North Waipā – South Hamilton Spatial Study

Study recommendations

June 2026

Future Proof
Te Tau Tītoki

Contents

Introduction

The North Waipā – South Hamilton area is emerging as one of the most strategically significant growth fronts in the Future Proof sub-region.

Located at the interface of Waipā District, Waikato District and Hamilton City, and anchored by Hamilton Airport and the Mystery Creek Event Centre, the area is uniquely positioned to support both regional growth and nationally significant economic activity.

Population growth, increasing demand for industrial land, and pressure on existing urban areas have all converged in this area for some time, with major infrastructure investments being signalled, including the Hamilton Southern Links transport corridor and the Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant.

These trends were previously acknowledged and have been monitored as part of the Future Proof Priority Development Areas (PDA) Monitoring Framework. More recently, the area became the focus of a specific implementation activity as part of the Future Proof Strategy - Future Development Strategy update and its Implementation Plan, which were formally adopted in late 2024, notably *Activity #5.1 - Develop an integrated spatial framework for the North Waipā – South Hamilton region*.

For years, this area has undergone development through a piecemeal approach, a situation further impacted by the numerous burgeoning Fast Track development proposals emerging across the sub-region. However, the anticipation of the upcoming Regional Spatial Plan under New Zealand's Resource Management Reform presents a rare opportunity to establish a coordinated and shared direction for the area. This coordinated effort could leverage existing strategic assets (particularly the Airport) while avoiding the inefficiencies associated with unplanned or fragmented growth.

This document is the third and final report in a series that combines spatial and economic analyses, infrastructure capacity considerations, and scenario testing to identify key drivers, constraints, and opportunities. It translates these into a set of recommended strategic directions and interventions, which for this area, have been designed to support coordinated decision-making, provide insight into future regional planning activities, and serve as a platform for alignment across Local Government, Central Government, Mana whenua/Iwi partners, and the private sector.

Scope of the Study

The spatial study builds on the thinking from various pieces of work previously prepared by Future Proof Partners and advanced through conversations among Future Proof Partners, Mana whenua, Iwi, and stakeholders.

Study area overview

The study area primarily focuses on land currently located in the northern part of the Waipā District; however, it also considers neighbouring areas within Hamilton City and the Waikato District. The area sits within a highly connected part of the Upper North Island, benefiting from proximity to State Highway networks (SH1, SH3 and SH21) and future transport investment, most notably the proposed Hamilton Southern Links Road project, identified in the Government Policy Statement on land transport (GPS 2024) as a Road of National Significance.

Land use within the study area is currently characterised by a mix of emerging residential, industrial developments and rural land, extending north toward the Peacocke growth area within Hamilton City boundaries, east towards the Mystery Creek area and the shared Waikato and Waipā districts boundary, south toward the village of Ōhaupō, and west, beyond the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) railway corridor along Rukuhia Road and towards O'Regan Road.

The area is also subject to a range of environmental constraints and considerations, including the Waikato River and its catchment, peat lakes and their catchments, and extensive, highly productive soils (LUC Class 1, 2, and 3).

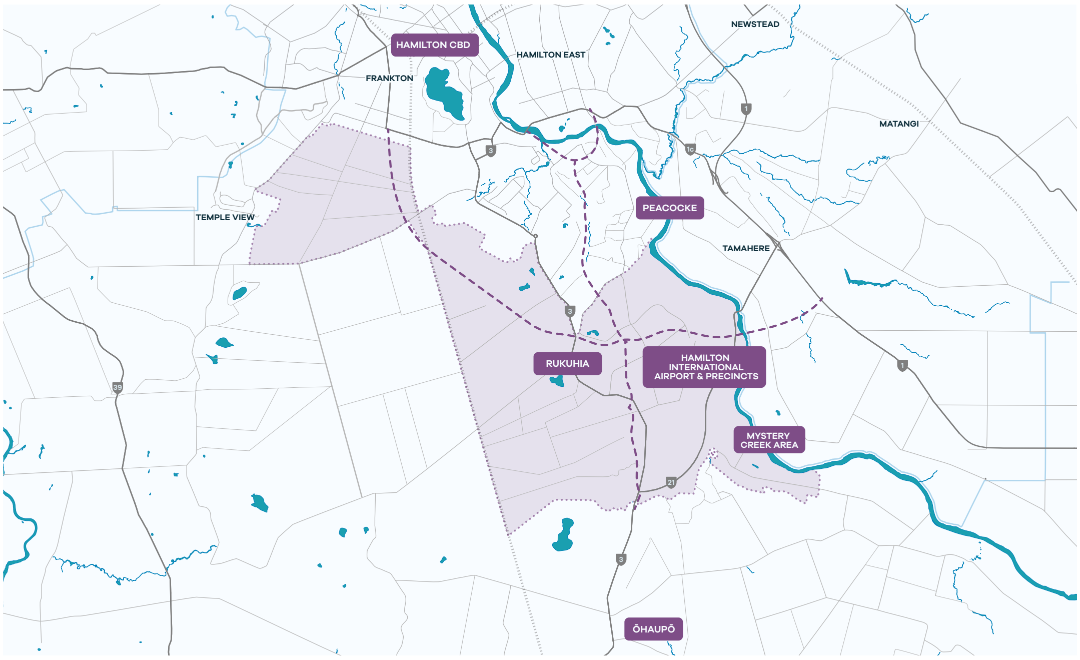


Figure 1 *- Initial North Waipā – South Hamilton Spatial Study boundary (purple) and surrounding context.*

The original boundary for this study was based on the area defined by the Priority Development Area Monitoring Framework. However, as the study progressed, it became clear that this boundary needed to be relaxed. This was primarily done to accurately reflect the location and extent of committed and aspiring development, as most recently signalled through private developers.

These areas will influence and be influenced by growth in the study area:

- **Tamahere** is situated in the Waikato District and is not directly included in the spatial study area. However, the development of Hamilton Southern Links and changes in neighbouring areas, particularly to the west, such as Peacocke and the SL2 area, are expected to have an impact on Tamahere. Additionally, plans are well underway to consolidate three Waikato racing clubs at a new, purpose-built racecourse and event centre in Tamahere, with a 150-hectare site identified as preferred in late 2025.
- **The Hamilton City Centre,** along with the towns of **Cambridge** and **Te Awamutu,** are not included in the spatial study area. However, this study acknowledges these central urban nodes as strategic economic interfaces to ensure that the recommended next steps do not negatively impact them. The aim of the study and its recommendations is to provide additional benefits rather than to shift them within the subregion, thereby undermining existing strategies and plans for these specific areas.

Purpose

This study has been undertaken to define a clear, coordinated spatial framework for the North Waipā – South Hamilton area, with a particular focus on unlocking the economic potential of the Hamilton Airport and Mystery Creek area.

The area represents a significant opportunity for new forms of long-term, high-value economic growth, given its strategic location, access to key transport networks, and proximity to a growing regional labour market. However, realising this opportunity requires alignment across land use, infrastructure investment, environmental considerations, and key stakeholders.

The purpose of the study is therefore to:

- Identify a shared and coherent spatial direction for the area over the next 30+ years;
- Provide clarity on where and how growth and development can occur, and under what conditions; and
- Establish a basis for coordinated public and private sector investment.

In addition to the multiple growth pressures experienced in the area, a key driver of this work is the context of the RMA reforms, including Regional Spatial Plans and Land Use Plans, which will form an important part of the upcoming new planning system. These plans are to support and enable economic growth within environmental limits (such as natural hazards and Significant Natural Areas) and will form part of the regional combined plans.

This presents a time-critical opportunity to translate the study's strategic directions into formal planning and investment signals, including:

- Clear identification of priority growth and investment locations,
- Alignment of infrastructure sequencing and funding pathways, and
- Integration of environmental and cultural frameworks, including for Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato.

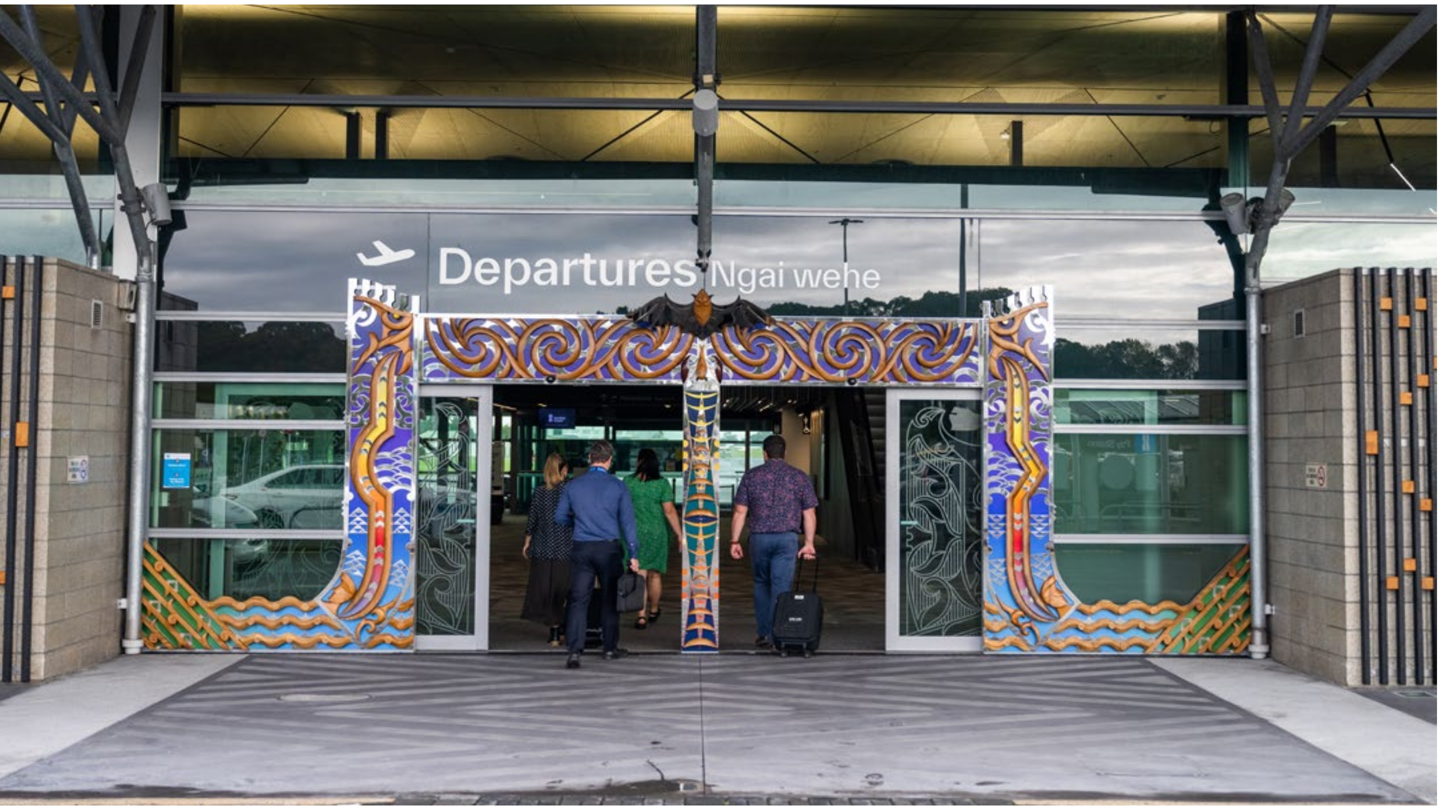
Methodology

The study was conducted in three phases, including engagement steps with Mana Whenua/Iwi partners and key stakeholders at each stage. It involved incremental research stages, as illustrated in Figure 2 and a multi-disciplinary approach.

Detailed outputs from each project phase have been documented in a suite of evidence-based reports, which are included as appendices to this report.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Gap analysis	Scenarios Development and Assessment	Spatial Study Recommendations

Figure 2 *Past (blue) and current (purple) phases of the North Waipā/ South Hamilton Spatial Study project.*



Hamilton International Airport

Phase 1: Gap analysis[1]

This initial phase of the project involved a comprehensive review of all documentation related to the area, recognising that it has been under investigation for an extended period. The objective of this review was to update our understanding of the latest developments in the area, identifying the current knowledge and key information gaps across several important themes, including growth, infrastructure provision, land use integration, and environmental constraints.

Vision and outcomes statements:

In parallel with the gap analysis, a vision and a set of desired outcomes were developed. These served as the main guiding principles for steering and advancing the study, helping to clarify "what we want in the future." The outcomes were derived from six key statements and consistently used throughout the study as performance and success criteria. This approach guided the assessment of phase 2 scenarios and ensured that the recommended future directions and interventions were fit for purpose.

VISION

The North Waipā – South Hamilton area will be a focus for industrial activity, leveraging off proximity to the Southern Links expressway, the North Island Main Trunk Rail, and Hamilton Airport, to support the economic growth of the Hamilton metro area and the Upper North Island, while enhancing the airport's role as an economic anchor.

New areas of residential development will include seamless extensions to the existing Hamilton urban area and/or carefully planned growth in North Waipā villages such as Rukuhia and Ōhaupō. Both patterns will offer high amenity communities with diverse housing options, stronger public transport connections, walking and cycling links, and proximity to new employment opportunities.

Development will respect the area's varied existing environmental and cultural values, and contribute to the restoration and protection of the Waikato River catchment.

[1] Future Proof, 2025 NWSH Study Report 1 – Gap analysis

OUTCOME 1: JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The area around Hamilton Airport has grown in a smart and coordinated way, comparable in scale to Ruakura, making the most of new transport links like Southern Links and rail, and creating more local job and business opportunities. Nearby villages such as Rukuhia and Ōhaupō also benefit from small-scale local services that support the daily needs of residents and workers.

OUTCOME 2: GREAT PLACE TO LIVE

Local neighbourhoods (city, village and rural) offer a range of good-quality, affordable homes, with the right services and green spaces to support healthy, connected communities that live well with nature. Rukuhia and Ōhaupō have grown into large villages that have retained their rural character and identity through the implementation of village concept plans.

OUTCOME 3: EASY TO GET AROUND

People can easily travel in and out of the area using a mix of affordable transport options (like walking, biking, buses, trains, and cars) with strong links to Hamilton and nearby towns and villages.

OUTCOME 4: SUPPORTING AND FACILITATING MANA WHENUA AND IWI ASPIRATIONS

Development in the area advances Mana Whenua and Iwi goals for the environment, culture, jobs, and wellbeing, and reflects their leadership and values. This includes identifying and protecting any heritage values in the study area, including archaeology, recorded and unrecorded and sites and areas of significance to Maaori.

OUTCOME 5: CARING FOR THE WAIKATO RIVER AND ENVIRONMENT

Growth in the area helps care for the Waikato River and gives effect to Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato (Te Ture Whaimana), by embedding resilience and environmental enhancement. Growth should be scaled and managed in a way that supports indigenous biodiversity, eco-friendly development incorporating nature-based solutions, preserves some productive soils for agricultural use, creates blue-green spaces, enhances peat lakes such as Lake Kareaotahi, and protects water in a way that respects Te Mana o Te Wai.

OUTCOME 6: VALUE FOR MONEY – STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE ALIGNMENT

Existing infrastructure is used efficiently. Growth sequencing maximises existing infrastructure, the most ‘bang for buck’ is obtained from new infrastructure, and growth pays for growth in terms of network infrastructure development and operation. Land use planning anticipates and supports the delivery of regionally significant infrastructure, including Hamilton Airport, the Southern Links transport corridor, and the Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant, to enable efficient, coordinated growth over time.

Phase 2: Scenario Development and Assessment[2]

This second project phase explored five possible future scenarios for the North Waipā South Hamilton Area, each shaped by different emphases on infrastructure sequencing, land use profile, and environmental balance, at two time points, 2040 and 2055. Scenarios enable us to explore potential issues or opportunities the area may encounter in the future and to identify actions to ensure the best outcomes across various settings.

Scenarios spanned a wide spectrum - from Scenario 1's status quo to Scenario 2's coordinated delivery, Scenario 3's competitive acceleration, Scenario 4's economic boost driven by a development corporation, and Scenario 5's environmental protection.

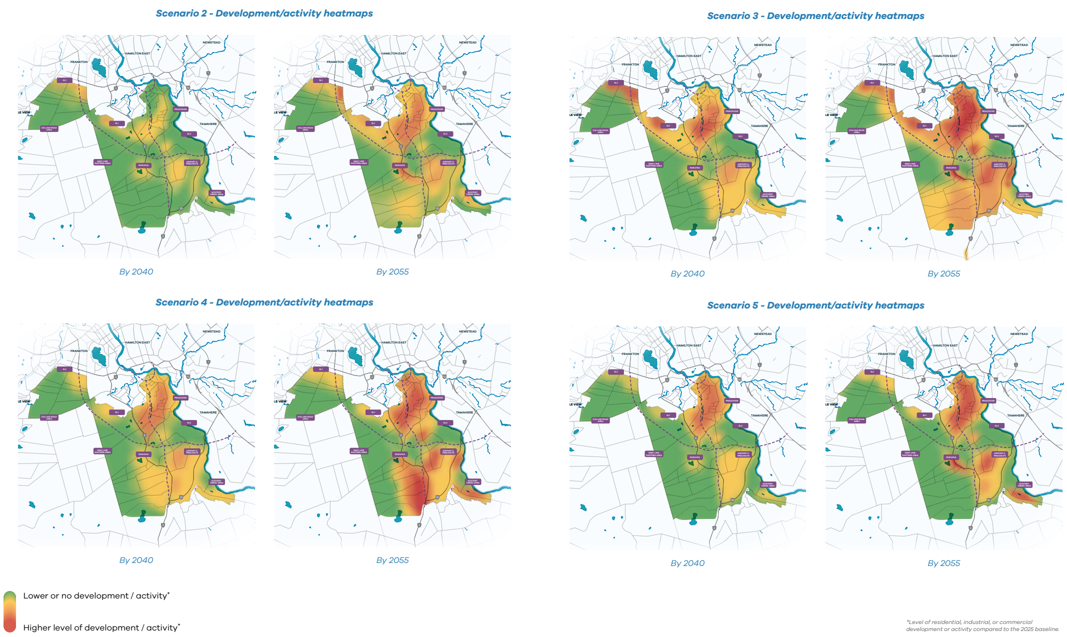


Figure 3 *Scenarios 2-5 heatmaps showing variation in the level of development/activity.*

Each scenario and its elements were qualitatively and quantitatively assessed against a consistent set of criteria that mirror the previously stated outcome statements: Job and opportunities, Great place to live, Easy to get around, Caring for the Waikato River and the environment, and Strategic infrastructure alignment.

The highest-rated elements from each scenario were combined to create a preferred scenario, establishing the foundation for the recommended strategic directions and interventions outlined later in this report.

