

Date: Thursday 28 March 2024
Time: 10.00am
Meeting Room: Reception Lounge
Venue: Auckland Town Hall
301-305 Queen Street
Auckland

Tira Hautū / Governing Body

OPEN ATTACHMENTS

ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS
UNDER SEPARATE COVER

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28 February 2024

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform

Via Email – C.Bishop@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister

I read your speech of 27 February to the Wellington Chamber of Commerce. It was pretty good, and Auckland Council is already focused on many of the things you suggest.

This letter is a follow-up to Councillor Richard Hills and Councillor Angela Dalton's letter to you of 1 February 2024, seeking a further one-year extension of time for Auckland Council to notify its decisions on *Plan Change 78 – Intensification* (the Auckland Council's IPI) from 31 March 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The RMA currently does not allow us to 'stop' this plan change process, which includes rigidly implementing the MDRS that you have confirmed will be made optional for councils.

Because of the existing statutory timeframes, formal hearings restarted last week and, without an extension, will need to ramp up over the next few months. This represents a massive waste of money given your confirmed intention to enable us to change it and the other matters raised in our earlier letter. In fact, we estimate that with hearings already underway, Auckland Council, Aucklanders, community groups, developers and government agencies like Kāinga Ora are spending around \$500,000 per week for every week that we're forced to go through with this plan change process, and this is ridiculous. Which is why we need an extension to enable us to propose a meaningful variation.

I have already received several letters from submitters confused about why the process is continuing despite your promise to enable the council to make changes to the plan change. It is unfair to put submitters to that cost and then start the process again as soon as this one is over.

An **extension of time**, along with your intended legislative changes, would allow Auckland Council to propose a substantive variation to the plan change that would do several things at once:

- Ensure that the plan change continues to "live zone" sufficient land and capacity to deal with 30 years of housing growth across both brownfield and greenfield development, taking account of infrastructure readiness, transport connections and where there is realistic demand for the enabled housing.
- Deal with the formerly-proposed Auckland Light Rail Corridor, which is a significant chunk of land currently anomalously excluded from the plan change process (see attached map), where more houses can be built. Not enabling a variation to include this corridor creates an incoherent plan and process.
- Enable us to take account of intensive work completed since the 2023 flooding events, and down-zone areas at risk from natural hazards such as flooding in the quickest and most cost-effective way (i.e.: considering the matters together).
- Incorporate greater mixed-use zoning, particularly around transport nodes. I would also like us to enable more commercial uses in residential zones, so people can work closer to where they live, ensuring we are not creating artificial barriers to new business.
- Within the constraints above, enable Auckland Council and the hearings panel to reassess the application of the MDRS in areas where its rigid application is inappropriate, and to make changes to the standards where we think that will result in better housing.

