



**Hamilton City Council – Staff Submission**

**Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill**

**Parliament's Environment Select Committee**

**17 November 2025**

# Improving the Wellbeing of Hamiltonians

Hamilton City Council is focused on improving the well-being of Hamiltonians through delivering to our five priorities of shaping:

- **A city that's easy to live in**
- **A city where our people thrive**
- **A central city where our people love to be**
- **A fun city with lots to do**
- **A green city**

The topic of this staff submission is aligned with all of Hamilton City Council's five priorities.

## Council Approval and Reference

This staff submission was approved by Hamilton City Council's Chief Executive on 17 November 2025.

Submission # 821

**It should be noted that the following submission is from staff at Hamilton City Council and does not, therefore, necessarily represent the views of the Council itself.**

## **Key Messages / Recommendations**

- 1.** Hamilton City Council staff support the intent of the Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill to accelerate housing and infrastructure delivery. However, urgent amendments are required to address the financial, planning, and governance impacts of cross-boundary greenfield development on the city's periphery. Boundary change is the highest priority: without early adjustment, developments on Hamilton's edge will impose unrecoverable costs, fragment planning, and constrain service delivery.
- 2.** Key statutory issues also require attention:
  - a. The definition of "relevant local authority" (section 4) currently excludes Hamilton from projects immediately outside its boundaries, risking loss of consultation and appeal rights.
  - b. Proposed reductions in statutory timeframes for comment and response (sections 11, 17, 79) are inadequate for complex projects.
  - c. The Bill's shift from genuine consultation to mere notification, and the limitation of appeal rights, threaten integrated planning and fair decision-making.
- 3.** Quantified impacts show up to \$2.9 billion in infrastructure costs, \$500 million in lost development contributions, and rate increases of 1.4–8.9% if boundary changes do not precede development.
- 4.** Amend section 4 to include territorial authorities with project areas outside but adjoining city boundaries.
- 5.** Require initiation and substantial advancement of boundary adjustment before granting fast-track consents in urban-edge areas.
- 6.** Enable panels to recommend boundary changes to Ministers, with final approval via Order in Council.
- 7.** Retain original timeframes for comment and response (sections 11, 17, 79), allowing proper analysis of complex applications.
- 8.** Preserve consultation and appeal rights (sections 11, 99), ensuring affected councils can participate fully in decision-making.
- 9.** Mandate enforceable cross-boundary development contributions and rates (section 104), equivalent to those within city boundaries.
- 10.** Introduce statutory dispute resolution for boundary and charging disagreements (section 108).
- 11.** Mandate early and ongoing engagement with affected communities (section 11).
- 12.** Conduct a post-implementation review within 12–24 months to assess effectiveness and refine the legislative framework.

# Statutory Definitions, Timeframes, and Rights

## 13. Definition of Relevant Local Authority

14. Section 4 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 currently defines a “relevant local authority” as one whose region or district contains the project area, and for marine consents, includes authorities adjacent to the site. This definition excludes Hamilton City Council from projects immediately outside its boundaries, even when these areas are functionally reliant on Hamilton’s infrastructure and urban growth. As a result, Hamilton may not be consulted, may lose comment rights, and could lose appeal rights under Clause 50.

## 15. Statutory Timeframes

16. Clause 6 and the new section 11(3) require notified parties to respond within 20 working days; Clause 9(4) and the amendment of section 17(6) reduce the timeframe for comments on referral applications from 20 to 15 working days.
17. These timeframes are inadequate for relevant local authorities, particularly when notification replaces meaningful consultation. Many project areas are large and complex, requiring detailed analysis to provide quality advice.
18. Clause 44(1) replaces section 79(2)(b), preventing a panel convener from setting a timeframe longer than 60 working days for receiving comments under section 53, unless the applicant agrees in writing.
19. Not all projects are equal in complexity or scale; highly complex or constrained projects may require more time to develop robust solutions, even when nationally or regionally significant.

## 20. Consultation and Appeal Rights

21. Clause 6, the amendment of section 11, and the new section 11(1)(b) replace the requirement to consult with other persons, including local authorities, with a requirement to notify them in writing.
22. Effective consultation with local authorities is essential for integrated planning and infrastructure delivery. Written notification alone does not constitute genuine engagement and risks poor outcomes.
23. Clause 50 and the amendment to section 99(1)(d) limit the ability to appeal to only those who have provided comments in response to an invitation under section 17(1), 53(2), or section 35(1)(a)-(d).
24. Hamilton City Council, not considered a relevant authority under the current definition, may not be consulted under section 17(1)(a) and may lose the ability to appeal panel decisions.
25. Many project areas outside the current boundaries are more relevant to Hamilton’s future than to the areas in which they currently reside. The Council should retain appeal rights, particularly where decisions may be unlawful or have significant implications for the city’s development.