[2] Future Proof, 2025 NWSH Study Report 2 – Scenarios NWSH Study Report 2 – Scenarios

Engagement overview

A series of engagement steps with project Iwi partners and stakeholders was used to refine scenarios, validate assumptions, and develop recommended directions and interventions, which are presented in this report.

Iwi partners included Ngaa Karu Atua o Te Waka and Ngā Iwi Tōpū O Waipā.

Key stakeholders were identified among local associations, government agencies, developers, landowners, infrastructure providers, and the private sector.

More details on the mana whenua/iwi and stakeholder engagement processes are provided in Appendices B and C.

Fieldays 2023

North Waipā – South Hamilton: Overview

The study area is currently undergoing a significant transformation characterised by rapid growth that must be carefully planned, financed, and delivered.

Both the population and the regional economy are expanding quickly. As a result, infrastructure, such as transport, three waters, green spaces, natural areas, rivers, and peatlands, is under increasing pressure and faces challenges in maintaining its function at this pace of change.

Drivers of change

An area located on an active corridor of rapid growth

The Future Proof sub-region forms New Zealand's "Golden Triangle" southern point, encompassing Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, Kirikiriroa/Hamilton, and Tauranga Moana. These three cities and the economic node they form are responsible for approximately 50 per cent of the country's economic output and are home to half of its total population.[3]

The sub-region is also part of a dynamic corridor of rapid population and development growth that stretches from Papakura in the north to Te Awamutu in the south, and eastward to key towns such as Morrinsville and Matamata, which also provide links to the Bay of Plenty and Tauranga. The population of the sub-region is projected to increase by around 30 per cent over the next 30 years.[4]

The study area is directly affected by the southward growth of Hamilton City and by the growth of the Waipā population and economy. Within the study area, the largest single influence of change is the growth of industrial and business-related development around Hamilton Airport, which rezoned 90ha of industrial land in 2024 and opened an international terminal in 2025.

[3] MBIE Regional Workforce Plan 2025

[4] Future Proof Strategy 2024, at page 14

An area with boundary-less planning in motion

Most of the area in focus in this study, and where change in land use will predominantly occur, is currently contained within the Waipā District. Much of the undeveloped land is predominantly zoned Rural in the Waipā District Plan, with some of this area regarded as 'greenfield' land available for urban development. The Future Proof Strategy notes that both Priority Area 1 and Priority Area 2 (respectively, geographically referred to as SL1 and SL2) are subject to a strategic boundary agreement signed in 2022 between the Waipā District Council and Hamilton City. The SL1 area has experienced an acceleration in land use change due to fast-tracked applications, and neither was included in the 30-year timeframe of the 2024 Future Proof Strategy settlement pattern, as investigations had not yet been completed to support their inclusion.

An area notable for numerous fast-track development proposals

There are at least 25 potential and accepted fast-track applications at various stages within the Future Proof subregion, including around 12 for housing and business developments. These developments have the potential to increase the Hamilton urban area by 11 per cent, adding 10,000 houses and over 750 hectares of business land satisfying typical industrial and commercial activities. These applications are demonstrative of the interest and significant growth pressures in the subregion. There are currently two fast-track projects preparing substantive applications within the study area, which all relate to the SL1 growth area:

- Southern Links 1 (SL1)
- Rogerson Block, SL1

These have both been referred to use the fast-track process, and applicants are preparing substantive applications. It is expected that additional applications will emerge over the next 6-12 months for similar developments.

There are infrastructure risks associated with these proposals, in particular, that there are no water or wastewater services readily available for the developments in SL1. Long-term wastewater solutions rely on the Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant. There are also transport implications, particularly until Southern Links is in place.

The fast-track applications are indicative of high developer interest in the North Waipā – South Hamilton area. This has been influenced by the ability to buy cheaper land and indications of future infrastructure, such as Southern Links.

An area with a fast-growing economy

The Waikato plays a central role in the Upper North Island economy, alongside the Auckland and Bay of Plenty regions. The Upper North Island supports 53 per cent of the national population and generates 55 per cent of the country's GDP. Growth in this area has increased more rapidly than for the rest of the country, and that's likely to continue.

It is a Future Proof Strategy principle to maintain linkages among the sub-region, the wider Waikato, and the Upper North Island, including integrated planning.

Increased connectivity (both intra and inter-regional) has driven economic growth and change in the Future Proof sub-region. Other economic drivers include a growing Maaori economy and high-performing education and research institutions nearby (e.g., the University of Waikato, Wintec, AgResearch), which businesses draw on for workforce and innovation support.

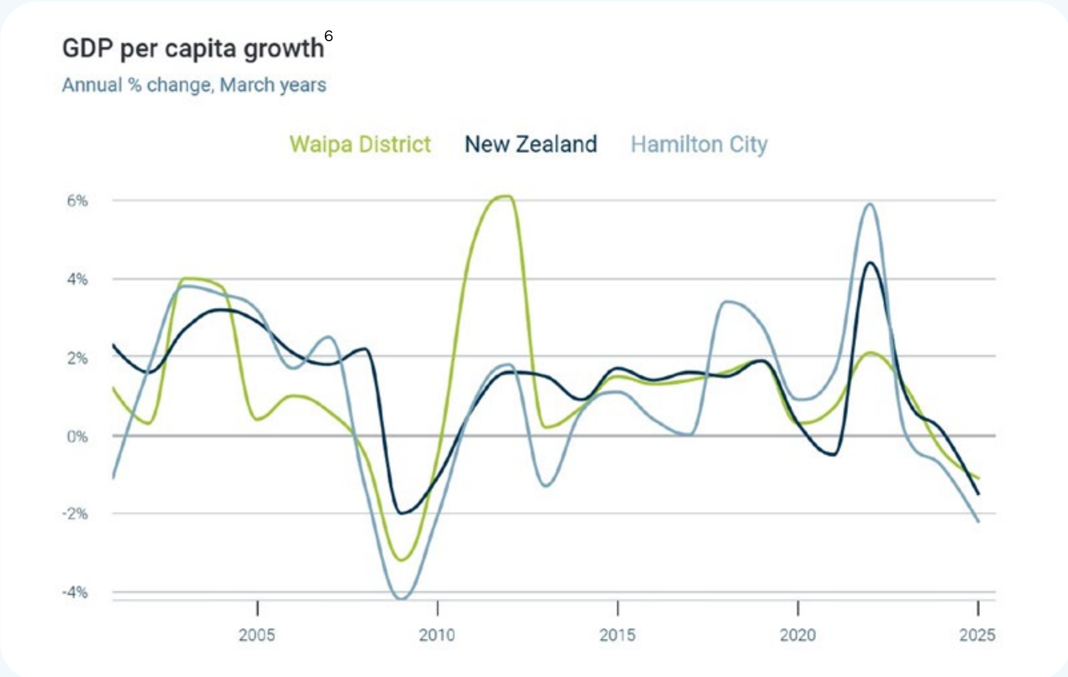
Performance

This section provides an assessment of the area's performance from the perspectives of economics, livability, and environmental considerations.

Jobs and Opportunity

While the Waikato region is a significant contributor to the New Zealand economy in several key sectors, it is not fully realising its potential. The Waikato sits below the national average for GDP, the employment rate and average household income.[5]

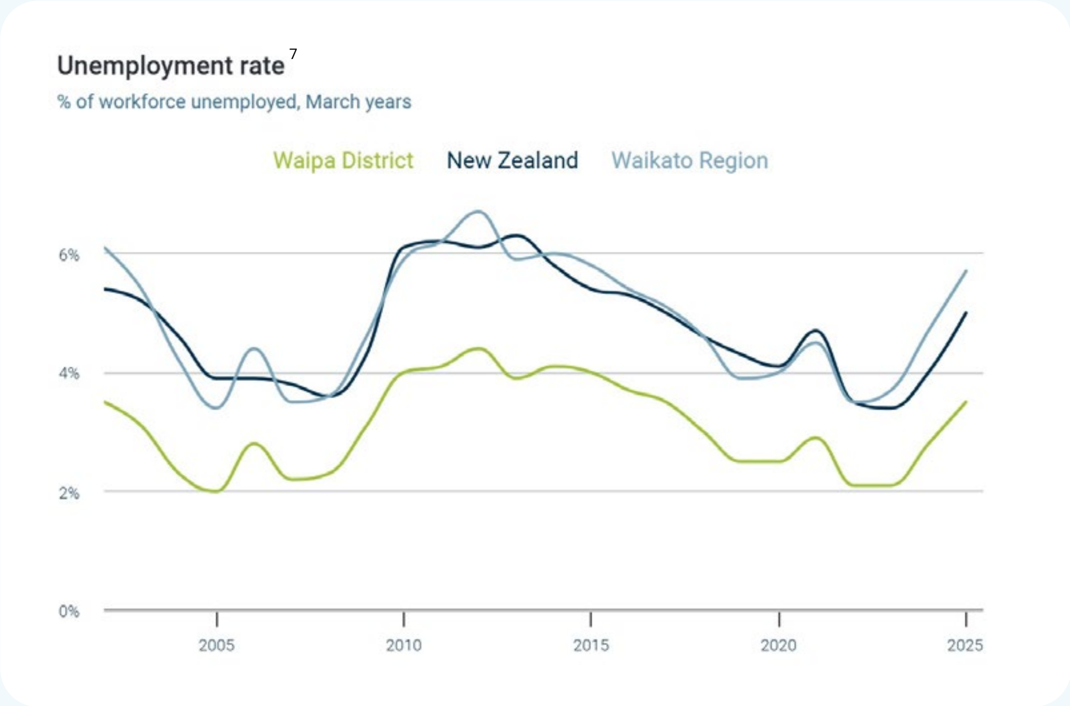
Employment growth or job creation has been declining over the last five years. This is the case for the Waikato Region, Waipā District, Hamilton City and New Zealand as a whole. The unemployment rate has also been increasing. Waipā has a lower rate than the national average, while Hamilton's rate is higher at 7 per cent.



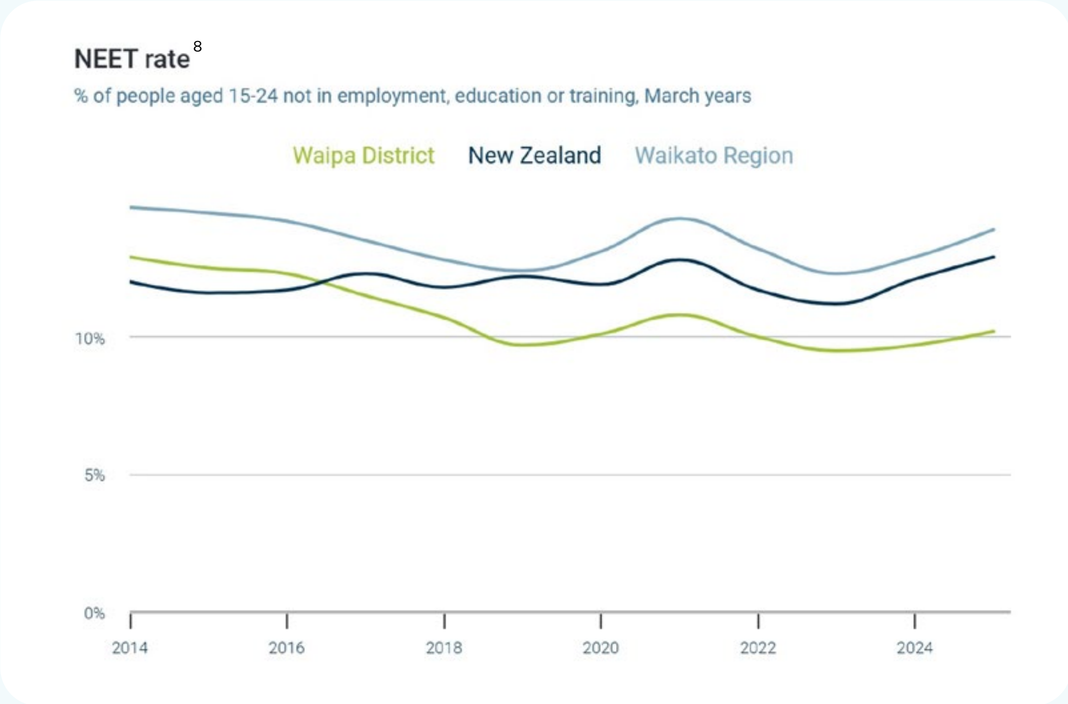
[5] MBIE, Regional Economic Activity Webtool: Regional Economic Activity web tool | Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

[6] Infometrics, 2026

The percentage of people aged 15 to 24 who are not in employment, education or training sits at 12.9 per cent for New Zealand as a whole. The Waikato Region and Hamilton City have a rate of 13.9 per cent , while Waipā has a rate of 10.2 per cent. Current trends show that over the last three years that rate has been increasing across the board.



[7] Infometrics, 2026



Hamilton's economy is characterised by larger-scale, high-value service activities typical of a significant urban environment. The Waipā economy is more diversified, with other services, high-value services and goods-producing industries continuing to play an important role in the overall economy. The combined Hamilton - Waipā market reflects a complementary economic relationship, with Hamilton serving as the service and technological / innovation hub and Waipā supporting sub-regional production and primary-based industries.

The Airport and Titanium Park are currently the most significant business and employment location in the North Waipā – South Hamilton study area. At present, manufacturing employment accounts for over half of total employment around Hamilton airport. Compared to the employment structure around Auckland and Christchurch Airports, Titanium Park's share of employment within transport, postal and warehousing is fairly small. There is additional room for growth in employment within this sector for Titanium Park.[9]

Hamilton Airport and Mystery Creek are identified as high-value economic anchors for the region. To date, there has been a lack of clarity around the future aspirations of some key stakeholders across the study area. This makes it difficult to plan and invest appropriately and to ensure that developments are not in conflict with one another.

[8] Infometrics, 2026

[9] Private Plan Change 20 - Statement of Evidence of Gregory Michael Akehurst, March 2023

The Hamilton-Waipā area has around 520ha of industrial land capacity. There is approximately 200ha of confirmed industrial land that will come onstream over the next 10 years in the study area.[10]

The Future Proof Business Development Capacity Assessment 2023 found that Hamilton City has a potential shortfall of industrial land over the medium and long-term. Recent industrial land projections have also indicated there could be accelerated demand. This includes potential spillovers from neighbouring regions and induced demand that could arise from an expanded supply of industrial land. These shortfalls need to be considered in the context of fast-track applications across the sub-region. If approved, these will add a significant amount of industrial land.

TAKEAWAY

The Waikato region is not fully realising its potential in several key sectors. This is also true within the study area which has significant employment opportunities – mostly within and around the Hamilton Airport. The Airport is the most significant business and employment location in the North Waipā – South Hamilton study area.

Great Place to Live (Liveability)

The Future Proof sub-region faces challenges in respect of housing affordability and the provision of housing that meets the needs of communities. There are also significant numbers of people on the social housing register. It is acknowledged nationally and regionally that there is a lack of sufficient housing choice and diversity in the right locations in New Zealand. The provision of affordable housing, social housing, and housing that meets the needs of a range of communities is a complex matter and requires a comprehensive, multifaceted approach, which is the focus of the Going For Housing Growth programme.

[10] Airport land plus SL1 Stage 1

[11] This shortfall includes a sensitivity analysis which reduced the capacity available at Ruakura to reflect alternative possibilities for land development outcomes in Ruakura given the leasehold status of the land which may not be attractive to a part of the industrial market *(Future Proof Business Development Capacity Assessment 2023, Market Economics).*

[12] Microsoft Word - HCC Industrial Land Projections - Draft Final, Business Development Capacity Assessment 2023

In the study area, growth pressure is concentrated in key areas – SH3, northern Waipā, around the Airport, along with ripple effects on nearby villages. Questions remain about the scale, nature, and timing of development in these areas, which limits the ability to plan proactively and to ensure that the right type of housing is provided, along with good placemaking.

The study area is expected to have around 1,000 houses constructed if the SL1 Stage 1 fast-track application is approved. In total, the whole SL1 area could contain more than 7,000 houses.

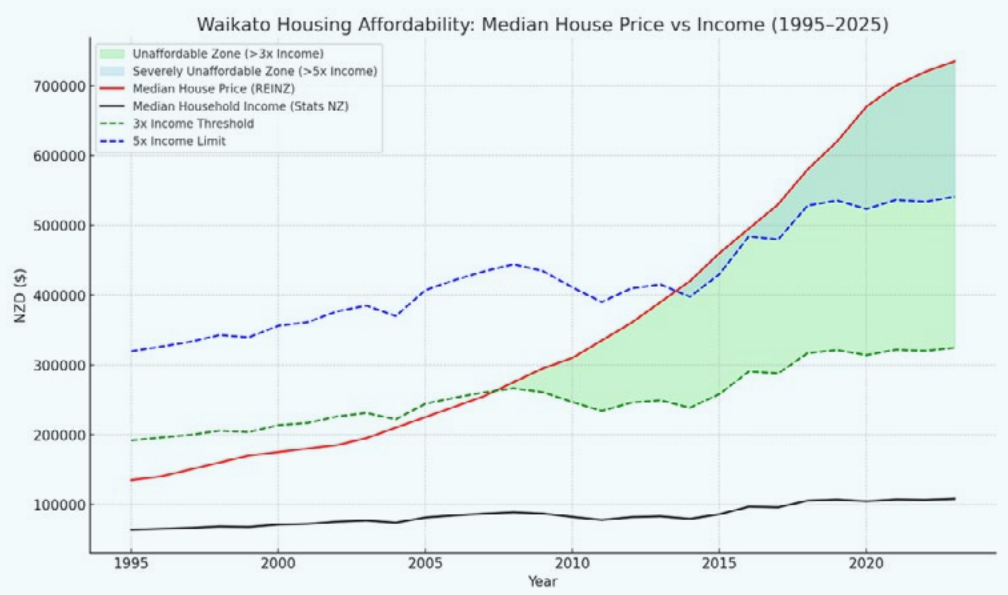


Figure 4 *Waikato Housing Affordability, Waikato Wellbeing Project*

TAKEAWAY

Establishing a major employment hub here creates live-work-play options that might not occur without such investment. Growth areas will need to be designed to include community facilities, open space, and diverse housing options. There needs to be a focus on providing liveable communities and affordable housing for the population. Currently, the scale, nature, and timing of development in the study area are unclear, which limits the ability to plan proactively.

Easy to get around (Transport and Accessibility)

The study area is currently supported by a State highway network (3 and 21), local roads, the North Island Main Trunk railway and the Airport. The Northern Waipā-Southern Hamilton transport networks are struggling to enable efficient and easy access, and this is forecast to worsen as strong growth continues. Travel times for freight and other traffic are lengthening and there are a lack of alternative travel options.

Recent data has confirmed a significant increase in traffic on SH21 Airport Road following the opening of the Waikato Expressway. There are safety and renewal issues at Narrows Bridge on SH21 Airport Road, congestion and access issues for Tamahere, congestion issues on SH1C and SH3 Ohaupo Road. Growth at the Airport is also putting pressure on the roading network.

