

North Waipā – South Hamilton Spatial Study

Executive Summary

Overview

The North Waipā – South Hamilton area has the potential to become a nationally significant employment, logistics and investment hub within the Upper North Island's Golden Triangle economy.

Market signals are already clear. Developer interest is accelerating, fast-track proposals are emerging across the sub-region, and infrastructure investment signals are moving from concept to commitment.

Growth is no longer the question.

The question is whether the area captures high-value, employment-led outcomes or drifts into fragmented development that constrains future options and increases long-term costs.

The study draws on previous work led by Future Proof, including technical analysis, stakeholder engagement, and partner collaboration, on the key issues and opportunities that could drive economic growth in the North Waipā/South Hamilton area.

Going beyond investigation, the study concludes by establishing a preferred growth framework and a staged implementation pathway. This provides a foundation to guide the market, coordinate the timing of investment, and give asset owners, Local Government and Central Government a robust foundation for moving from early interest to practical delivery decisions. It sets direction without pre-empting formal decisions or requiring immediate funding commitments, while still being clear about what needs to be aligned now to unlock value.

Why this area matters

This area offers a rare convergence of nationally relevant assets and investment logic:

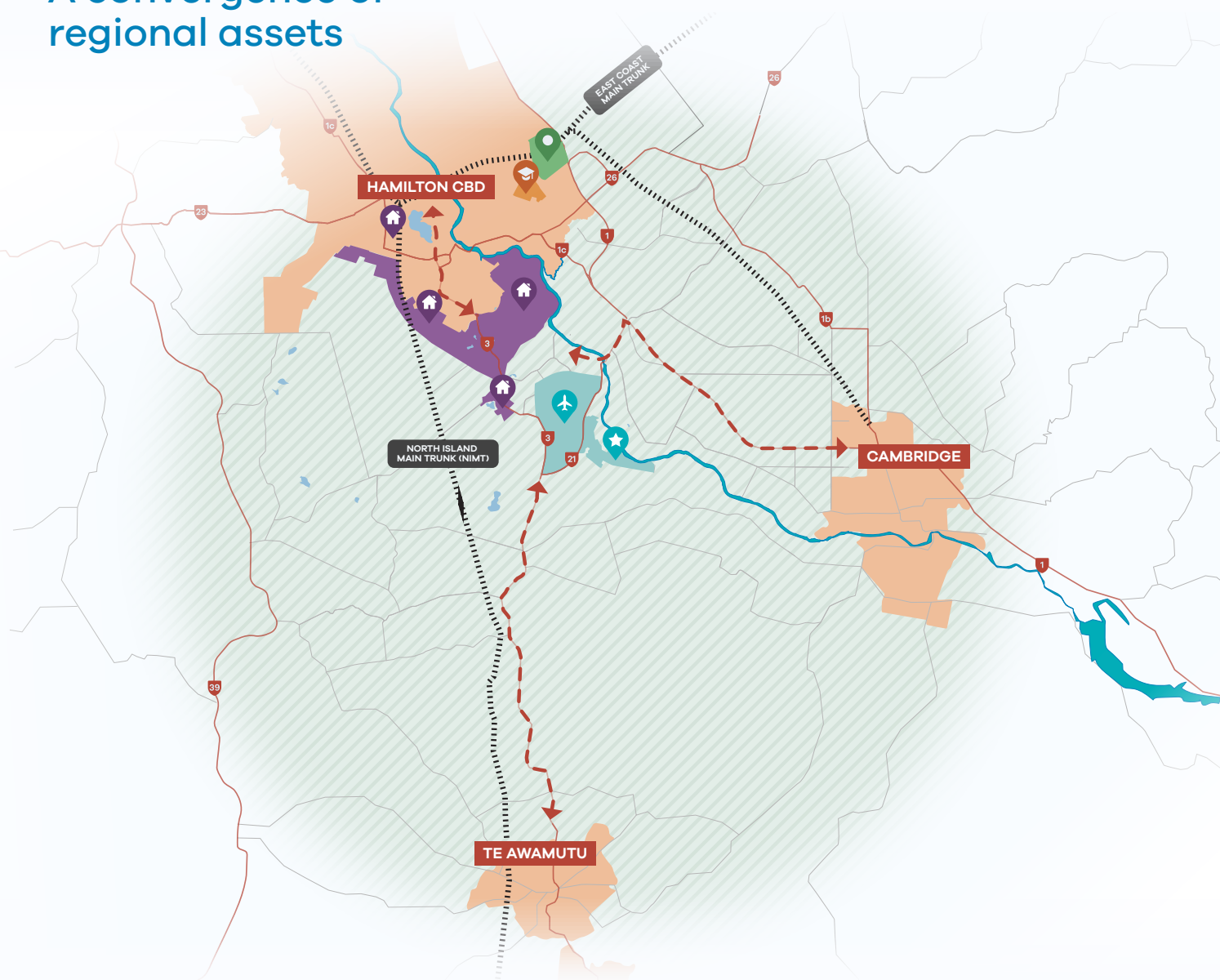
- Direct access to state highway and rail freight networks, and the wider Upper North Island supply chain spine.
- Hamilton International Airport and Mystery Creek as economic anchors with expansion and resilience roles.
- Proximity to major logistics platforms and the Hamilton metro economy, with strong labour market access.
- A scale opportunity to build an aviation-compatible employment node and integrated logistics and innovation corridor, complementing (not competing with) Hamilton central city, Ruakura, Cambridge and Te Awamutu.
- Proximity to existing and planned residential growth areas, providing access to labour, supporting housing supply and enabling integrated employment and community development outcomes.