## 26. Cross-boundary Impacts

27. Hamilton is New Zealand’s fastest-growing city with a number of major fast-track developments planned or underway on its boundary in the Waikato and Waipā Districts that will rely heavily on Hamilton’s infrastructure. A Hamilton City Council financial finds that, without boundary changes, these developments could cost hundreds of millions in lost revenue and drive significant rate hikes for residents. Financial modelling shows significant impacts if boundary changes do not occur before development:
- **Scale:** Up to 15,356 household equivalent units (HEUs), equivalent to a new city the size of Gisborne across three of these areas, being SL1, R2, and Ruakura East, functionally reliant on Hamilton’s networks.
  - **Lost development contributions:** Several hundred million dollars of development contributions are at risk or compromised if development proceeds outside the boundary.

- **Rates impact:** Average city-wide increase of \$70–\$454 per existing ratepayer after 10 years (1.4%–8.9%) as the existing is forced to pay for impacts from multiple fast-track development areas that grow outside Hamilton’s jurisdiction.
- **Infrastructure investment:** Up to \$2.9 billion required; developers approximately \$1.42 billion in-cell; city-wide upgrades up to \$1.4 billion.
- **Operating and maintenance costs:** At full build-out, annual operating and maintenance costs for vested assets are projected to reach \$46 million, with peak annual depreciation costs of \$44 million.

## Proposed Bill Amendments

### 28. Amend the Definition of Relevant Local Authority

- 29. Why:** The current definition under section 4 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 excludes Hamilton City Council from being considered a relevant authority for many adjoining project areas, despite their reliance on Hamilton’s infrastructure.
- 30. Mechanism:** Amend section 4 to include territorial authorities that have project areas that are within or outside of, but adjoining their city boundaries.

### 31. Retain Existing Timeframes

- 32. Why:** Shorter timeframes (Clauses 6, 9, 44) risk incomplete assessments and errors, undermining fast-track integrity.
- 33. Mechanism:** Retain the original timeframes in the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024.

### 34. Preserve Consultation and Appeal Rights

- 35. Why:** Consultation should be meaningful, not limited to written notification. Early engagement reduces errors and improves project outcomes. Hamilton City Council is not considered a relevant local authority, and because of this, may not have appeal rights if the area is unlawful, despite being relevant to these project areas.
- 36. Mechanism:** Retain the original wording of sections 11 and 99(1)(d) in the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024.

### 37. Include Boundary Adjustment Decisions

- 38. Why:** Without early boundary adjustment, councils risk unrecoverable costs, revenue loss, and fragmented planning as development proceeds outside city limits. Misaligned boundaries create inefficiencies, duplicate processes, and undermine integrated infrastructure delivery.
- 39. Mechanism:** Amend the Act to require initiation and substantial advancement of boundary adjustment processes, with clear triggers and timelines, before granting fast-track consents in urban-edge areas.
- 40.** Hamilton City Council staff recommend the following:
- “For any project area located on or near the boundary of a territorial authority and functionally reliant on that authority’s infrastructure, the panel must not grant substantive approval unless a boundary adjustment process under the Local Government Act 2002 has been initiated, and the Minister is satisfied that the process will be completed prior to the commencement of development”.*
- 41.** Amend the Act to allow the receiving council to act as the charging authority for development contributions and rates from the point of fast-track consent where a boundary change is formally proposed or signaled.
- 42.** Hamilton City Council staff recommend the insertion of a new subsection in the Act’s section on panel consent conditions:
- “Where a boundary change affecting a project area is proposed or signaled under the Local Government Act 2002, the receiving territorial authority may, with the approval of the Minister, act as the charging*

*authority for levying development contributions, rates, or other charges from the date of fast-track consent, notwithstanding that the boundary change has not yet taken effect”.*

#### 43. Enable Cross-Boundary Development Contributions and Levies

44. **Why:** No mechanism exists to recover costs from developments outside city boundaries that rely on city infrastructure, creating inequity and financial risk.
45. **Mechanism:** Empower panels under the Act to require enforceable financial contributions from fast-track developments that rely on another council’s infrastructure. Panels must be able to impose payments equivalent to the development contributions and rates that would apply if the development were within the affected council’s boundaries, with these payments made directly to the affected council as a condition of consent.
46. Hamilton City Council staff recommend insertion of a new subsection in the Act’s section on panel consent conditions:  
*“Where a fast-track project relies on infrastructure or services provided by a territorial authority other than the consenting authority, the panel must, as a condition of approval, require the applicant to pay the affected authority a contribution equivalent to the development contributions and rates that would have applied had the development occurred within that authority’s district. Such contribution shall be enforceable as a condition of consent”.*

## Concluding Comments

47. Hamilton City Council staff support the Bill, subject to the enhancements outlined above. These changes are essential to enable efficient delivery, fair cost allocation, and integrated planning.
48. As we share similar views on the Bill with Tauranga City Council, we therefore also endorse their submission to the Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill.

## Further Information and Hearings

49. Should Parliament’s Environment Select Committee require clarification of this submission from Hamilton City Council staff, or additional information, please contact **Blair Bowcott** (General Manager Strategy, Growth and Planning), phone **07 838 6742** or **021 775 640**, or email [Blair.Bowcott@hcc.govt.nz](mailto:Blair.Bowcott@hcc.govt.nz) in the first instance.
50. Hamilton City Council representatives **do wish to speak** at the Environment Select Committee hearings in support of this submission.

Yours faithfully



**Lance Vervoort**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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