The North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) runs through the study area although it does not interact with the Airport. The NIMT is predominantly for freight but a passenger rail service is provided between Hamilton and Auckland (Te Huia).

Fourty per cent of the country's freight movements go into, out of, or through the Waikato.[13] The Waikato has 13 per cent of the country's freight task, which nationally is expected to increase 20 per cent by 2035. Freight volumes in the Waikato are forecast to grow 47 to 65 per cent by 2030. Ninety three per cent of freight volume is moved by road transport.[14]

The wider Hamilton area's strategic location makes it the most integrated inland freight hub in the country. There are strong road and rail links to Auckland and Tauranga ports, which make it an important freight and distribution hub in New Zealand's supply chain. Efficient movement through and around Hamilton is critical for accessing regional and global markets and for New Zealand's ongoing economic growth and productivity.

Better connectivity in the study area would improve productivity and unlock residential and business land, in particular the economic benefits associated with the Airport.

TAKEAWAY

Targeted investment along SH3, SH21 and the Tamahere interchange, along with construction of the Southern Links and investment in public transport, is needed to support growth, maintain productivity and liveability and provide a resilient network. The study area is not currently serviced by public transport.

[13] MoT

[14] Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan 2024 - 2054

Supporting and facilitating Mana Whenua / Iwi aspirations

Iwi with recognised rohe in the study area are:

- Waikato-Tainui
- Ngaati Hauaa
- Ngaati Korokii Kahukura
- Maniapoto
- Raukawa

Maaori constitute nearly a quarter of the population of the Waikato Region. This region has the second-largest Maaori asset base in New Zealand, and its economy remains strong. The largest share of Maaori primary sector assets is located in the Waikato, primarily in sheep, beef, dairy, and forestry. Additionally, Waikato has the third-largest number of Maaori-owned businesses in the country.[15]

The Waikato rohe possesses a substantial asset base in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, as well as in property, with the primary sector accounting for around 40 per cent of the Waikato Maaori asset base. Most of these assets are collective in nature.

In the manufacturing and construction sectors, the Maaori asset base is also significant, along with some investments in public and professional services.

Between 2013 and 2018, Maaori assets grew by 10 per cent per year. Furthermore, Maaori make a considerable contribution to the regional GDP, estimated at 8 per cent of the total. The value of assets in the Waikato rohe exceeds $20 billion.[16]

Based on the review of Iwi management plans available for the area, common themes across Iwi economic aspirations include sustainable land use, with development embedded in environmental respect; development that understands and respects mātauranga Maaori, and the specific values of each Iwi; and increased partnership and involvement in economic development in the region.

TAKEAWAY

The Maaori economy is a source of a large and growing part of the region's capital and labour. Te Ao Maaori and maatauranga Maaori represents a more holistic way of considering development and growing the economy, with longer timeframes.

[15] MBIE, Te Ōhanga Māori - The Māori Economy 2023

[16] MBIE, Te Ōhanga Māori - The Māori Economy 2023

Caring for the Waikato River and the Environment

Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato (Te Ture Whaimana) is the Vision and Strategy and primary direction-setting document for the Waikato River and activities within its catchment. The health and wellbeing of the Waikato River and its tributaries remain central to all growth considerations. There are strong signals of widespread deterioration in water quality indicators for the Waikato Awa.[17] Over the past twenty years, levels of nitrogen in the river have risen, probably as a result of land use changes over recent decades.[18]

Waipā District contains a significantly higher proportion of highly productive soils than the national average, particularly Land Use Capability Classes 1, 2 and 3, making it a critical area for New Zealand's agricultural sector. The study area also contains peat lakes of national significance. The Waikato region has the largest collection of this wetland type in New Zealand, with 16 peat lakes located within Waipā District, including two within the study area: Lake Cameron / Kaeroatahi and Lake Maratoto.

Peat soils are also a defining feature of parts of the study area. While they are often treated as environmental constraints, they also create significant engineering, infrastructure and long-term financial challenges. Peat soils have high water content and low bearing capacity, making them prone to compression under heavy loads. This can increase construction complexity, require more expensive foundation design, and create ongoing risks for buildings, roads, pipes and other infrastructure.

Where peat soils are drained to enable farming or development, they release greenhouse gases and can subside over time as the peat dries and decomposes. This can reduce land levels, increase flood and drainage risks, and create escalating costs for pumping, drainage maintenance and infrastructure renewal. In this sense, drained peat soils can appear productive or developable in the short term, but may generate increasing costs, risks and liabilities over time.

Highly productive soils, peat soils, liquefaction, flooding, and biodiversity are prominent environmental factors across the study area. The full spatial extent of these constraints is not well mapped or assessed and further work is underway as part of the newly proposed planning regime. As it stands, previous mapping exercises (including the Future Proof Strategy 2024) categorised environmental constraints and values as follows:

[17] Report: Trends analysis for selected indicators of Waikato River health and wellbeing 2010-2019 | Earth Sciences New Zealand | NIWA

[18] River Water Quality, Waikato Regional Council: WPI - river water quality | Waikato Regional Council

- Waahi Toituu: areas with enduring presence that, for the purposes of spatial planning, are to be protected from new development:
    - areas with intrinsic environmental values, which offer ecosystem services or natural capital, or reflect important historic or cultural values;
    - areas where hazards, risks or other aspects are deemed to make future urban development in the foreseeable future either infeasible and/or undesirable, such as high-risk flood zones or areas with land instability risk[19]
- Waahi Toiora: areas where, for the purposes of spatial planning, potential development must be carefully managed with appropriate consideration and mitigation of risks. Constraints include areas with moderate slopes, highly productive soils (LUC 2 and 3), allophanic and shallow peat soils.

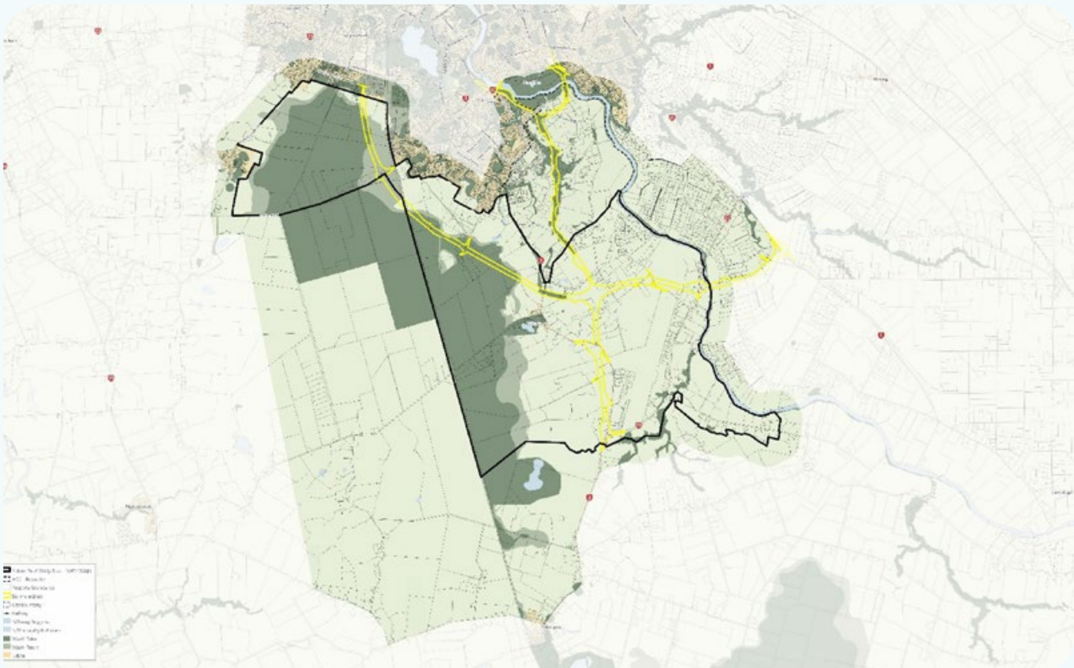


Figure 5 *Constraints map - Wāhi Toitū and Wāhi Toiora (Source : Future Proof Strategy 2024)*

TAKEAWAY

The study area contains a number of important environmental features. There are signs of ongoing deterioration in water quality, peatlands and biodiversity.

[19] High risk flood zones, instability risk, significant natural areas, wetlands, heritage sites, reserves, DOC land, QEII trust covenants, infrastructure corridors, outstanding natural features, steep slopes (25 degrees or greater), high class soils (LUC1), peat soil (depth greater than 3m), peat lakes (outside Rotokauri).

Value for Money - Strategic infrastructure alignment

The Future Proof subregion has substantial plan-enabled capacity to accommodate growth. However, infrastructure funding and financing remain the critical barrier to fully realising this capacity.

Growth in the North Waipā – South Hamilton study area has been planned for the long term, but Fast-track processes are accelerating development and bringing forward infrastructure investment requirements without corresponding funding and delivery being in place.

The area requires further significant investment in core infrastructure, particularly three waters (water supply, wastewater and stormwater), transport networks (including Hamilton Southern Links), and other bulk servicing infrastructure. A lot of the infrastructure needs to be delivered upfront and at scale before development can occur.

Some areas, such as Peacocke, have been planned and sequenced with strategic infrastructure in place to enable growth. However, many other areas require significant new investment before development can proceed.

Urban growth in northern Waipā, adjacent to Hamilton city, is dependent on connections to Hamilton's existing urban networks, reinforcing the need for coordinated, cross-boundary infrastructure planning and investment. In some locations, existing networks are already constrained and limit the ability to enable further growth. For example, parts of southwest Hamilton are constrained by infrastructure capacity, meaning additional investment is required before growth can proceed in those areas.

Councils must plan and fund infrastructure investment within financially sustainable limits, which influences when and how infrastructure is delivered. This creates a need to consider alternative approaches to infrastructure funding, financing and delivery involving councils, water entities, developers and central governement.

The Local Government Funding Agency (LGFA) has announced increased debt limits for high-growth councils, beyond the current ceiling of 285 per cent of operating revenues, to 350 per cent . However, these changes are set against a backdrop of a proposed rates cap for local government and ongoing cost increases.

There are a number of emerging tools aimed at improving infrastructure funding and financing, including the Infrastructure Funding and Financing Act (IFF) model, development levies and targeted rates. These are intended to support a more flexible, "growth pays for growth" approach, enabling infrastructure to be funded, financed and delivered in a financially sustainable way.

The Te Awa Lakes development in Hamilton City has been able to take advantage of the IFF Act and establish a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for the project – separate from council's balance sheets. The SPV then repays any finance raised by charging a levy to homeowners and landowners who benefit from the infrastructure.

However, these tools are still evolving and are not yet widely applied. Current funding models do not consistently recover the full cost of growth, meaning costs can fall on existing ratepayers rather than those driving demand.

This reinforces the need for alternative funding, financing and delivery models, and a stronger application of a "developer pays" approach, particularly where growth is unplanned or occurs ahead of infrastructure provision, or requires new infrastructure investment to be brought forward.

TAKEAWAY

Infrastructure funding and financing remain the critical constraint on enabling growth. A more coordinated, subregional approach is required to align infrastructure and land use, ensure financially sustainable delivery, and apply a stronger "developer pays" approach where growth is unplanned or out-of-sequence.

Areas of interest: Snapshots

The map below outlines key locations of interest covered by the study. These areas were initially investigated during Phase 2 of the project as part of various scenarios. These locations are depicted as snapshots illustrating the current land-use types, their key functions, and how these areas are expected to evolve over the study planning horizon of 30 to 50 years, taking into account key signals and considerations.

SL1 (WHOLE GROWTH CELL)

Current Role / Function

- Primarily rural
- Characterised by fragmented land ownership
- Limited urban development
- Identified SL1 growth-cell catchment as defined in the HCC Operative District Plan
- Fast Track Applications (Housing / Industrial) in progress

Future Role / Function

- Residential and industrial development based on Fast Track and concept planning proposals.
- Fast Track elements include, in part, Southern Links 1 (Stage 1): Residential approx. 1,035 allotments across 48 ha / Industrial: Approx 66 ha and Rogerson Block, SL1: 200 medium-density residential units over 13 ha / 30 industrial allotments over 28 ha.

Level of Change

High

Level of Certainty

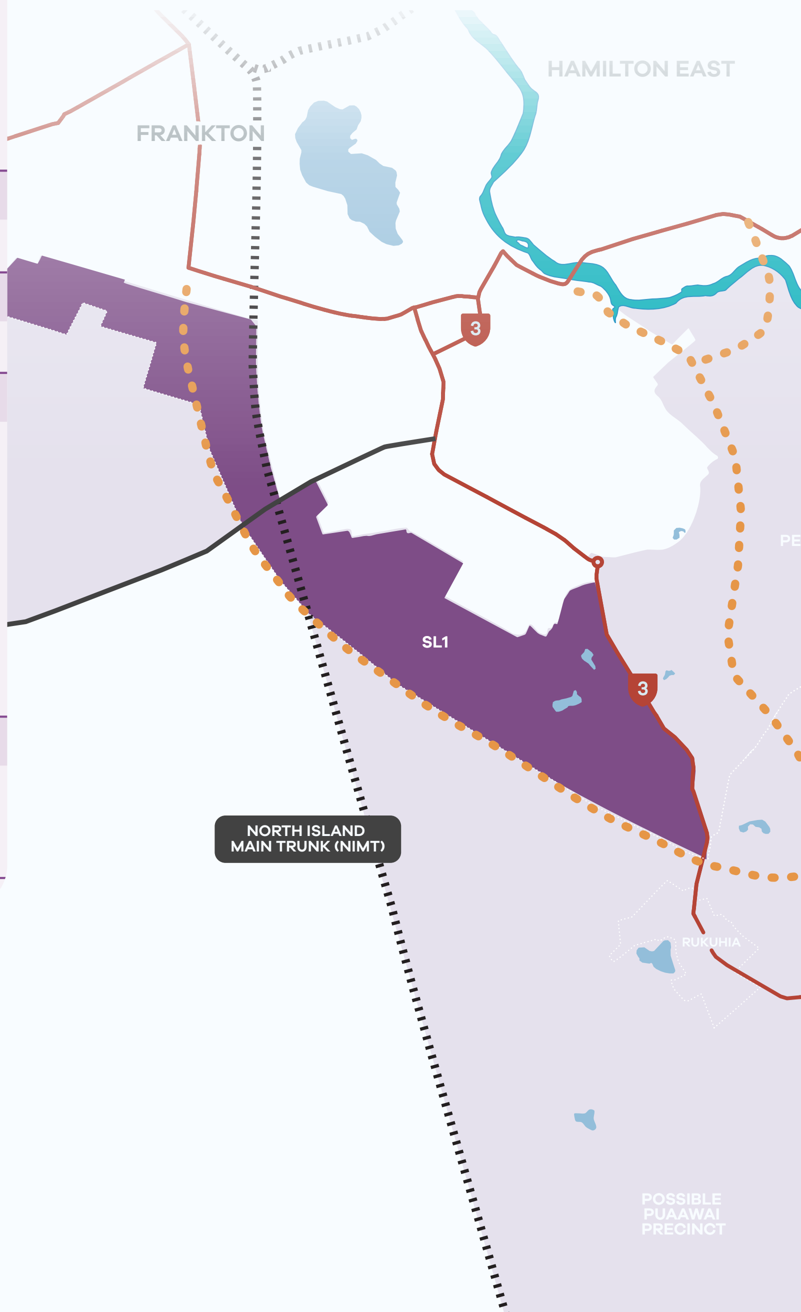
High

Key Signals

- Area is a key component to Strategic Boundary agreement between HCC and WDC
- Land directly adjacent to the proposed Hamilton Southern Links corridor
- SL1 Consortium Concept plan submitted (2024)
- Southern Links 1 (Stage 1), Rogerson blocks referred to fast-track process
- Houchens block preparing a fast-track referral application

Key Considerations:

- Environmental (peat / highly productive soils (LUC 2))
- Infrastructure (roading/accessibility / wastewater)



SL2

Current Role / Function

- Primarily rural and large lot residential
- Characterised by fragmented land ownership
- Airport runway approach and noise contour
- Narrows Concept Plan

Future Role / Function

- Forms part of the Strategic Boundary Agreement between HCC and WDC (long-term)
- Likely to be functionally split land use - SL2 West: Retaining low-density residential and proposed Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant / SL2 East: Industrial / Employment Land

Level of Change

Low

Level of Certainty

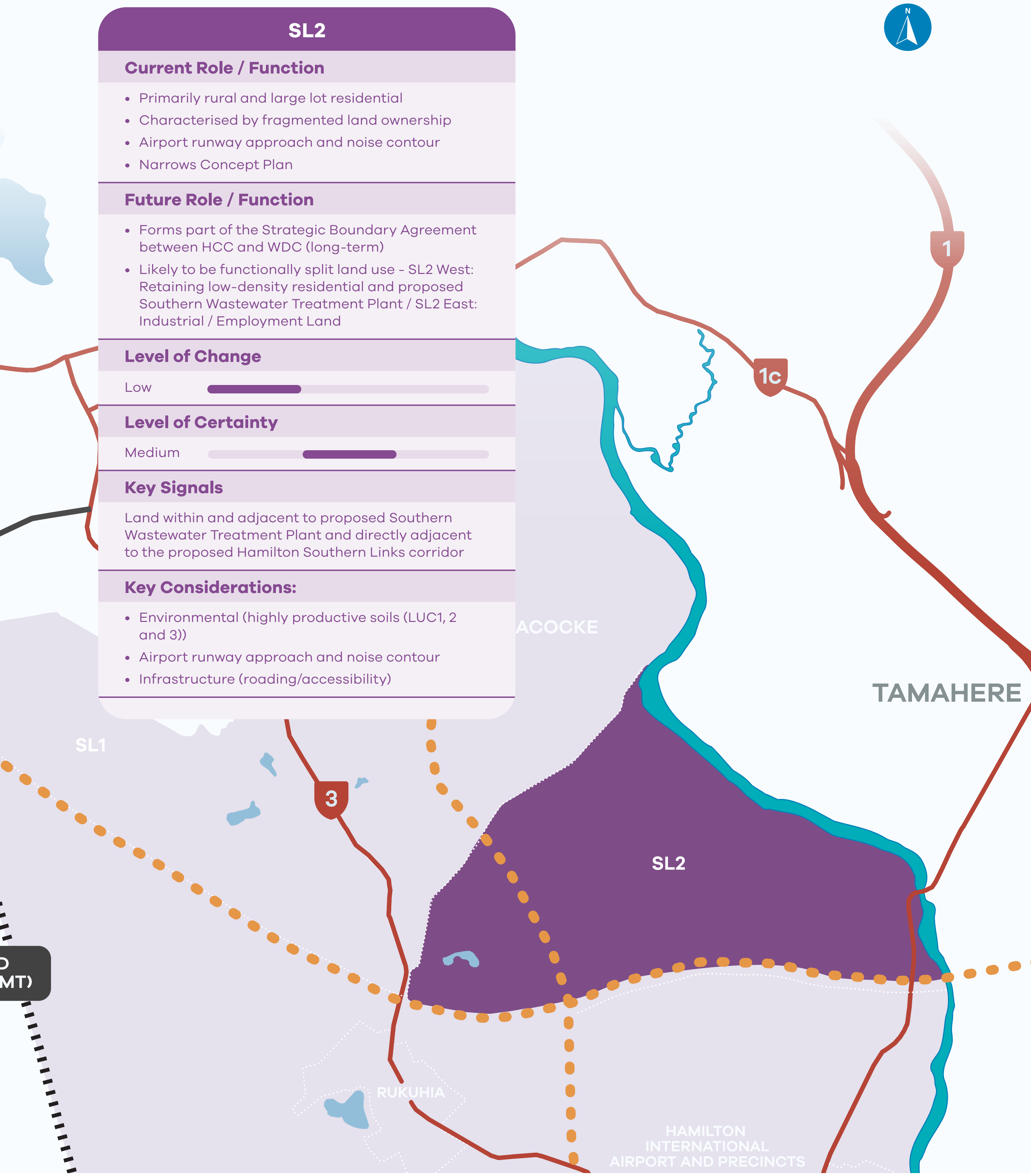
Medium

Key Signals

Land within and adjacent to proposed Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant and directly adjacent to the proposed Hamilton Southern Links corridor