These advantages are already attracting significant market interest, with development proposals and infrastructure investment activity signalling that growth is moving from planning into delivery.

There are at least 25 fast-track applications across the Future Proof sub-region (including housing and business developments), with the potential to materially shift land-use outcomes and infrastructure demand.

This is a location where aligned public investment, including in transport and water servicing, can unlock major private sector-led productivity and jobs outcomes, and where the cost of mis-sequencing is high.

Spatial and economic opportunities: A convergence of regional assets



 **Hamilton International Airport** and its surrounding precincts

 **Mystery Creek** as a nationally significant event and business destination

 Linkages to tertiary education and research capability, including the **University of Waikato**

 Access to **state highway** (SH1, SH3 and SH21)

 Access to **rail networks** (North Island Main Trunk and East Coast Main Trunk)

 **Surrounding highly productive rural soils** supporting primary sector industries and value chains

 Close to the **Ruakura Superhub** and inland port logistics system

 **Close to Hamilton** - New Zealand's 4th largest city, and close to the townships of **Cambridge** and **Te Awamutu**

 Within short commuting distance from mixed typology residential housing (**existing and future development**)

Key findings of the study

Growth pressure is accelerating, and the consequences of uncoordinated development are clear. If growth outpaces infrastructure investment and strategic planning, the region risks higher costs, reduced network efficiency and the loss of strategically important land.

The study highlights five key findings:

1. A coordinated approach is required now

The area is already attracting strong market interest and development pressure. Coordination is needed now to avoid piecemeal outcomes driven by individual proposals.

2. Infrastructure sequencing will determine future growth outcomes

Transport and wastewater are the key constraints and enablers. Major investments, including Hamilton Southern Links and wastewater servicing options, will shape how much development can occur, when it can happen, and whether the area achieves high-value outcomes.

There are already investment signals in motion, including the NZ Transport Agency endorsement of an Investment Case for Hamilton Southern Links (and a \$100 million pre-implementation commitment), and recent Regional Infrastructure Fund loans, including \$6.5 million for airport runway and apron upgrades and \$1.35 million for Mystery Creek water network upgrades.

3. Economic opportunity is nationally significant

The study identifies the opportunity to establish a nationally significant employment and logistics hub supporting aviation, freight, agritech, innovation and event-based activity, generating long-term productivity, investment and employment benefits for the Waikato and Upper North Island economies.

4. Environmental outcomes must be integrated with growth planning

Highly productive soils, peat systems, flood-prone areas, and the Waikato River catchment will shape long-term value and what development is possible. The study's position is that environmental opportunities and economic growth need to be planned together from the start, not balanced against each other later.

5. Long-term success depends on sustained partnership and governance alignment

It is clear that no single organisation can deliver this alone. Success will require ongoing coordination between Future Proof partners, iwi and mana whenua, infrastructure providers, central government agencies, and major asset owners.

