

28 August 2023

s9(2)(a)



Thank you for your email to Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities, dated 17 July 2023, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*Your previous response to my question (sent June 27) "Where else and when was this project publicly notified" is unsatisfactory. Please provide details of the information requested, or provide a valid reason for withholding such. Under the Official Information Act you now have seven days to respond.*

*I have additional questions, for yourself and the mayor/RDC:*

*Why has this been such a secretive process?*

*Why are we only just finding out about this development on the eve of the resource consent being lodged?*

*Do you and the mayor believe that affected residents, and the wider community, have been treated fairly and given adequate time to consider and have input into the proposal, as well as be adequately consulted?*

*Has consideration been given to the impact this mega social housing scheme will have on the town's premier tourist attraction - the Carrot Adventure Land?*

*This project will devalue our properties - How will we be compensated?*

*What other sites/properties were considered?*

*What avenues are there for residents to have input into the consenting process?*

*What environmental impact assessment has been undertaken?*

*What recourse is there for residents to lay an official complaint about Kainga Ora and the council over this? Or do we have to take legal action?*

*What work has been undertaken to assess the wider impact of the development and population increase on local infrastructure?*

*Who is the contact point at Horizons Regional Council overseeing the consent application?*

*What safety provisions have been made for people using the public walkway between Snowmass Drive and (as yet undeveloped) Teitei Drive at night?*

*Will residents of this proposed mega state house development pay rates or will the costs be borne by the wider community?*

*What assessment has been made of the traffic hazard this will cause on the approach to the town centre?*

On 19 July 2023, you emailed a further request for:

*"Across Ruapehu District there are 72 individuals and families on the MSD Housing register who need a place to call home. We also know that there is a growth opportunity for Ohakune and other types of housing will be required to support the community."*

- 1. How many individuals and families are there in Ohakune on the MSD housing register?*
- 2. What is the "growth opportunity" in Ohakune to which you refer?*

There is a need for more public housing in the area. In Ruapehu District, around 72 applicants with an urgent housing need are on the Housing Register, including 12 whānau already living in Ohakune. Research by Ruapehu District Council and Ngāti Rangi suggests these numbers only capture the 'tip of the iceberg' for housing need.

I note that your request was also sent to the Ruapehu District Council (RDC). As such, we will respond to your request from our point of view and refer you to RDC as required.

***Why has this been such a secretive process?***

***Why are we only just finding out about this development on the eve of the resource consent being lodged?***

***Do you and the mayor believe that affected residents, and the wider community, have been treated fairly and given adequate time to consider and have input into the proposal, as well as be adequately consulted?***

***What avenues are there for residents to have input into the consenting process?***

We are committed to keeping communities up-to-date, and ensuring new homes work well for the people and whānau who will live there, as well as the wider community. This is consistent with its operating principles outlined in Section 14(1)(i) of the Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities Act 2019.

We are mindful of the impact development work may have on people and look to engage with communities as soon as we can, by sharing information with affected communities. The nature and timing of this engagement is tailored to the particular site, and is dependent on local Council planning regulations, the size and scale of the development, and whether Kāinga Ora is overseeing the construction.

The resource consent process is run by the local council. It takes into account factors such as whether there is enough infrastructure and services to support the proposed new development and how it aligns with the District Plan. I am advised that it is the role of an independent consultant processing the Resource Consent to decide whether there is a need for the public to be notified of the consent application. The application has been lodged and accepted and is currently being processed. The first part of the process is an assessment and determination on whether or not the application will be publicly notified.

If a non-notified resource consent is approved, we do not have an additional obligation to engage or consult with the community, however, our practice is to keep communities updated as plans progress. If there is a requirement to notify, neighbours will be consulted on the plans for the site as part of this process.

It's important to note the resource consent for building the homes themselves is a separate process.

***What other sites/properties were considered?***

The Teitei Drive site has been identified as part of the Council's housing strategy, and a funding application was approved to support shovel ready projects. Kāinga Ora is open to looking at market delivery options (i.e. purchasing existing homes from the market) to support supply for public housing, but they must align to our build standards and be in locations where we can best support our customers.