Key Considerations:

- Environmental (highly productive soils (LUC1, 2 and 3))
- Airport runway approach and noise contour
- Infrastructure (roading/accessibility)



PEACOCKE

Current Role / Function

- Zoned for urban development
- Development is getting underway according to the structure plan
- Infrastructure-ready

Future Role / Function

- 720-hectare development
- Residential: 8,000 houses over 30 years

Level of Change

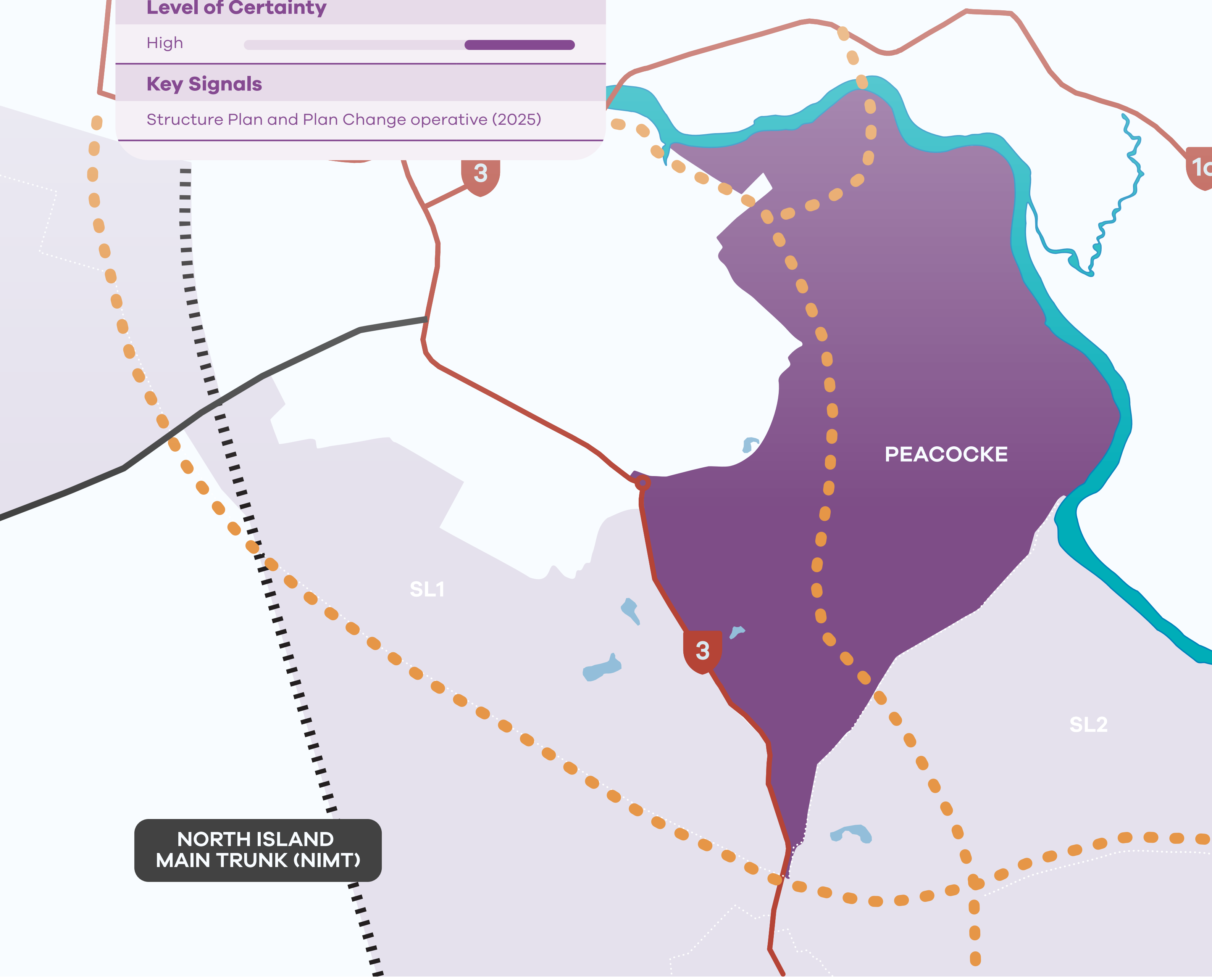
High

Level of Certainty

High

Key Signals

Structure Plan and Plan Change operative (2025)



INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND PRECINCTS

Current Role / Function

- International Airport and other related aviation activities.
- Surrounding precincts, principally industrial, commercial activities and accommodation services.
- 5 precincts – North, South, East, West and Central, all already under development.

Future Role / Function

- Airport to potentially provide an alternative to Auckland and Wellington airports in case of adverse weather
- Northern precinct – 100 ha
- Potential for additional development.

Level of Change

High

Level of Certainty

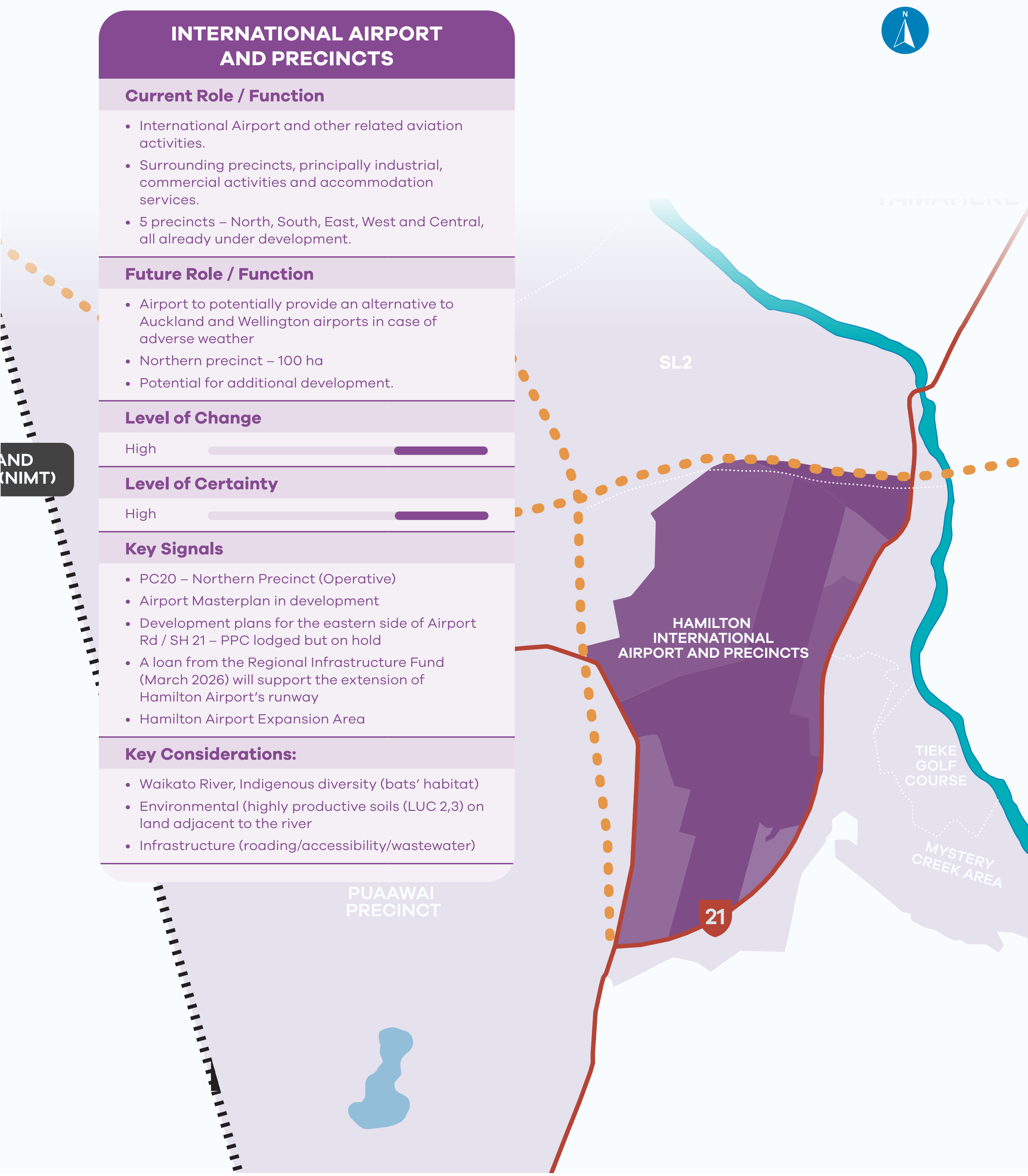
High

Key Signals

- PC20 – Northern Precinct (Operative)
- Airport Masterplan in development
- Development plans for the eastern side of Airport Rd / SH 21 – PPC lodged but on hold
- A loan from the Regional Infrastructure Fund (March 2026) will support the extension of Hamilton Airport's runway
- Hamilton Airport Expansion Area

Key Considerations:

- Waikato River, Indigenous diversity (bats' habitat)
- Environmental (highly productive soils (LUC 2,3) on land adjacent to the river
- Infrastructure (roading/accessibility/wastewater)



TIEKE GOLF COURSE

Current Role / Function

- 18-hole golf course with supporting facilities (golf club, restaurant)
- Nationally ranked (Top 20)

Future Role / Function

Recreational / Tourism / Accommodation services / events

Level of Change

Low

Level of Certainty

High

Key Signals

None identified

Key Considerations:

Reverse sensitivity to airport and associated activities (e.g. engine testing)

MYSTERY CREEK

Current Role / Function

- Events Centre – 114ha
- Host of the largest agricultural show in the southern hemisphere
- Emergency hub

Future Role / Function

- Additional pavilion
- More large-scale events
- Emergency hub

Level of Change

Medium

Level of Certainty

High

Key Signals

- Regional Infrastructure Fund to upgrade the water storage system (April 2026)
- 15 year plan

Key Considerations:

- Waikato River
- Environmental (highly productive soils (LUC 2,3) on land adjacent to the river
- Infrastructure (wastewater)

RUKUHIA VILLAGE

Current Role / Function

Small village (approx. 200 people)

Future Role / Function

Potential large village

Level of Change

Medium

Level of Certainty

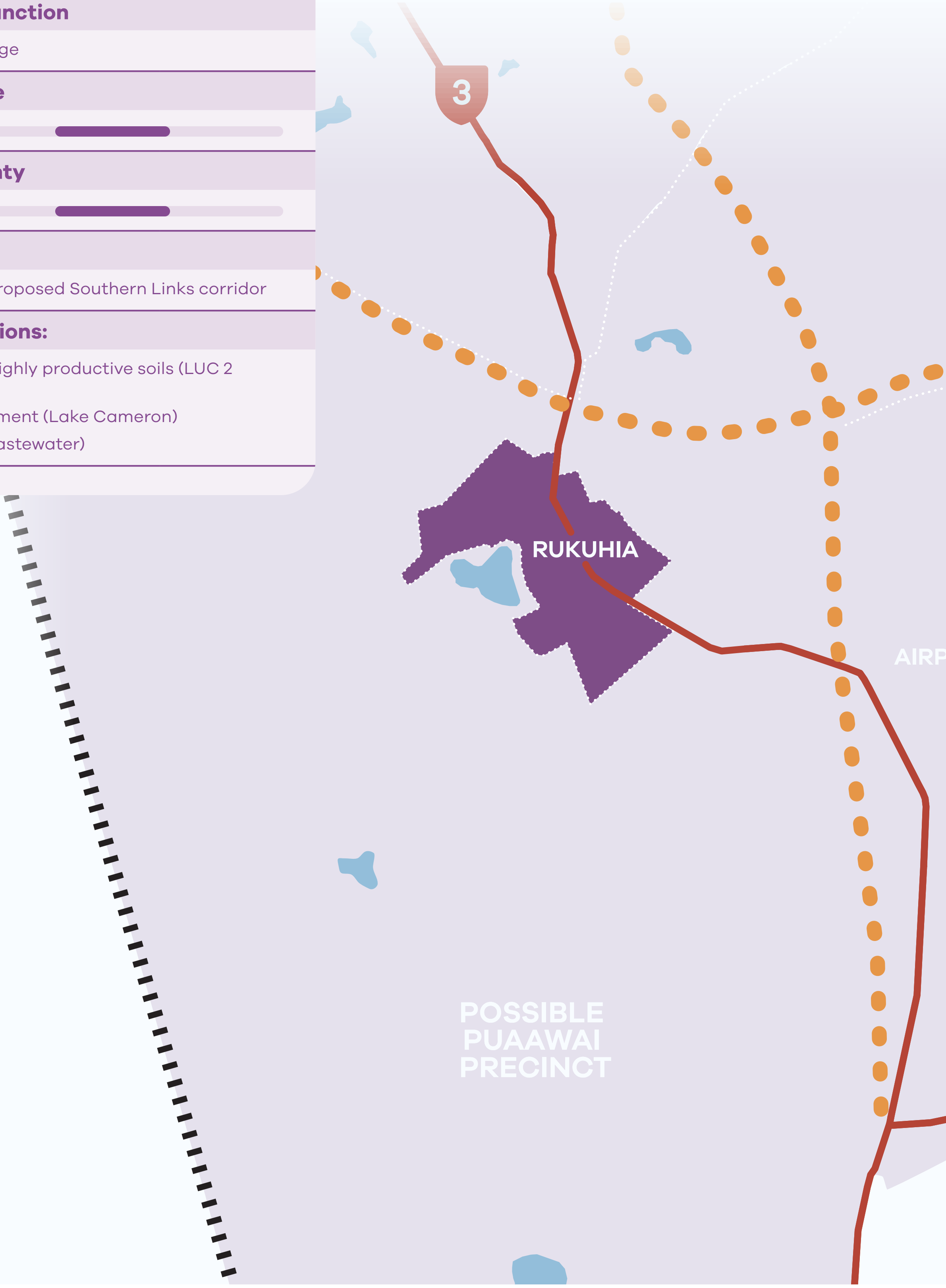
Medium

Key Signals

Land adjacent to proposed Southern Links corridor

Key Considerations:

- Environmental (highly productive soils (LUC 2 and 3))
- Peat Lake Catchment (Lake Cameron)
- Infrastructure (wastewater)



PUAAWAI (POSSIBLE PRECINCT)

Current Role / Function

- Mostly rural with sand mining operation untill 2038 (Consent end date).
- Medium fragmented land ownership

Future Role / Function

- Mined area to be remediated.
- Industrial aspirations and various activities proposed once mining ceases operation

Level of Change

High

Level of Certainty

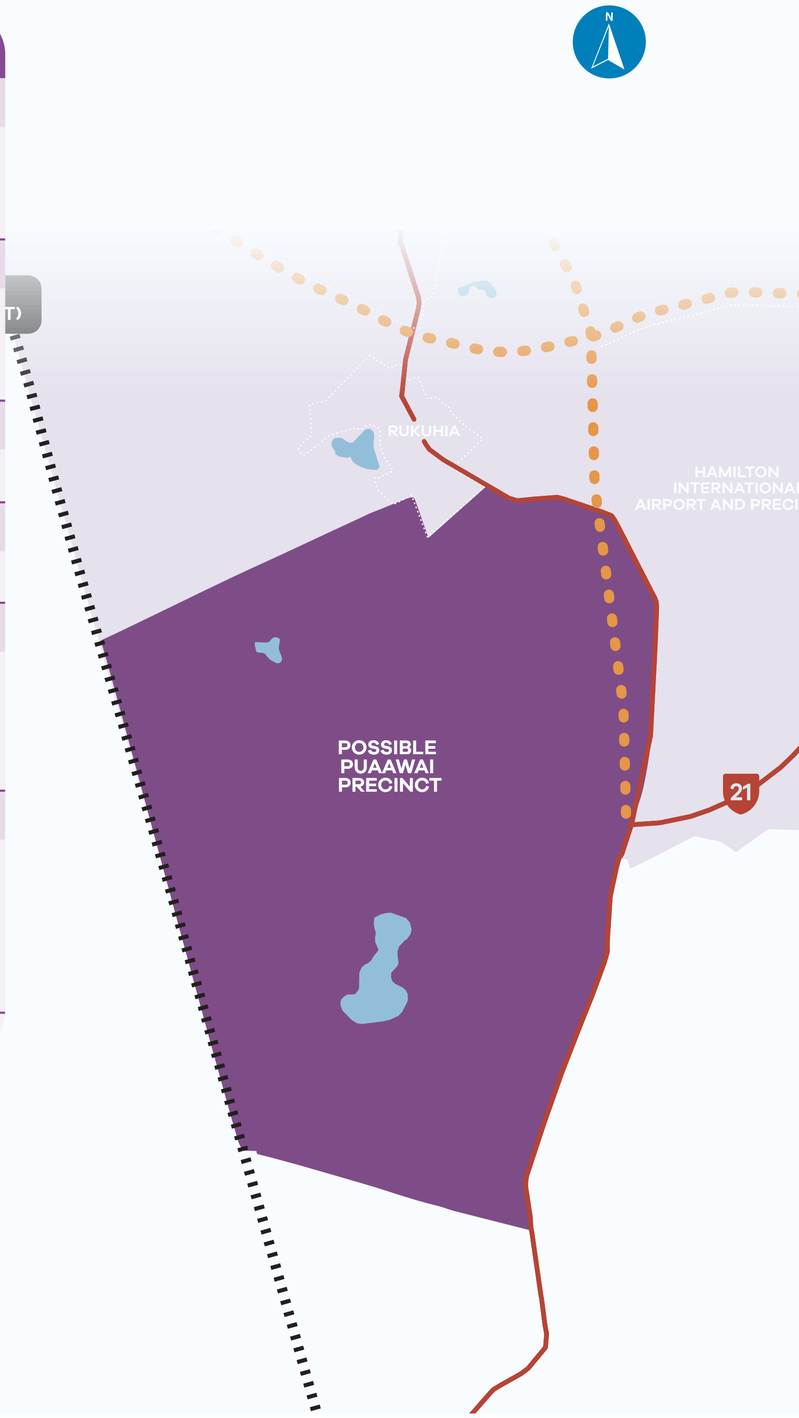
Low/Medium

Key Signals

- Aspirations driven by Puaawai Whenua Limited Partnership
- Developer strong appetite for short-term development. Concept Plan progressed.