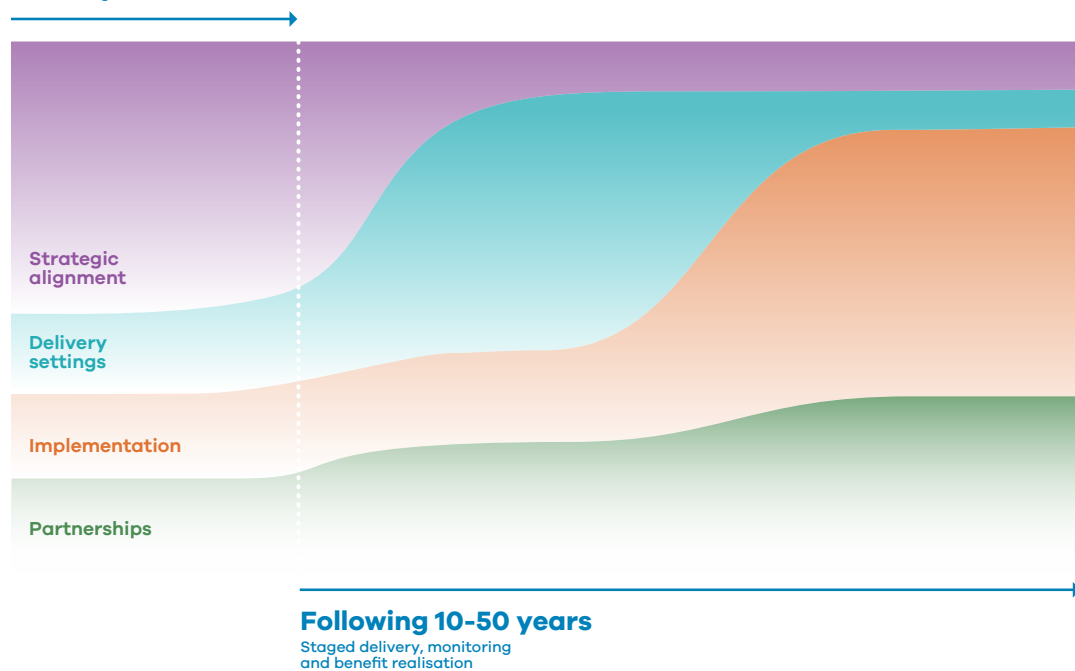
A staged implementation pathway

The next 10 years are critical. This period should focus on establishing the conditions for success rather than assuming the form and shape of the end delivery.

Beyond the first 10 years, implementation should shift from alignment and planning toward staged delivery and benefit realisation.

Next 10 years

Alignment, planning
and enabling decisions



Immediate priorities (0–10 years): Alignment and enabling decisions

This phase should focus on five priorities:

1. Confirm Airport shareholders' (Councils') expectations for Waikato Regional Airport Limited (WRAL) and Titanium Park Limited.
2. Initiate Economic Hub precinct master planning as an entry point to the Regional Spatial Plan.
3. Convene a Strategic Economic Hub symposium.

4. Prioritise Highly Productive Land (HPL) and peat mapping as key considerations in the Regional Spatial Plan process.
5. Embed infrastructure triggers, sequencing and investment in statutory and investment planning instruments, including the Regional Spatial Plan, long-term plans and Regional Land Transport Plan.

Longer-term priorities (10–50 years): Sustained partnership will determine delivery success

The longer-term approach should include:

1. Integrating the agreed spatial direction into successive Regional Spatial Plans, land-use plans, long-term plans, regional land transport plans, water services strategies and growth strategies.
2. Monitoring infrastructure triggers, land demand, market uptake, environmental thresholds, and development feasibility.
3. Reviewing whether governance structure and coordination arrangements remain fit for purpose.
4. Identifying funding and financing pathways where infrastructure investment becomes necessary and justified.
5. Ensuring that development continues to support the agreed regional economic role of the area.

The case for action

North Waipā – South Hamilton presents a rare opportunity to leverage existing strategic assets, infrastructure investment and market momentum to create a nationally significant employment, logistics and innovation hub.

The opportunity is substantial, but it is also time-sensitive. Development interest is increasing, infrastructure decisions are approaching, and land-use patterns established over the coming decade will shape economic outcomes for generations.

Without coordinated planning and investment, growth risks becoming fragmented, increasing long-term infrastructure costs and limiting future economic potential. With alignment between Government, Future Proof partners, iwi and mana whenua, infrastructure providers and major asset owners, the area can deliver significant productivity, employment and investment benefits for both the Waikato region and New Zealand.

A clear pathway exists for Government, infrastructure providers, iwi and mana whenua, asset owners and investors to align decisions, sequence investment and unlock nationally significant economic outcomes. Realising this opportunity will require deliberate coordination, timely investment and a shared commitment to long-term outcomes.