***Has consideration been given to the impact this mega social housing scheme will have on the town's premier tourist attraction - the Carrot Adventure Land?***

***This project will devalue our properties - How will we be compensated?***

***What environmental impact assessment has been undertaken?***

***What work has been undertaken to assess the wider impact of the development and population increase on local infrastructure?***

***What assessment has been made of the traffic hazard this will cause on the approach to the town centre?***

This development is not a 'mega social housing scheme'. In fact, only 15 of the 44 homes to be built in this stage of the development will be for public housing. The proposed plans are for a mixed development of 44 new homes, including 15 affordable homes, 14 long-term worker rentals and 15 public homes. Outside of this proposal, no decisions have been made regarding future development on the site.

Kāinga Ora has carried out a thorough due diligence process which included all appropriate assessments. Kāinga Ora has no reason to believe that the development will have a negative impact on local infrastructure. The resource consent process also ensures that there is enough infrastructure to support the development.

Environmental assessment included an independent assessment on the presence and status of any wetlands on site and potential stormwater options to address potential freshwater impacts. A traffic engineer was engaged to provide an assessment and engineering plan.

The availability of suitable, quality housing is a critical factor in retaining and attracting people who choose to make their life in Ohakune and who in turn stimulate economic and community growth which is good for businesses.

***What recourse is there for residents to lay an official complaint about Kainga Ora and the council over this? Or do we have to take legal action?***

People can submit a complaint to Kāinga Ora at any time. There is guidance on our website on how to do this:

<https://kaingaora.govt.nz/tenants-and-communities/our-neighbours/provide-feedback-or-a-complaint/>

If you are unsatisfied with the response, you can make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman:

<https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/what-ombudsman-can-help/complaints-about-government-agencies>

***What safety provisions have been made for people using the public walkway between Snowmass Drive and (as yet undeveloped) Teitei Drive at night?***

Through best practice urban design, a key consideration for all of our developments is ensuring safety and privacy is incorporated throughout the design. It is important to emphasise the focus at the moment is on enabling infrastructure of the site, with plans for the homes themselves still to be finalised. As with other walkways and public spaces in the district there is likely to be provisions for appropriate lighting and other features that will address public safety.

***Who is the contact point at Horizons Regional Council overseeing the consent application?***

A regional council consent application will be submitted to Horizons Regional Council in due course. Therefore at this time, there is no contact point at Horizons Regional Council. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the information is not held.

***Will residents of this proposed mega state house development pay rates or will the costs be borne by the wider community?***

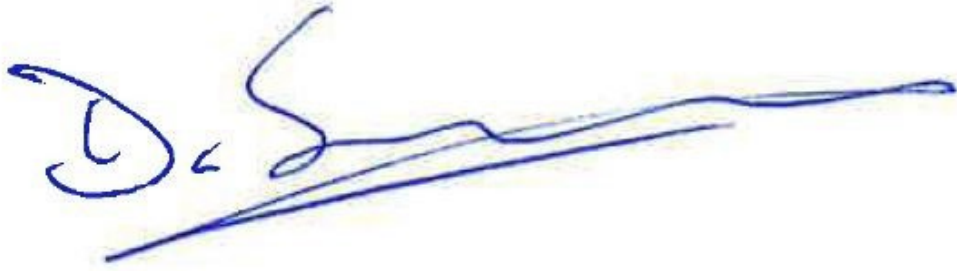
This development is not just a public housing development. We have developed a range of communication and engagement opportunities to correct this incorrect information that is being circulated. The proposed plans are for a mixed development of 44 new homes, including 15 affordable homes, 14 long-term worker rentals and 15 public homes. Kāinga Ora is proposing to build the public homes, and subdivide and enable the remaining 29 homes for others to build.

As is the case throughout New Zealand, the property owners will pay rates on their property. Kāinga Ora will own the 15 public housing homes and pay rates consistent with its obligations as a residential landlord.

I trust this information will be helpful to you. If you have any further questions, I encourage you to contact the Community Engagement team, at [communities@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:communities@kaingaora.govt.nz)

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Contact details for the Ombudsman can be found at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Soughtton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Soughtton  
**Deputy Chief Executive - Central**