Key Considerations:

- Environmental (highly productive soils (LUC 1, 2 and 3)
- Peat Lake Catchment (Lake Maratoto)
- Infrastructure (roading / accessibility /water / wastewater)



The current function of the remaining land cover within the study area, or the balance, is predominantly rural and used for primary production. This area is likely to see no change in land use over the next 30+ years, as it remains a critical, ongoing agricultural use that supports the district and regional economy and helps grow and sustain these communities.

Spatial and Economic Opportunities

The North Waipā – South Hamilton area presents a rare convergence of distinct and interrelated spatial and economic opportunities at scale, positioning it as one of the most compelling growth opportunities within the Waikato and wider Upper North Island.

These opportunities are diverse and not evenly distributed across the study area. Some aim to expand economic prospects and are mainly focused on established development and infrastructure corridors, while others are centred on conserving and safeguarding locations with specific environmental features and their associated traditional activities, such as farming.

This section provides the case for change. It identifies where and how these opportunities should be enabled to maximise productivity, improve infrastructure efficiency, and support a more coherent and well-functioning subregional urban and rural environment. Realising this potential will require the right balance to ensure that the associated risks and trade-offs are well managed and that coordinated intervention can deliver step-change outcomes.

A national and inter-regional node

At a national scale and as previously stated, the study area sits within New Zealand's most significant economic corridor - the Golden Triangle, linking Auckland, Hamilton, and Tauranga. This corridor is projected to continue concentrating the majority of the country's population growth, freight movement, and economic activity over the next 25–30 years.

Within this context, the North Waipā/ South Hamilton area is uniquely positioned:

- At the intersection of the Auckland and Tauranga economic corridors;
- Connected to state highway and rail networks, which form the backbone of national freight movement;
- Anchored by Hamilton International Airport, which has the potential to play an increasing role in regional transportation resilience and national network redundancy, particularly as a complementary asset to Auckland Airport activities; and
- Located in proximity to established knowledge node, including the Waikato Hospital and Waikato University.

From a national rail investment perspective, KiwiRail's most recent Rail Network Investment Programme (RNIP 2024-27) signalled a continued focus on maintaining the Golden Triangle network, which reinforces the strategic importance of its locations. The study area, therefore, sits directly within this national freight and logistics spine, creating a platform for long-term economic activity.

A convergence of regional assets

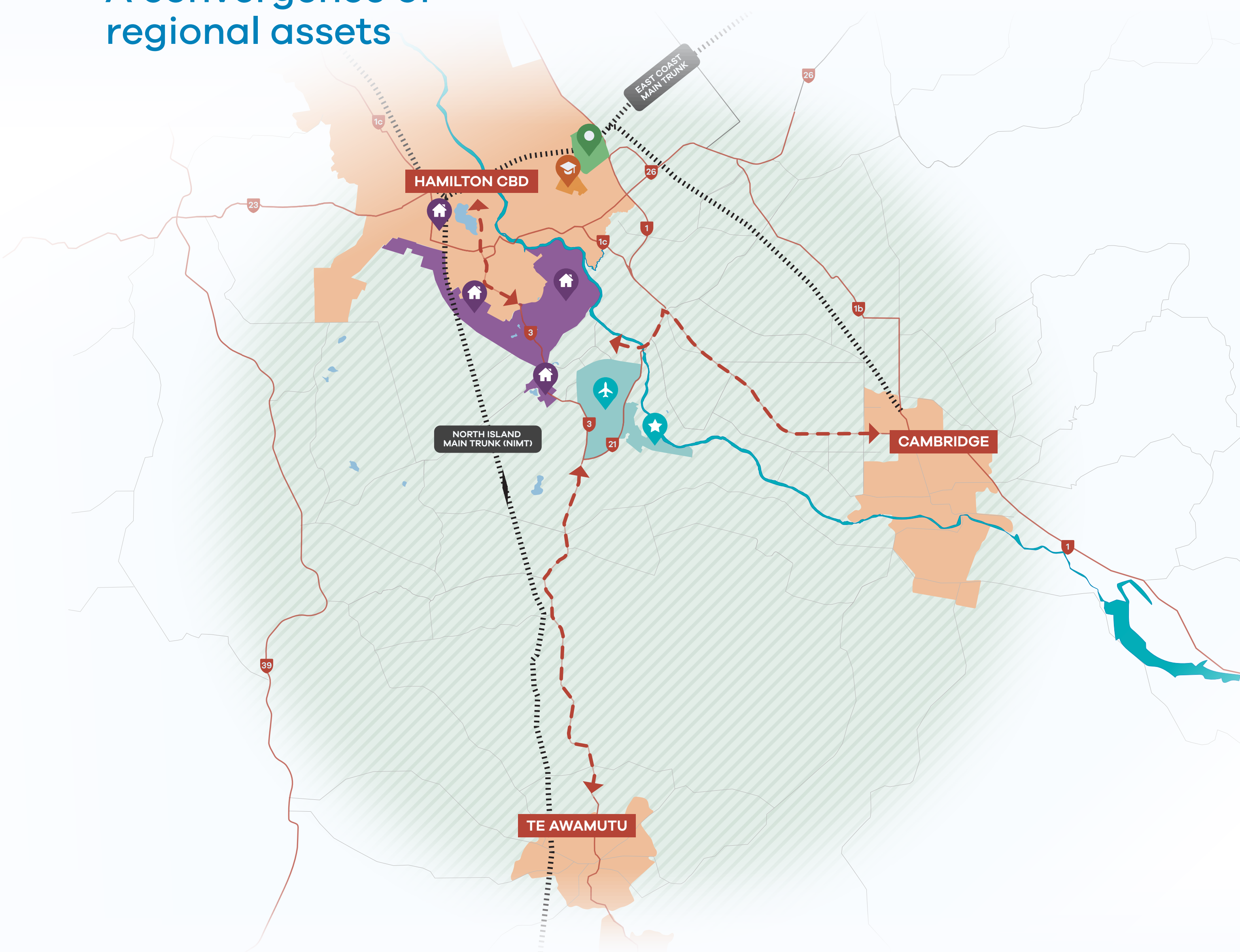
The scale of opportunity in the study area is driven by the co-location of major economic and institutional assets, which is uncommon at this level within New Zealand.

These include:

- Hamilton International Airport and its surrounding precincts;
- Mystery Creek as a nationally significant event and business destination;
- Proximity to the Ruakura Superhub and inland port logistics system;
- Access to state highway (SH1, SH3 and SH21) and rail networks (North Island Main Trunk and East Coast Main Trunk;
- Surrounding highly productive rural soils supporting primary sector industries and value chains;
- Linkages to tertiary education and research capability, including the University of Waikato;
- Close to Hamilton - New Zealand's fourth largest city, and approximately equidistant to the townships of Cambridge and Te Awamutu;
- Within short commuting distance from mixed typology residential housing (existing and longer term growth)

Together, these assets form the foundation of a potential integrated logistics, production, and innovation corridor that connects goods, people/workers and knowledge/ideas.

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)**

Environmental constraints are economic opportunities

Natural assets such as highly productive soils, peat systems, the Waikato River, biodiversity networks and flood-prone areas are essential components of the region's long-term economic asset base. They support primary production, water quality, ecosystem services, and environmental stability, all of which are vital for sustained regional economic performance and attractiveness. Therefore, environmental constraints should not be considered separately from economic considerations.

In this context, Wāhi Toitū (no-go areas) and Wāhi Toiora (go-carefully areas) can serve as valuable tools for both economic and environmental decision-making. This approach fosters a framework that guides development towards locations capable of sustaining long-term productivity, managing infrastructure costs effectively, and minimising environmental risks.

Infrastructure as an enabler, not sole driver

From an investment perspective, infrastructure does not create opportunity on its own; it amplifies locations where underlying land use and strategic advantages already exist. It is an enabler of opportunity, not a generator.

In the North Waipā – South Hamilton area, this is reflected in the role of key enabling infrastructure, such as the ones listed below. These investments will, eventually, unlock and scale pre-existing economic opportunities, improving accessibility, amenities and servicing capacity.

Hamilton Southern Links (HSL) - Road of National Significance[20]

The proposed Hamilton Southern Links (HSL) project (State highway components) was classified as a Road of National Significance (RoNS) in 2024 and will represent a step-change in freight movement and accessibility for the area. While funding and construction timelines remain uncertain, there is a clear commitment to establishing and constructing some form of road along the Southern Links designation.

[20] NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, Hamilton Southern Links Investment Case Summary, 2025

The project, along with its supporting arterial network, has long been a priority for Future Proof to deliver housing and economic growth, but it competes with other road developments for limited government funds. Last year, Hamilton Southern Links (HSL) roading project (State highway components) moved forward with NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) Board endorsing is as an Investment Case in October 2025 and committing $100 million to pre-implementation.

Public transport and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) [21]

The Hamilton Airport area has currently limited serviced by public transport. Hamilton urban buses serve the existing urban area of Hamilton, and the frequent Te Awamutu service passes through the study area with very limited stops. The Hamilton Metro Spatial Plan Transport Programme Business Case (PBC) provides a long-term vision for a bus rapid transit corridor (ten-minute frequency) connecting Hamilton Airport to the Hamilton CBD, although it does not identify a specific route.

Through the Waikato Regional Council's Public Transport (PT) Pathways Project, a network likely to service the subregion's needs over the next 10-15 years as we transition toward BRT has been identified. This network includes the potential for a bus service to the airport as demand builds.

Park and Ride site as a key transport intervention

The prospects for a Park and Ride site in the vicinity of Hamilton Airport or Mystery Creek Events Centre were investigated as part of the 2022 Hamilton-Waikato Metro Spatial Plan (MSP) and its associated transport business cases. The plan identified a Park and Ride as a key intervention with a commercial opportunity to handle growing international and domestic passenger numbers. Currently, the airport offers on-site, pre-bookable parking, but as flight frequencies and volumes increase, long-term, cost-effective off-site options with shuttles might be considered. Such a facility could also service local commuters in Hamilton. A location is still to be identified.

[21] Future Proof, Waikato Metropolitan Spatial Plan, 2020

Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant

The proposed new Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant is being progressed through the IAWAI – Flowing Waters partnership. This partnership is a Council-Controlled Organisation between Hamilton City Council and Waikato District Council, working in partnership with Waikato-Tainui. The initial design and potential consent for the new plant follow a business case endorsed by the Hamilton, Waipā, and Waikato Councils.

The new plant represents a critical enabling investment and is configured to receive waste from this overall study area, should that prove appropriate.

In the interim, landowners will continue to provide their own wastewater services, which may include on-site treatment or truck-and-transfer to the Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant. A site for the southern plant has been identified (to the north of the Hamilton Southern Links state highway designation, in the SL2 area), funding for the sites construction is in the Hamilton City Council Long-Term Plan, and a design team is in place.

Recent infrastructure investments have been signalled in the area

A $6.5 million loan was recently announced for Hamilton International Airport from the Regional Infrastructure Fund. The loan is intended to fund the extension of the runway and apron space to accommodate a wider range of aircraft.

Ultimately, the upgrades would strengthen Hamilton International Airport's role in national aviation resilience. This means that during emergencies or adverse weather events, such as the one Auckland Airport experienced in 2023, Hamilton Airport could play a key role in minimising disruption and keeping people and goods moving. Upgrades are scheduled for completion by the end of 2027.

Similarly, Mystery Creek was recently allocated $1.35 million from the same Regional Infrastructure Fund loan to upgrade the existing reticulated water network and install a large-scale water tank. Mystery Creek is home to the southern hemisphere's largest agribusiness show and generates $528 million in total expenditure, including $213 million in the Waikato region. The event centre also serves as a critical infrastructure location for Civil Defence in the region, and with the upgrade, it would act as a logistics and supply hub during a large-scale emergency.

Unlocking existing zoning and environmental foundations

The existing zoning, i.e., Airport Business Zone (ABZ) and Mystery Creek Event Zone, provides a ready-to-leverage economic platform with established industrial, commercial, and event-related activities, meaning minimal regulatory steps to transition and adjustments are required to unlock additional development capacity and economic opportunities.

Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato provides a strong foundation to position environmental outcomes as a positive driver of development, supporting river health restoration while enabling high-quality amenity and place-making.

The proximity of productive agricultural land and the regulatory framework for sustaining the economic and environmental capacity of highly productive soils (LUC Class 1, 2, and 3) create opportunities to support agri-tech, food innovation, and value-added industries, strengthening linkages between production and supply and thus strengthening the Waikato's primary sector economy

Unlocking the agglomeration and clustering potential

The study area presents a significant opportunity to realise stronger agglomeration and clustering benefits over time. Agglomeration refers to the economic advantages that arise when companies, workers, and supporting infrastructure are located in close proximity, generating external economies such as shared services, deeper labour markets, and knowledge spillovers.

These benefits are typically expressed through three mechanisms:

- Sharing of infrastructure, inputs and supply chains;
- Matching between firms and a specialised workforce; and
- Learning through the exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Together, these effects can improve productivity, support higher-value activity, and strengthen regional competitiveness.

However, agglomeration can also entail costs, particularly where growth is fragmented or insufficiently coordinated. To fully realise the clustering benefits of this area, it is essential to understand its specialised role within the broader clustered framework of Hamilton, which serves as the dominant centre. Defining the area in this manner will enhance complementarity within the larger Hamilton-centred system, rather than fragmenting investments and creating competition with the Hamilton CBD, Ruakura, Cambridge, or Te Awamutu.

Other considerations

Realising the spatial and economic opportunities within the study area will require careful management of a number of risks and trade-offs. These do not negate the opportunities, but reinforce the need for a coordinated and well-thought-out approach.

Cross-boundary misalignment

The North Waipā – South Hamilton area should not be planned as a discrete growth precinct. Instead, it needs to be connected to the wider economic area to enhance long-term regional productivity. Partnering Councils must ensure alignment to avoid duplicating investments, providing inefficient infrastructure, or creating competition for development that undermines overall regional outcomes.

In this context, the outcome sought from this spatial study is not to replicate Hamilton's Ruakura or its knowledge-based functions, nor does it aim to duplicate the industrial and commercial activities proposals under the fast-track applications. This is because these are dispersed across the sub-region and are intended to meet typical industrial needs. The opportunity sought under this study aims to complement them by providing a strategic economic node at an appropriate scale for different format employment linked to aviation-related activities, logistics, freight distribution, agritech, and event-based functions, rather than being treated as a generic industrial development area. The strategic opportunity lies in operating as a connected economic network rather than as competing elements.

Uncoordinated growth and loss of strategic land

One of the most significant land use tensions addressed by the study is that incremental or poorly sequenced development could compromise opportunities that are difficult to recover once lost. The intent is not to enable dispersed or speculative conversion, but to ensure that land use decisions are deliberate, strategic, and aligned with infrastructure and economic opportunity. In many cases, highly productive soils should be prioritised for protection, while development should be focused in locations where the case for change is strongest. Importantly, unplanned growth may pose a greater long-term risk to productive land than a coordinated and disciplined planning approach.

Lack of Infrastructure certainty – timing and funding.

The study area's spatial and economic opportunities are partly dependent on infrastructure being funded to completion, notably in terms of transport and wastewater investment. This creates risks where, if infrastructure is delayed, reprioritised, or delivered out of sequence with demand, growth will need to be constrained or will create inefficiencies. This risk is mitigated through an agreed-upon, adaptive approach, where early actions focus on planning, alignment, and enabling work, while larger-scale development is linked to infrastructure delivery and demonstrated demand.

Inability to withstand political changes and maintain governance discipline

The economic and social potential of the area does not rely solely on realising the unlocked opportunities, but also on whether a common vision can be sustained over time. Changes in political priorities, election cycles, or short-term pressure to respond to specific development proposals hold the risk of weakening this vision and diluting the strategic direction over time. The opportunities identified in the study will require sustained commitment over many years and the fostering of trust through a collaborative approach.

The trade-off in sustaining a common effort discipline also means that the involved Councils and partners must be willing to accept some limitations on short-term flexibility, with a focus on delivering greater certainty through better infrastructure alignment and building stronger confidence among landowners and investors. This is a particular aspect that the development of the upcoming Regional Spatial Plan will support.

TAKEAWAY

The purpose of this study is to provide direction for realising the area's spatial and economic benefits while reducing identified risks through a coordinated framework.

Recommended Strategic Directions and Interventions

The area acts as a critical junction where job opportunities, transportation routes (air, road and rail), and housing needs all come together. Decisions made here can affect labour markets, freight and logistics performance, infrastructure costs, where people live, and how nearby towns and cities work alongside each other.

This study is intended to set out the strategic intent and implementation, providing a coherent sub-regional spatial framework for how land use development growth in the North Waipā – South Hamilton area should be enabled and delivered.

To this end, the following strategic directions and interventions have been designed to:

- Inform future spatial planning processes, particularly the preparation of the Regional Spatial Plan (RSP);
- Inform the strategic direction for development and public investment priorities for the area over the next 30+ years;
- Provide clear signals regarding the scale, location, and nature of future development opportunities and promote their integration with infrastructure planning and investment;
- Position the area to respond proactively to growth pressures while maximising long-term economic and infrastructure outcomes; and
- Support alignment and a coordinated approach to infrastructure funding and investment across agencies, including local government, central government, iwi partners and other infrastructure providers.

This establishes a foundation for subsequent detailed planning, including structure planning, infrastructure business cases, and delivery models to inform Council's long-term plans and infrastructure strategies, as well as Central Government plans and investments.

Each set of strategic directions and interventions presented below is:

- Outcome-led,
- Spatially explicit where possible, and
- Aligned with the higher-order strategies and governance (Future Proof, RSP).

It is important to note that *Outcome 4: Supporting and facilitating the aspirations of Mana Whenua and Iwi* is not intended to be delivered through a single set of strategic interventions. Areas for advancing Mana Whenua and Iwi goals for the environment, culture, jobs, and wellbeing, and reflecting their leadership and values, are not to be viewed in siloes, and these goals are integrated throughout all proposed strategic interventions. This integration occurs at the governance level, through leading interventions, or as intervention partners.