North Waipā – South Hamilton Spatial Study

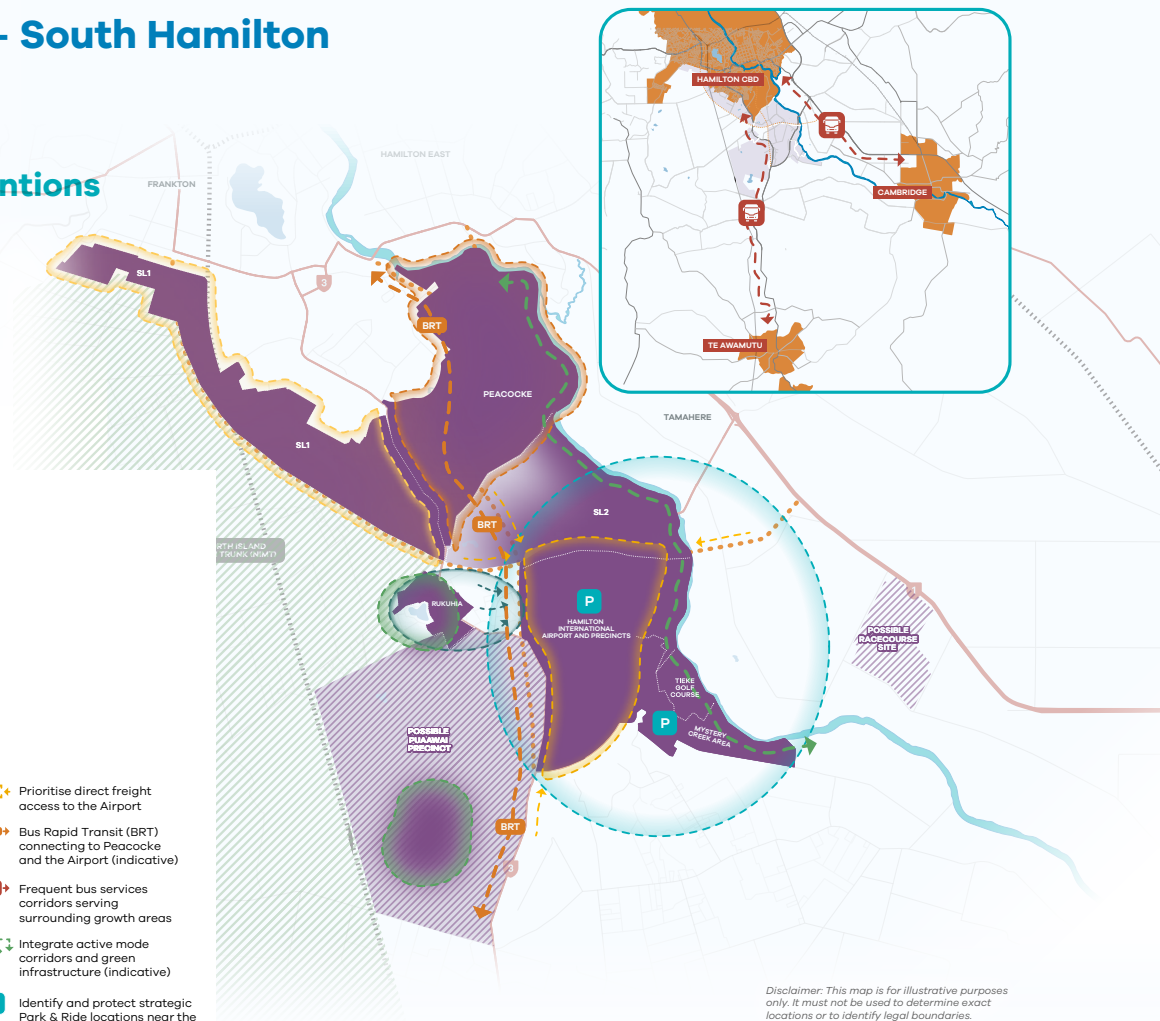
Strategic Interventions

Legend

- Hamilton Southern Links designation
- Areas of interest
- North Island Main Trunk (NIMT)
- Waikato River
- State Highways
- Other roads

Proposed Strategic Interventions

- Economic hub: Initial stage
- ▨ Economic hub: Area for future consideration
- Residential – Infrastructure-ready
- Residential – Under investigation
- Residential – Long-term growth direction
- ▨ Investigate the protection of Highly Productive Land and peat
- Embed environmental framework considering green infrastructure as core infrastructure
- ➡ Prioritise direct freight access to the Airport
- ➡ Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connecting to Peacocke and the Airport (indicative)
- ➡ Frequent bus services corridors serving surrounding growth areas
- ➡ Integrate active mode corridors and green infrastructure (indicative)
- P Identify and protect strategic Park & Ride locations near the Airport and Mystery Creek



Disclaimer: This map is for illustrative purposes only. It must not be used to determine exact locations or to identify legal boundaries.