please write your answer here:

Does the project includes an activity which would make it ineligible?

No

If yes, please explain:

Section 8: Climate change and natural hazards

Will the project be affected by climate change and natural hazards?

Yes

If yes, please explain:

The combination of Northland topography, geology and intensity of rainfall create challenges for the city centre including the project location and existing transportation links. The city centre is vulnerable to climatic events and it needs protection because it is essential to providing for the region's wellbeing.

Central Whangārei City has a history of flooding and inundation with exposure to high levels of river and coastal flooding which is projected to increase over the next 30 years. This is affecting business viability and investment in the city centre which impacts our economic growth. Planning is signalled in the Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 to model flood risk in urban Whangārei.

The potential infrastructure solutions, which are likely to include long-term adaptation options, will not be fully understood until this modelling has been completed, with site specific assessment being undertaken as part of any future project.

Section 9: Track record

Please add a summary of all compliance and/or enforcement actions taken against the applicant by any entity with enforcement powers under the Acts referred to in the Bill, and the outcome of those actions.

Please write your answer here:

WDC exercises many resource consents and Designations. From time to time occasional non-compliance can occur. WDC takes its environmental responsibilities seriously and usually rectifies these instances via self-monitoring.

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Declaration

Do you acknowledge your submission will be published on environment.govt.nz if required

Yes

By typing your name in the field below you are electronically signing this application form and certifying the information given in this application is true and correct.

Please write your name here:

Simon Weston

Important notes