The section below outlines the strategic directions and interventions in two parts:

- First, described as a future state, "The future we want", detailing the desired outcomes for each theme. These narratives are composite elements of the preferred scenario and were shaped by feedback received during phase 2 of the project.
- Secondly, "How we plan to get there" sections, which outline the pathway by which Future Proof partners and, at times, the Waipā District Council, on behalf of Future Proof partners, aim to address these challenges. It is important to note that the interventions are not presented in a strict chronological order; instead, many will be implemented within the same time period.

Rural Waikato

Outcome 1: Jobs and Opportunities

The future we want:

By 2070, the area is a nationally significant innovation and employment hub serving businesses that value its location near the airport and its transport links to the Upper North Island. The average salaries of employees in this area are higher than average and employees are drawn from across the sub-region, attracted to the comparatively high wages, accessibility and quality environment/ place making that creates a unique selling point that is different to other industrial zones in the region; thereby strengthening the Waikato position and economy, making it a competitive contender in the Golden Triangle powerhouse. An area that showcases a deliberate investment-attraction strategy, supported by the public and private sectors, has attracted new, innovative companies to the site and created a vibrant ecosystem of interconnected national and international businesses.

How we plan to get there:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Position the Airport/ Mystery Creek area as a strategic economic area of regional and national significance

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Confirm Airport shareholders' (Councils) expectations for WRAL and Titanium Park Limited

WRAL (Waikato Regional Airport Ltd is a Council-controlled organisation owned by Hamilton City Council, Ōtorohanga, Waipā, Waikato and Matamata-Piako districts Councils and is the umbrella for subsidiary companies Hamilton Airport, Jet Park Hotel, Waikato Tourism (HWT) and Titanium Park Limited.

Through shareholders (Council) direction, initiate conversations to expand WRAL and Titanium Park's strategic focus beyond industrial land management toward long-term economic development, enabling higher-value, productivity-enhancing industries that leverage aviation capability, freight connectivity (and possibly airfreight), and access to major labour markets. Protecting and enhancing aviation-related operations should be a key factor to ensure Hamilton Airport's strategic positioning in the central North Island and as an alternative to Auckland Airport during adverse weather events. This critical step will facilitate political buy-in/ endorsement across Councils and key players on the long-term vision.

Initiate Economic Hub precinct master planning

Initiate coordinated precinct-scale master planning across the Airport/ Mystery Creek area to inform the Regional Spatial Plan and align shareholders and landowners around a shared long-term economic vision. The master planning process would be facilitated through the Future Proof partnership and will:

a. Safeguard the airport's long-term operational capacity by confirming runway designation protections, securing infrastructure servicing pathways (including the Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant), and managing reverse-sensitivity risks.

b. Establish and define the Airport/ Mystery Creek area as a regionally and nationally significant Economic Hub, focused on attracting high-value, job-creating industries and strengthening the Future Proof sub-regional economy. This could over time extend in a staged approach (early and deferred) to nearby existing, planned, and connected economic activity and amenity centres.

   The proposed Economic Hub key areas of interest include: Hamilton Airport and surrounding precincts, the Narrows Precinct located north in the SL2 area, the Mystery Creek Events Centre, the possible site for the Waikato Thoroughbred Racecourse, the Tieke Golf Estate on the eastern side, as well as, in the longer term, the possible Puaawai Precinct on the western side, provided alignment with the master plan and environmental constraints are resolved.

c. Identify Hamilton Airport and precincts as an Economic Hub as part of the Regional Spatial Plan and consider the need for any bespoke zoning provisions under the proposed Land Use Plan process. If a departure from the nationally standardised land-use zones proposed under the RMA reform is necessary, a justification report is likely to be required. This report and any bespoke provisions would be subject to scrutiny by the relevant authority.

d. Confirm whether a Special Economic Zone, Development Corporation, Special Purpose Vehicle or other mechanism to enable implementation could be established for this area.

e. Establish the foundation for a governance and delivery structure that supports business investment and infrastructure planning (see below - Establish a coordination structure to guide master planning and delivery)

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Establish a governance and delivery pathway

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Convene a strategic economic hub symposium

Establish a precinct meeting bringing together key asset owners and stakeholders to align on the long-term economic vision for the economic hub area. This vision should be grounded in the coordinated master planning exercise and may also benefit from place-branding considerations, including place-brand identity, place marketing, and placemaking.

The symposium will outline the fundamental components to position the area as a strategic economic hub, prioritising value-added and knowledge-based industries, as well as the highest-value use of the area.

Additionally, it may be beneficial to develop an economic strategy for the area that provides evidence-based direction and clarity to guide business investment. This strategy should focus on fostering strong industry partnerships, a core function of economic development that has already been underway through the collaborative efforts of Waikato economic development practitioners. This will ensure that development proposals can be assessed against explicit agglomeration and complementarity tests, evaluating whether they strengthen existing economic nodes, improve the labour market and avoid duplicating functions that are better located elsewhere in the wider functional economic area.

Establish a coordination structure to guide master planning and delivery

Put in place a coordination structure to support development of the master plan and oversee its function, implementation, strengthening and ensuring cross-organisation alignment as the strategy progresses and delivering development in alignment with the economic conditions that support it.

Major partners should include:

- Councils (as Airport shareholders)
- Waikato Regional Council
- Waikato Regional Airport Ltd (WRAL)
- Titanium Park Ltd (TPL)
- New Zealand National Fieldays Society Inc (NZNFS)
- Mana whenua / iwi
- Private sector partners (e.g. significant landowners/developers in the area).
- Waikato River Authority (WRA) and River Iwi
- Central government.

Once the vision is confirmed, major partners will:

a. Assess the most appropriate delivery mechanisms to coordinate development and investment across the defined economic precinct.

   This may include evaluating options such as:

   - Special Purpose Vehicle (SPVs)
   - Council-Controlled Organisation (CCOs)
   - Special Economic Zone (SEZ)
   - Development partnership/ corporation.

Special Purpose Vehicle (SPVs) →

Council-Controlled Organisation (CCOs) →

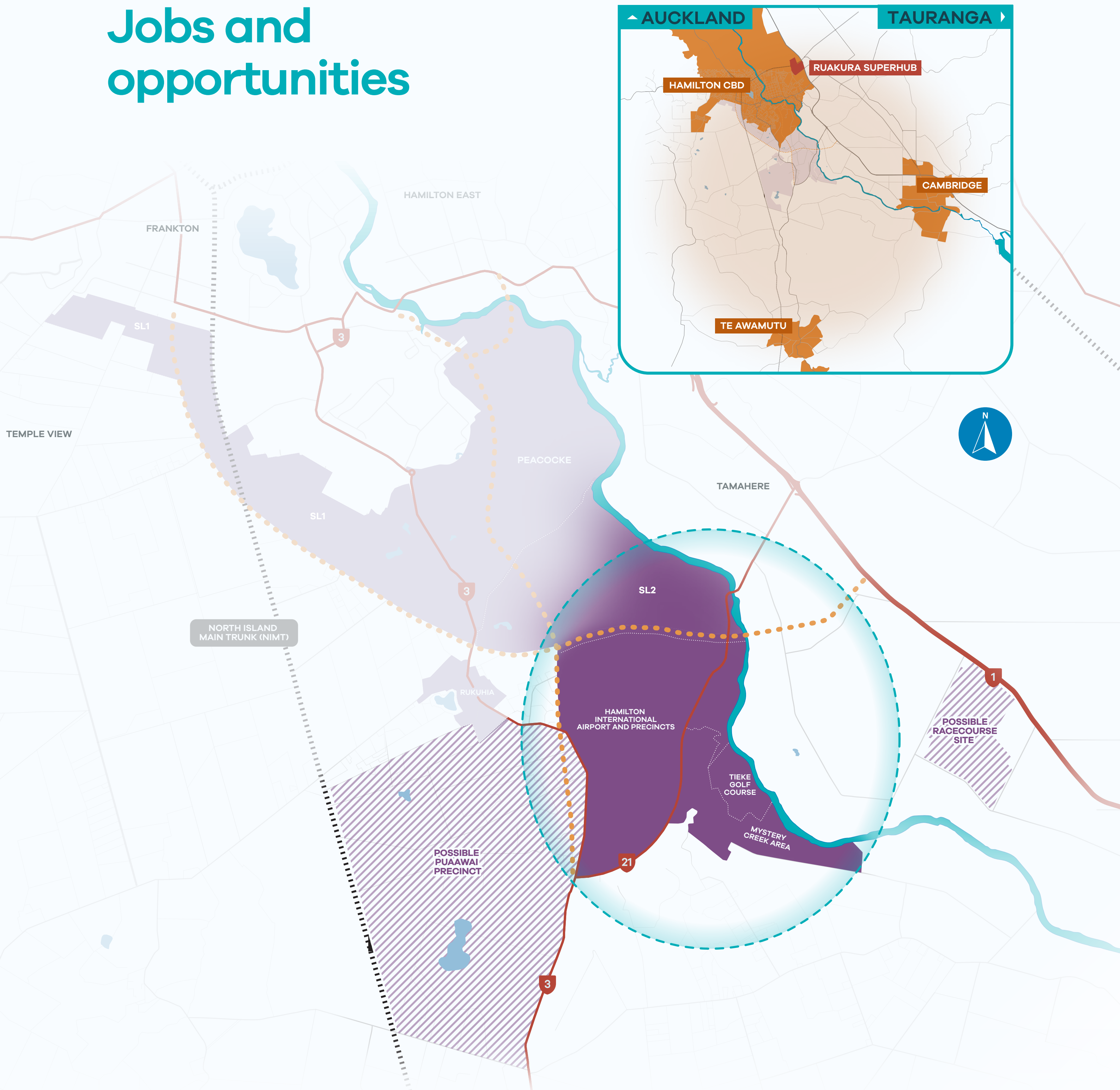
Special Economic Zone (SEZ) →

Development partnership/ corporation →

It is important to understand that there isn't necessarily a single correct setup; it could be a combination of several options. The case studies outlines in Appendix A provide a clear picture of what is possible, acknowledging that some of these ideas are not yet legislated in New Zealand.

b. Investigate funding models and co-investment opportunities to support infrastructure and economic hub development, including engagement with Kānoa (Central Government's Regional Economic Development and Investment Unit), central government funding programmes, and potential iwi and private investment.

Jobs and opportunities



Legend

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

Jobs and Opportunities: Proposed Strategic Interventions

- Economic hub: Initial stage
- Economic hub: Area for future consideration
- Waikato Functional Economic Area

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

Outcome 2: Great Places to Live

The future we want:

By 2070, parts of the area have urbanised, with an attractive, interconnected urban form that provides seamless access to both the Hamilton central business district and local community hubs. Compact, connected settlements now integrate the "live/work/play" principle to support a growing workforce while retaining the area's natural character and identity and delivering infrastructure efficiently. Recreational facilities have been carefully planned to suit the needs of the community and are easily accessible by all modes of transport. Green transport corridors connect open spaces with workplaces and residential areas, and link the community to the Waikato River.

How we plan to get there:

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Deliver compact, serviced settlements with a clear identity and interface.

Integrate live/work/play within a corridor-based structure

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Align future development with the Regional Spatial Plan

Use the outcomes of this spatial study to inform the upcoming Regional Spatial Plan and guide consideration of future development proposals, including Fast Track applications.

This will help ensure new proposals align with the agreed spatial opportunities, infrastructure capacity, while recognising key principles and directives set in the Future Proof Future Development Strategy. Particular focus should be given to a coordinated approach in the vicinity of the Airport/Mystery Creek Strategic Economic Hub to ensure adequate provision of workforce housing over time, beyond areas such as Peacocke and SL1.

Direct development to infrastructure-ready locations and anchor a compact settlement approach

Focus will be on new urban growth in defined locations, such as Peacocke, where infrastructure capacity, environmental limits, and servicing can be confirmed.

This is likely to be followed by SL1; however, further investigations are required to fully confirm.

Existing villages, such as Rukuhia, are expected to urbanise over time. Growth should therefore be planned to support a compact urban form that supports public transport and infrastructure efficiency, and access to employment.

This means considering:

- Avoiding dispersed opportunity zoning, which will improve access between housing and employment and help reduce VKT travel distances for workers.
- Establishing minimum density expectations to strengthen the viability of BRT and public transport investment.
- Using development agreements or planning tools to achieve density outcomes.
- Providing community facilities and amenities early to support well-functioning neighbourhoods (urban and rural).

Recognise Rukuhia as a potential long-term growth location

Progress Rukuhia as a long-term growth area (subject to clear conditions) with development staged and enabled only when key infrastructure and environmental conditions are satisfied.

Key conditions include:

- Prioritisation of Peacocke and then potentially SL1 when infrastucture ready.
- Consideration of existing and emerging capacity from Fast Track developments.
- Confirmation of Hamilton Southern Links Stage 4 funding and delivery timeline.
- Confirmation of Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant modular servicing capacity. If wastewater servicing remains unresolved, growth should be capped accordingly.
- Assessment of environmental constraints, including peat soils, flood risk and Highly Productive Land extents.

Once satisfied, develop a Rukuhia Concept Plan to guide future growth and ensure development responds to infrastructure, environmental constraints, and transport connectivity.

- Extending the growth boundary toward the Southern Links corridor, where feasible. Clarifying implications of NZTA land ownership holdings associated with the Southern Links designation.
- Integrating peat and flood-resilience design and defining urban edges and landscape buffers.
- Addressing SH3 access changes following the potential HSL revocation plan.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Protect Highly Productive Land (HPL) for use in land-based primary rural/ farming activities and from inappropriate development.

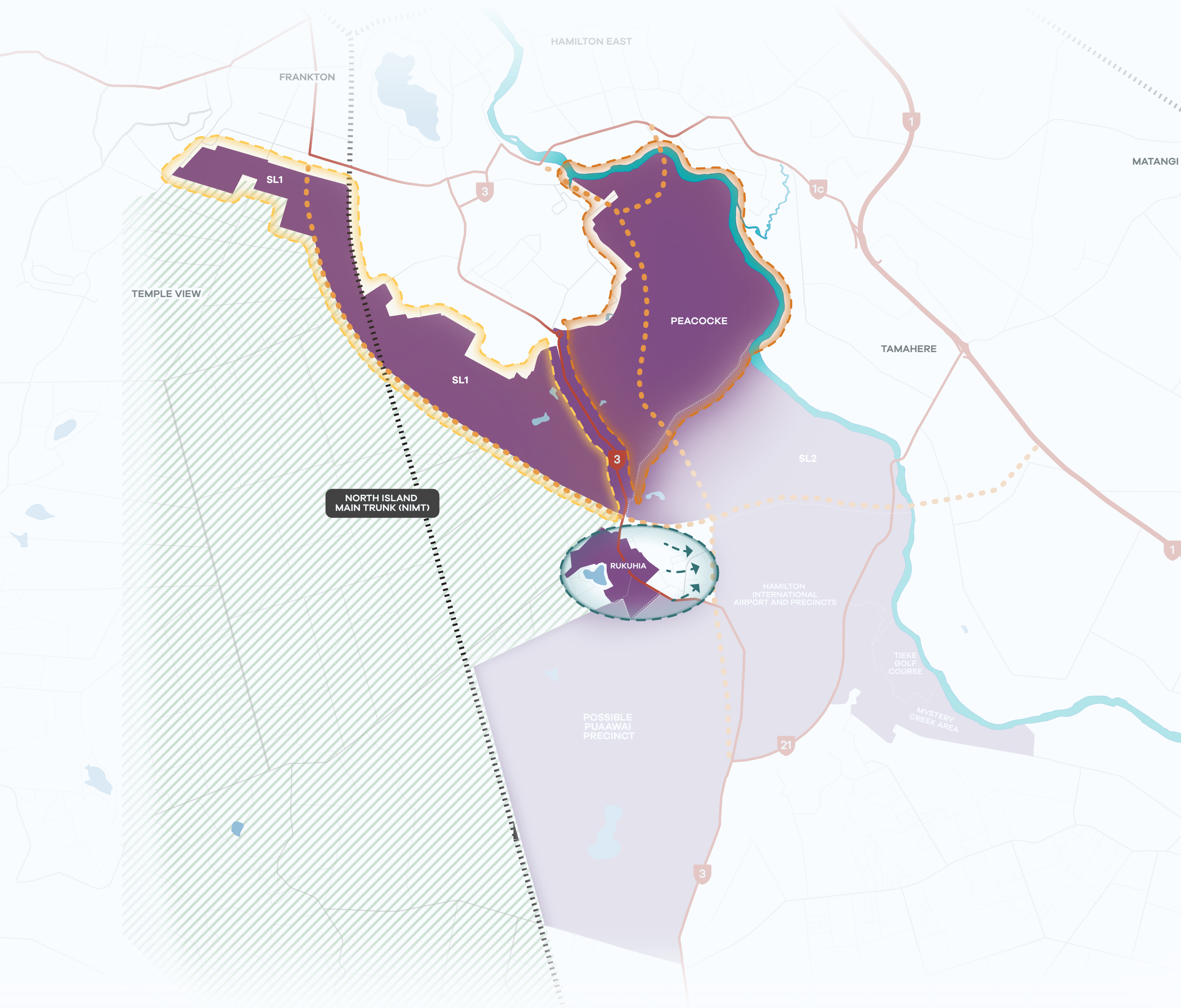
STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Prioritise HPL and peat mapping as a key consideration of the Regional Spatial Plan process

Led by the Waikato Regional Council, this intervention will help better understand the environmental limits of the area beyond the constraints currently defined under the Land Use Classification scale. This work will be informed by Waikato Regional Council's comprehensive peat resources survey, completed in late 2025, which provides an important evidence base for further investigation.

This will support the definition of urban and industrial interfaces by establishing clear boundaries for potential future urban development, thereby helping preserve surrounding natural areas, including HPL. It is important to note that the current National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) allows pathways for urban rezoning based on demonstrated need and strong economic justification. It is assumed that similar pathways would be retained by any equivalent version of the NPS-HPL provisions that may be produced as part of the drafting of the National Direction under the new planning system.

Great Places to Live



Legend

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

Great Places To Live: Proposed Strategic Interventions

- Residential - **Infrastructure-ready**
- Residential – **Under investigation**
- Residential – **Long-term growth direction**
- Investigate the protection of Highly Productive Land and peat

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

Outcome 3: Easy to Get Around

The future we want:

By 2070, the full Hamilton Southern Links transport network, incorporating linkages through Peacocks to the CBD, has been completed. In addition, frequent public transport connections that link Hamilton, Te Awamutu and Cambridge to the airport connect at a multi-model transport hub. A 10-minute frequency bus rapid transit service connects the area to the Hamilton CBD. The Te Awa cycleway connects the area to both Hamilton and Cambridge seamlessly, allowing commuters and recreational cyclists, as well as micromobility users, to travel along the river by bicycle. Overall, an integrated multimodal network that supports productivity, freight efficiency, and liveable communities.

How we plan to get there:

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Embed a network hierarchy that realises and reinforces the economic aspirations

Transport investment must support an integrated multi-modal transport system with a clear form and function strategy anchored in realising the economic growth opportunity for the area.

Right mode for different functions

Reinforcing, prioritising, and optimising existing network capacity and protecting the value of committed infrastructure before advancing new investments to the transport network.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Confirm the strategic transport network and corridor functions for the area

Confirm the transport network hierarchy and corridor functions for the study area, aligned with the One Network Framework (ONF).

This hierarchy must be validated as part of the Future Proof / NZTA Network Plan, with Hamilton Southern Links (HSL) identified as the primary strategic corridor. Existing structure plans should continue to guide network connections where relevant.

The plan should ultimately :

- Incorporate managed lanes and demand management tools to support mode shift and enhance corridor performance over time.
- Prioritise direct freight access to the Airport and its industrial area, protecting corridors that support logistics efficiency and future freight volumes. Freight corridors should:
    - maintain the strategic freight function of Southern Links
    - avoid heavy freight movement through village centres, particularly near schools
    - support industrial clustering and high-value employment activity
    - In terms of rail, maintaining performance and prioritising investment in the Priority lines (Golden Triangle and Freight) will be critical to safeguard freight function while avoiding making commitments to future rail infrastructure unless there is a clear economic and strategic rationale.
- Develop a staged transport delivery pathway that enables early economic activity while longer-term infrastructure is progressed. While HSL remains a critical component of the long-term network, the identification of interim network solutions will be critical should its delivery be delayed or reprioritised. This will ensure that economic development within the Airport/Mystery Creek economic area proceeds through staged infrastructure delivery where feasible and that development remains aligned with infrastructure capacity.

Strengthen public transport access across the study area

a. Undertake an immediate assessment of public transport access to the Airport/Mystery Creek area to ensure it is integrated into the wider strategic transport network and corridor functions plan.

b. Deliver a staged public transport network aligned with growth, consistent with the PT Pathways and Metro-Spatial Plan Transport Programme Business Case.

This includes:

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connecting to Peacocke and the Airport
- Frequent bus services corridors serving surrounding growth areas and strengthening connections to Hamilton CBD, Te Awamutu and Cambridge as major employment nodes.

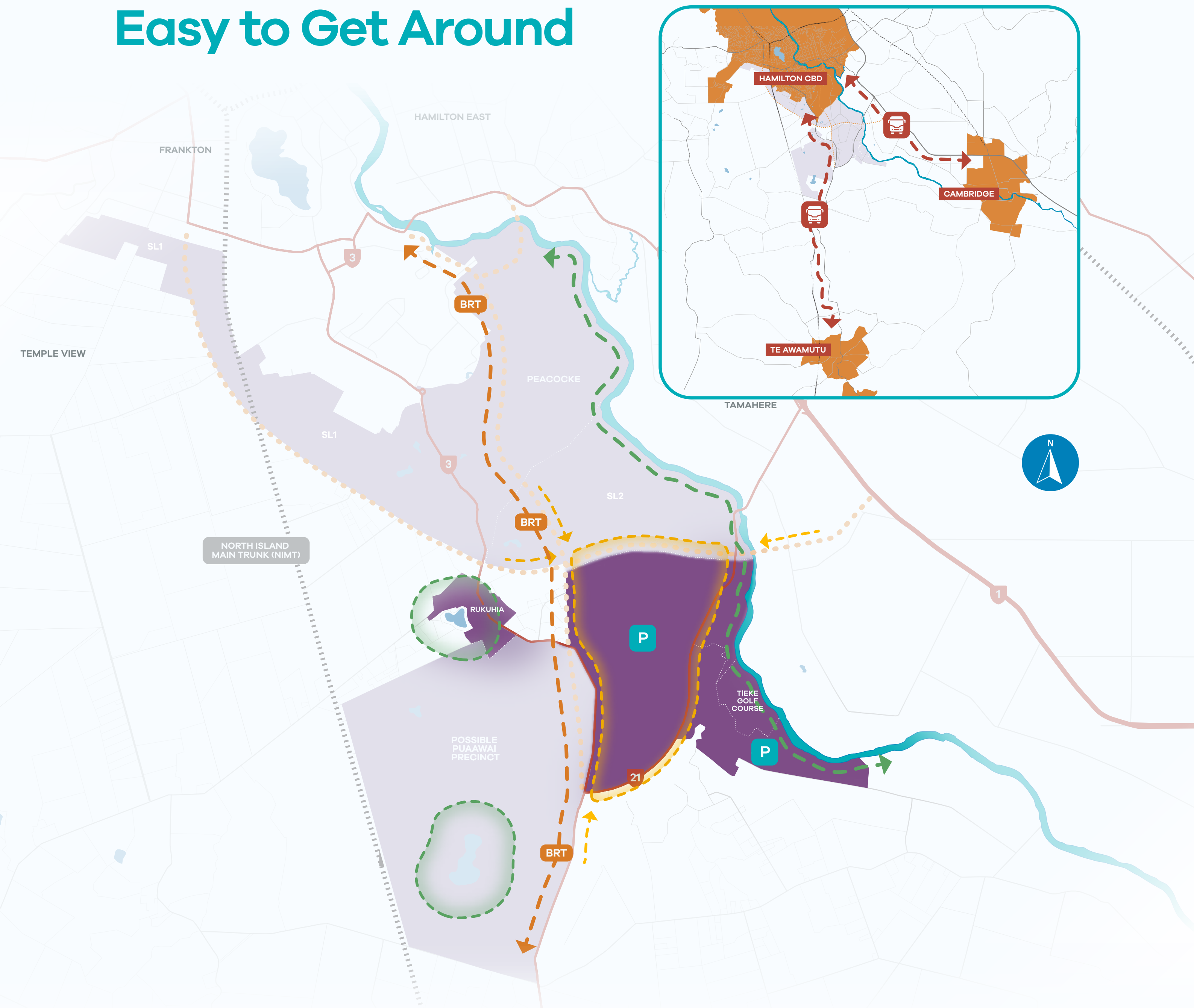
Integrate active mode corridors and green infrastructure

Plan walking and cycling infrastructure from the outset, integrating active mode corridors with blue-green networks to support both liveability and environmental outcomes.

Safeguard future Park and Ride opportunities

Identify and protect strategic Park and Ride locations near the Airport and Mystery Creek, consistent with the MSP Transport Programme Business Case.

Easy to Get Around



Legend

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

Easy To Get Around: Proposed Strategic Interventions

- Prioritise direct freight access to the Airport
- BRT 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

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Outcome 5: Caring for the Waikato River and Environment

The future we want:

By 2070, the area is connected to the Waikato River through a network of blue-green corridors that follow the gully systems and provide habitat for the locally distinct fauna, such as long-tailed bats (pekapeka-tou-roa). The Peat Lakes are protected by the required buffering zone of deep riparian planting, and efforts to restore their health through pest control, improved nutrient management, and restoration plantings have begun to yield measurable improvements. Water quality in the river itself has been steadily improving despite the urbanisation around it, largely due to the restoration focus that has been taken on stormwater design. Significant areas of highly productive soils remain in production with the land uses changing with the climate, meaning fewer dairy farms but new crops and stocking types, so that the land remains at the heart of the local economy. The area supports both environmental protection and long-term economic attractiveness, helping create places where skilled workers and visitors want to live, work and invest.

How we plan to get there:

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Treat Green Infrastructure as Core Infrastructure

Good environmental outcomes are structural components of growth and are a significant factor in liveability, resilience and economic output / as an amenity for place-based planning and tourism opportunities.

Embed Te Ao Maaori values and Maatauranga Maaori approach as foundational.

Explicitly delivering as long-term and enduring valued environmental assets

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Establish a clear environmental opportunity and constraint framework:

Embed environmental constraints and opportunities as part of the Regional Spatial Plan (RSP) process to guide future land use and infrastructure decisions (provisions currently under review as part of the National Direction). The framework should consider green infrastructure as core infrastructure, using natural systems to strengthen resilience and reduce long-term infrastructure costs. It will support a monitoring framework to protect highly productive lands, peat lakes catchments and ecological corridors, to prevent degradation and maximise long-term agricultural capability, while identifying areas for enhancement and restoration.

The framework should ultimately:

- Identify 'waahi toituu' (areas to be protected in perpetuity and are to be protected from development) and 'waahi toiora' (areas where we should plan with care) within the study area. Constraints will include natural hazards, HPL, significant natural areas, outstanding natural features and landscapes and the spatial implications of these limits.
- Identify peat lakes and the surrounding ecological network as significant natural features, possibly being classified in the new system as Outstanding Natural Features (ONF), High Natural Character areas, or Sites of Significance to Maaori. Peat lake catchment should be recognised as an opportunity for water storage, stormwater management, carbon sequestration and ecological restoration.
- Integrating a connected blue-green network across planning instruments, including:
    - the Rukuhia Concept Plan (if one is prepared)
    - the Regional Spatial Plan
    - the Natural Environment Plan
    - Land Use Plans.
- Identify delivery pathways to support long-term environmental enhancement and resilience infrastructure, including offset or enhancement funding incentives and other mechanisms for environmental protection where appropriate.

The blue-green network should connect future development areas, lakes, the Airport / Mystery Creek hub, and the Waikato River, supporting flood mitigation and stormwater management, as well as recreation and environmental restoration.

Key consideration should be given to the SL2 area, currently predominantly rural, and subject to the Strategic Boundary Agreement between Waipa District Council and Hamilton City Council. In the interim, the area represents an opportunity to remain underdeveloped and further define a buffer/greenbelt separating incompatible landuse. This could involve exploring options for water storage and extending the offset area established by Hamilton Airport as a bat corridor, helping to manage reverse sensitivity effects while reinforcing environmental and landscape values across the area.

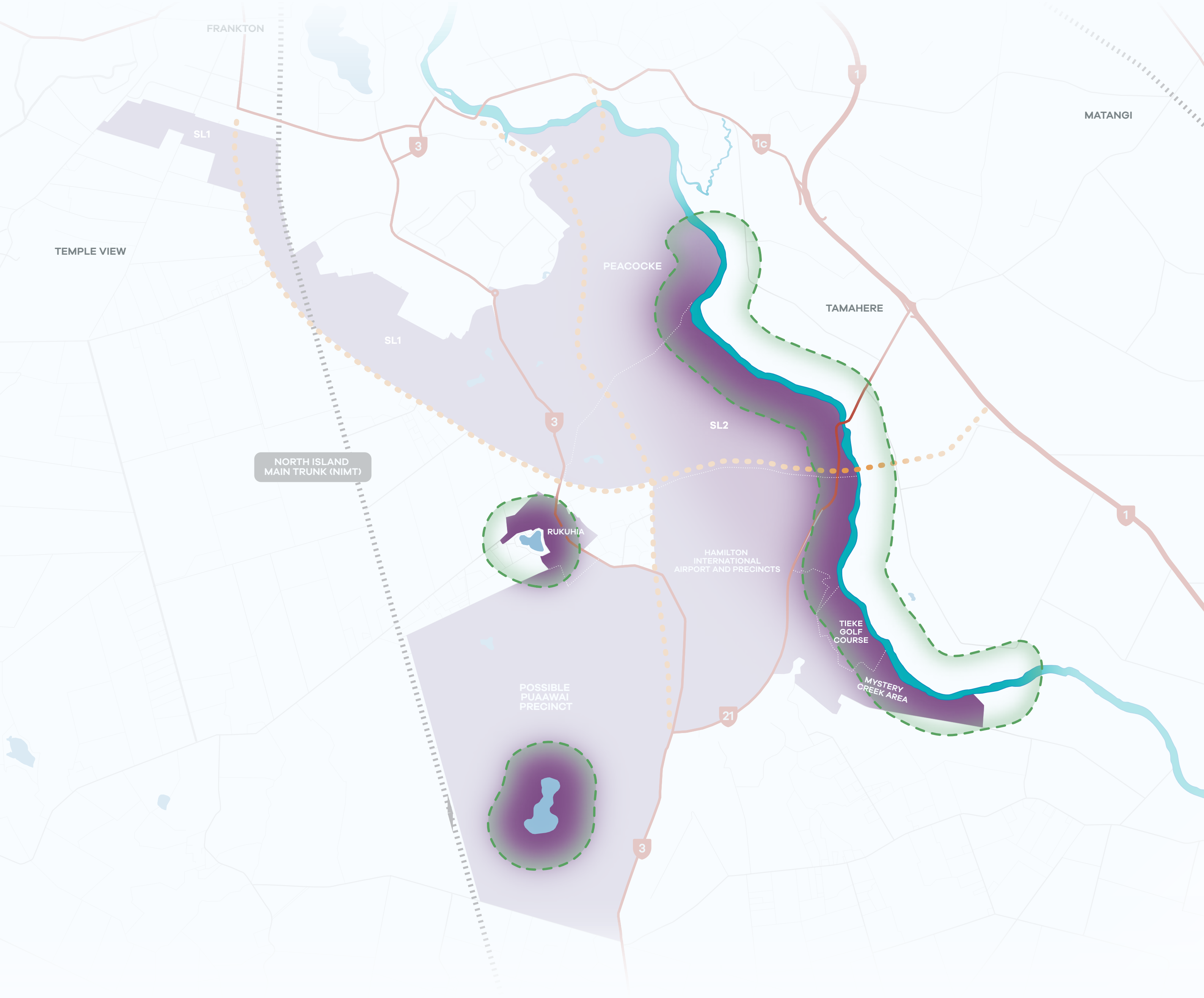
Embed Te Ture Whaimana as the guiding framework

Reinforce the Regional Spatial Plan as a process that gives practical effect to Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato (Te Ture Whaimana) – the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River, recognising its status as the primary direction-setting document for the river and activities within its catchment. This should be strengthened by working with the Waikato River Authority (WRA) and River Iwi to support the implementation and monitoring of river outcomes within the study area.

Key elements should include:

- Recognising the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River as a non-negotiable foundation for development decisions
- Embedding mātauranga Maaori principles, including intergenerational protection and enhancement of ecological systems
- Ensuring planning and infrastructure decisions reflect long-term river restoration objectives.
- The WRA and River Iwi may play an advisory role within the governance and delivery structure arrangements, helping ensure development aligns with Te Ture Whaimana and supports adaptive management based on monitoring and evidence.

Caring for the Waikato River and Environment



Legend

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

Caring for the Waikato River and the Environment: Proposed Strategic Interventions

- Embed environmental framework considering green infrastructure as core infrastructure

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Outcome 6: Value for Money – Strategic Infrastructure Alignment

The future we want:

By 2070, the area continues to invest in infrastructure in a coordinated and integrated manner. This approach prioritises locations where existing or planned infrastructure networks, access to the labour market, and transport connectivity can be utilised efficiently, while ensuring new infrastructure investments are directed towards areas capable of supporting sufficient scale, accessibility, and long-term productivity benefits. Decisions are made to match the pace and scale of development while avoiding the consequences of poorly timed investments, such as congestion, inadequate water supply, or insufficient wastewater services for the service industry.

How we plan to get there:

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Infrastructure-first, staged growth

Growth proceeds only with explicit thresholds and sequencing

Avoid stranded assets through demand-responsive investment

Invest in infrastructure when it's needed and there is certainty around demand and use. Population triggers and development capacity will be important.

Growth pays for growth

Acknowledging that developers have to fund their infrastructure, otherwise, they may be unable to progress with their development.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Embed infrastructure triggers and sequencing in statutory and investment planning

Confirm a set of explicit infrastructure triggers, environmental thresholds, and constraints as part of the Regional Spatial Plan process to guide when and where development can proceed across the study area. This is intended to strengthen coordination across public and private partners to support infrastructure delivery and economic development.

Key considerations should include:

- Approval for development will only be granted where servicing infrastructure can be demonstrated to be feasibly provided and funding is confirmed.
- Strengthen collaborative approach to the servicing of the area between IAWAI – Flowing waters and Waikato Waters Ltd, leading to the long-term alignment of their water servicing plans.
- Providing a clear servicing decision for wastewater servicing to support future development within the study area, including confirming the long-term connection pathway to the SWWTP or another treatment plant, and establishing defined limits for on-site or communal wastewater systems. Where wastewater servicing remains unresolved, growth should be capped accordingly to avoid infrastructure shortfalls. On-site systems should be avoided where there are cost and environmental implications and if they undermine existing investment.
- Ensure infrastructure delivery and funding are aligned across planning and investment frameworks, including the Regional Spatial Plan, the Natural Environment Plan, as well as Council's Land Use Plans, Long-Term Plans and Infrastructure Strategies and the RLTP/NLTP.

Align infrastructure investment

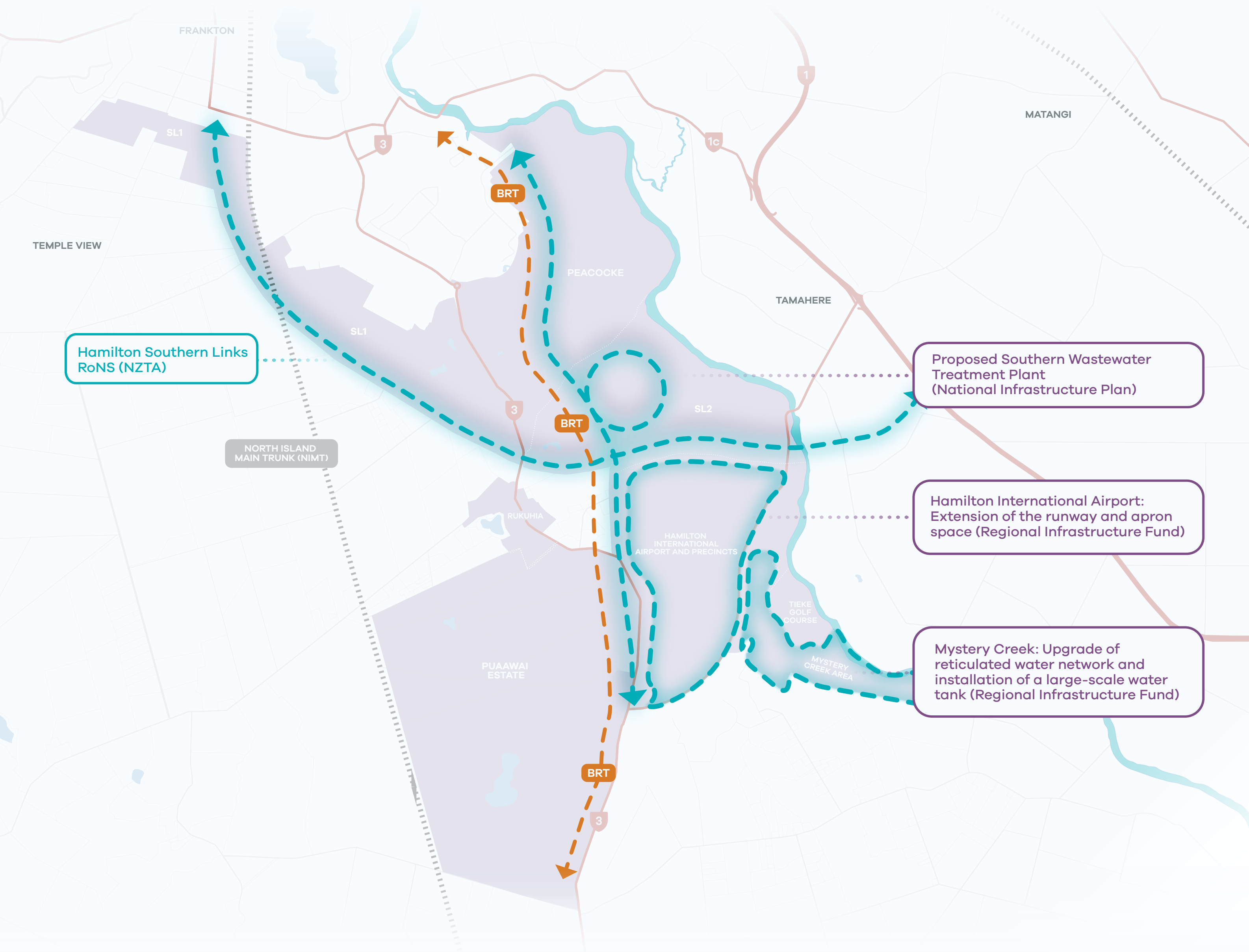
Reinforce the need for a multi-party approach to infrastructure investment where those who gain the most from new infrastructure also contribute to its cost (noting that this will depend on the type of infrastructure). This approach enables shared investment between councils, central government, iwi, private sector partners and infrastructure providers.

Make the most of existing funding tools and opportunities to move debt off council and central government balance sheets.

Funding and investment tools may include:

- Development levies.
- Value capture mechanisms linked to the development of an economic hub (Note: will require a change in legislation).
- Infrastructure Funding and Financing (IFF) Act, including SPV structures.
- Transport funding tools such as tolling, road pricing or time-of-use charging.
- Targeted incentives or regulatory tools to support high-value economic activity.
- Possible water metering and associated charges.

Value for Money – Strategic Infrastructure Alignment



Legend

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

Strategic Infrastructure Alignment: Proposed Strategic Interventions

- Enabling infrastructure signal
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connecting to Peacocke and the Airport (indicative)

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Delivery and Implementation Framework

A pathway to achieve long-term momentum

The delivery of the strategic directions and interventions for the North Waipā – South Hamilton area will span multiple decades.

The scale and complexity of change anticipated in this study cannot be achieved through a single decision, funding round, statutory process, or agency mandate. Instead, implementation will require a staged and coordinated approach that aligns land use, infrastructure planning, funding, environmental outcomes, economic development, mana whenua aspirations, and market readiness over time.

The intent of this framework is not to commit partners to immediate infrastructure investment or to pre-empt future statutory and funding decisions. Rather, it provides a structured pathway for maintaining alignment, protecting long-term options, and ensuring that future decisions are made in the right sequence, at the right time, and through the appropriate planning and investment processes.

Priority Investment Area concept

A key proposition of this study is that the North Waipā – South Hamilton area should be considered a regionally significant Priority Investment Area within the wider Future Proof sub-region.

This does not mean that all investment should occur immediately in one place, but rather that the area has sufficient long-term strategic importance to warrant deliberate coordination through the Regional Spatial Plan, Land Use Plans, Long Term Plans, Regional Land Transport Plan, and Water services planning.

The concept provides a way to identify the area's long-term role without overcommitting to premature delivery. It allows partners to distinguish between:

- actions that are needed now to maintain alignment and protect future options;
- investigations and master planning required before major commitments are made;

- infrastructure triggers that would need to be met before development proceeds; and
- longer-term delivery opportunities that may only become viable as infrastructure, funding, market demand, and governance arrangements mature.

This approach recognises that the study area sits within a wider functional economic area, with Hamilton as the dominant centre. Its future role should complement, rather than compete with, the established and emerging roles of Hamilton CBD, Ruakura, Cambridge, Te Awamutu, and other parts of the sub-region. In particular, the Airport / Mystery Creek area has the potential to become a specialised node focused on activities that benefit from airport access, freight connectivity, integration with agribusiness systems, and event infrastructure. This includes aviation-related activity, logistics and distribution functions, supply-chain services, agritech interfaces, innovation-led business, and event-based economic activity.

Confirming this role early will be important to avoid fragmented decision-making and to ensure that local area planning is anchored in a coherent regional economic and spatial framework that avoids duplicating functions better located elsewhere in the wider functional economic area.

Implementation grounded in partnerships

Implementation will need to be owned and advanced collectively via Future Proof. No single organisation can deliver the outcomes identified in this study alone, even within the context of the simplifying local government reforms, as there are multiple partners involved.

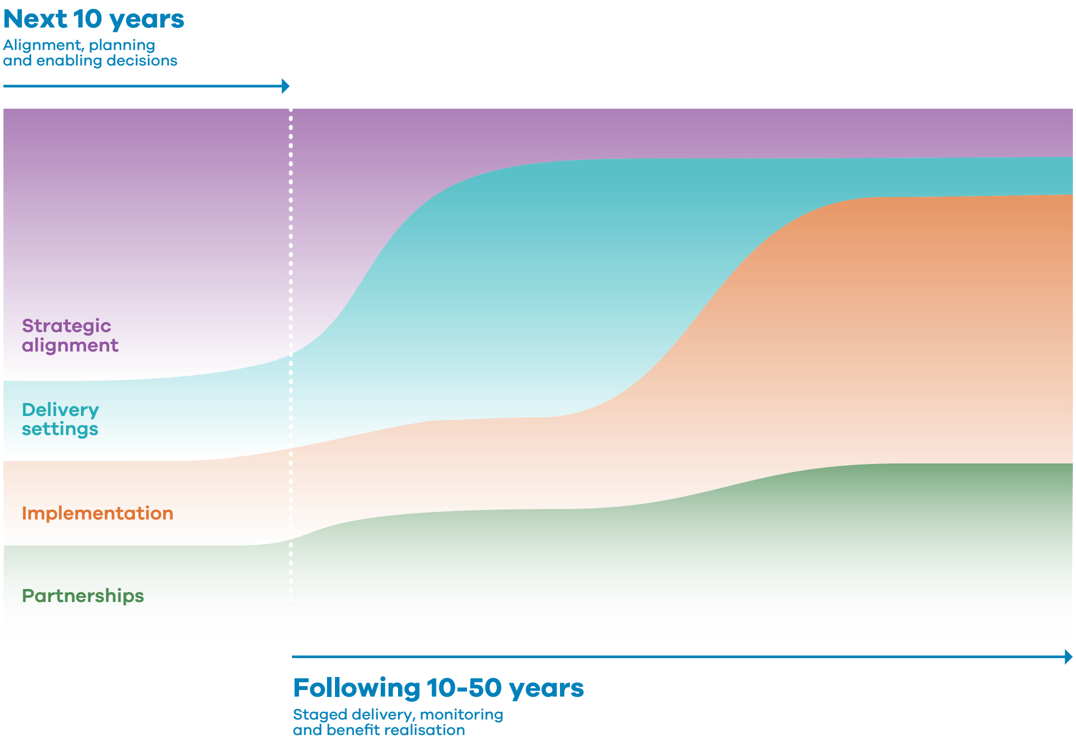
Waipā District Council plays an important enabling role, particularly in land use planning, infrastructure alignment, environmental management, and advocacy within sub-regional and regional processes. However, successful delivery will depend on Future Proof Partnership governance and leadership oversight, and on sustained collaboration with Hamilton City Council, Waikato Regional Council, Mana whenua/Iwi, infrastructure providers, central government agencies, the private sector, and the Waikato River Authority / River Iwi, where relevant.

The simplifying local government reforms may change the landscape for councils and how they will work together. This study is flexible enough to adapt to any changes that may come about. The Future Proof partnership approach to implementing this study remains important given the involvement of Mana whenua/Iwi and central government.

A staged implementation approach

The implementation framework is structured around two broad horizons:

- The next 10 years - alignment, planning and enabling decisions
- The following decades - staged delivery, monitoring and benefit realisation



Implementation focus: next 10 years

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.

The purpose is to ensure that the strategic interventions identified through this study are carried forward into the next generation of regional and local planning instruments.

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 High 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 the Regional Land Transport Plan.

Longer-term implementation: 10–50 years

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

This will depend on the resolution of key infrastructure, funding, statutory, environmental, and market conditions.

The longer-term approach should include:

- 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;
- Monitoring infrastructure triggers, land demand, market uptake, environmental thresholds, and development feasibility;
- Reviewing whether existing governance and coordination arrangements remain fit for purpose;
- Identifying funding and financing pathways where infrastructure investment becomes necessary and justified; and
- Ensuring that development continues to support the agreed regional economic role of the area.

The long-term implementation pathway should remain adaptive. If key assumptions change, the framework should allow partners to pause, resequence, or redirect effort without undermining the overall strategic direction.

This is particularly important in relation to Hamilton Southern Links. The study identifies Hamilton Southern Links as a major strategic transport dependency for parts of the study area. If the project is delayed, staged differently, or does not proceed in the anticipated form, this would have implications for the timing, scale, and distribution of growth. In that scenario, the framework should prioritise development opportunities that are less dependent on that corridor, strengthen alternative access and public transport planning, and avoid enabling land use change that would create unresolved network effects.

Delivery framework

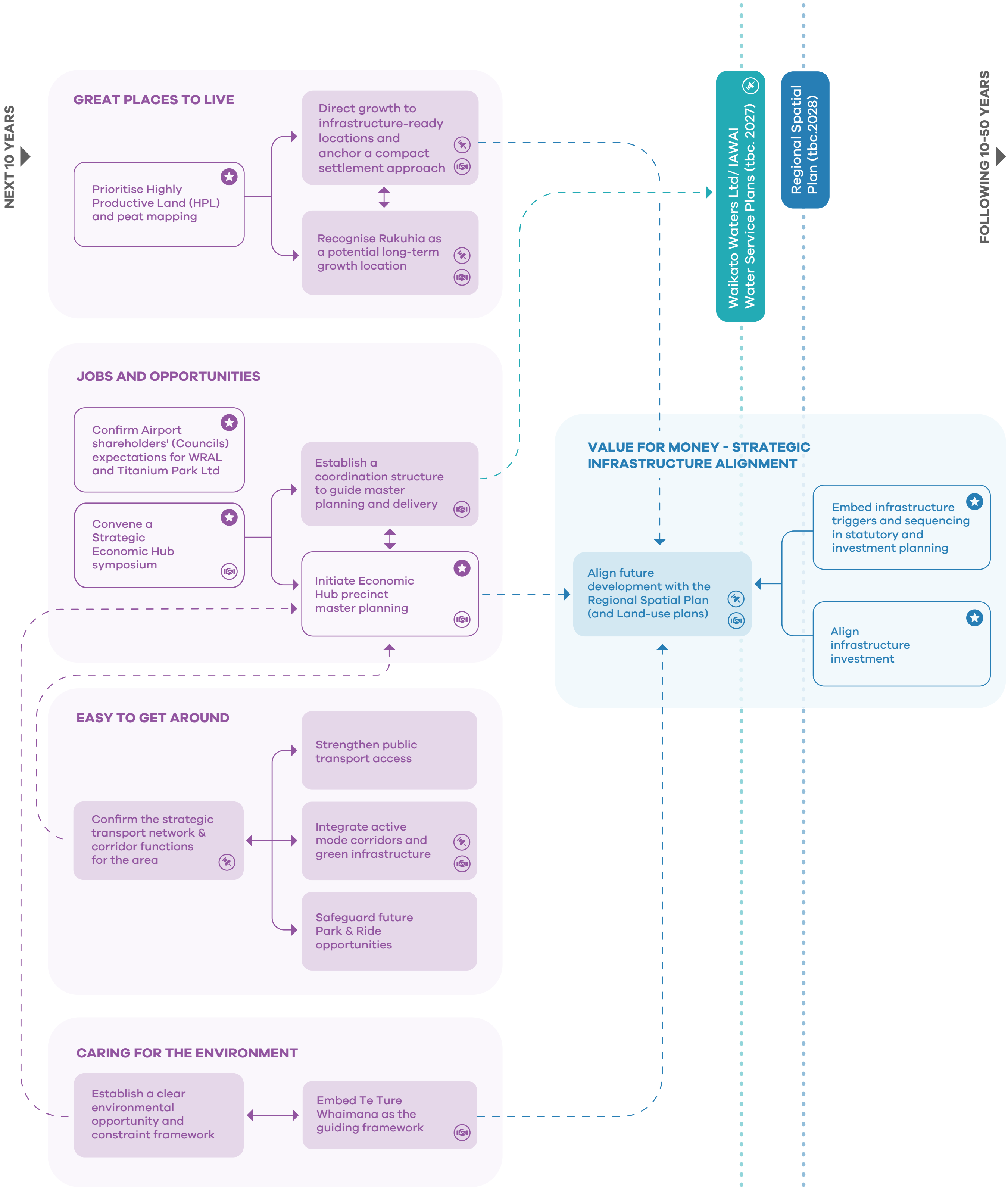
The following framework translates the strategic directions into an initial set of implementation priorities. It is intended to guide coordination across partners and identify where early planning efforts should be focused. It does not represent a funded capital programme or a commitment by any individual agency to deliver infrastructure ahead of statutory approvals, investment decisions, or confirmed funding pathways.

PRIORITY	STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS	LEAD	PARTNER / SUPPORT	NEXT 10 YEARS ANCHOR POINTS Planning and Investments
JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES				
★	**Confirm Airport shareholders' (Councils) expectations for WRAL and Titanium Park Limited:** Define a strategic focus beyond industrial land management toward long-term economic development.	Hamilton City Council / Waipā District Council	• WRAL Shareholder (Councils) • Future Proof partners • Private Sector	• Economic Hub • Master Plan and Symposium
★	**Initiate Economic Hub precinct master planning:** Align the strategic and spatial planning of shareholders and landowners to support long-term decision-making for the area.	Waipā District Council	• Future Proof partners • Private Sector • Iwi • Central Government • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Water services plans
★	**Convene a Strategic Economic Hub symposium:** Establish the pillars for coordinated precinct-scale master planning and a shared economic vision.	Future Proof partners	• Private Sector • Iwi • WRA • Central Government	• Economic Hub Master Plan
	Establish a coordination structure to guide master planning and delivery: Ensure long-term cross-organisation alignment to support development of the master plan and oversee its structure and function.	Future Proof partners	• Private Sector • Iwi • WRA • Central Government	• Economic Hub Master Plan and Symposium

PRIORITY	STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS	LEAD	PARTNER / SUPPORT	NEXT 10 YEARS ANCHOR POINTS Planning and Investments
GREAT PLACES TO LIVE				
	Align future development with the Regional Spatial Plan: Align agreed spatial opportunities with existing and future land use types and infrastructure capacity, while adhering to the Future Proof FDS 2024, with an emphasis on the agreed vision for the Airport/Mystery Creek Strategic Economic Hub area.	Waipā District Council	• Future Proof partners • Private Sector • Iwi • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Water services plans • Growth strategies • Long-term plans
	Direct development to infrastructure-ready locations and anchor a compact settlement approach: Reinforce the sequencing approach and ensure the use of viable indicators to strengthen the benefits of infrastructure investment.	Waipā District Council / Hamilton City Council	• Future Proof partners • Iwi • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Water services plans • Growth strategies • Long-term plans
	Recognise Rukuhia as a potential long-term growth location: Confirm in time, Rukuhia as an area for future growth, ensuring consideration are given to environmental constraints.	Waipā District Council	• Future Proof partners • NZ Transport Agency • Iwi • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Water services plans • Growth strategies • Long-term plans
★	**Prioritise Highly Productive Land (HPL) and peat mapping as key considerations in the Regional Spatial Plan process:** Confirm environmental limits and constraints under Land Use Classification scale.	Waikato Regional Council	• Future Proof partners • Iwi	• Regional Spatial Plan • Growth strategies

PRIORITY	STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS	LEAD	PARTNER / SUPPORT	NEXT 10 YEARS ANCHOR POINTS Planning and Investments
EASY TO GET AROUND				
	Confirm the strategic transport network and corridor functions for the area: Confirm and validate the transport network hierarchy and corridor functions as part of the Future Proof / NZ Transport Agency Network Plan, with Hamilton Southern Links (HSL) identified as the primary strategic corridor and aligned with the One Network Framework (ONF).	Future Proof	• NZ Transport Agency • Private sector	• Regional Spatial Plan • Economic Hub Master Plan • Growth strategies • Regional Land Transport Plan • Long-term plans
	Strengthen public transport access across the study area: Assess PT requirements in alignment with future land use and growth pace	Waikato Regional Council	• Future Proof partners • NZ Transport Agency • Private sector	• Regional Spatial Plan • Economic Hub Master Plan
	Integrate active mode corridors and green infrastructure: Ensure proactive and strategic planning for walking and cycling infrastructure	Waipā District Council	• Future Proof partners • Iwi • Private sector	• Economic Hub Master Plan
	Safeguard future Park and Ride opportunities: Ensure proactive and strategic identification and protection of a Park and Ride locations	Future Proof	• Private sector	• Economic Hub Master Plan
CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE WAIKATO RIVER				
	Establish a clear environmental opportunity and constraint framework: Embed environmental constraints and opportunities	Waipā District Council	• Future Proof partners • Private Sector • Iwi • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Economic Hub Master Plan • Growth strategies • Water services plans

PRIORITY	STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS	LEAD	PARTNER / SUPPORT	NEXT 10 YEARS ANCHOR POINTS Planning and Investments
	Embed Te Ture Whaimana as the guiding framework: Reinforce the Regional Spatial Plan as a process that gives practical effect to Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato (Te Ture Whaimana).	Waipā District Council	• Future Proof • Partners • Waikato River Authority / River Iwi • Private Sector • Iwi • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Economic Hub Master Plan • Growth strategies • Water services plans
VALUE FOR MONEY – STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE ALIGNMENT				
★	**Embed infrastructure triggers and sequencing in statutory and investment planning:** Confirm a set of explicit infrastructure triggers, environmental thresholds, and constraints as part of the Regional Spatial Plan process to support growth sequencing and monitoring.	Future Proof partners	• NZ Transport Agency • Private sector • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Regional Land Transport Plan • Water services plans
★	**Align infrastructure investment:** Confirm long-term commitment to a multi-party approach to infrastructure investment	Future Proof partners	• NZ Transport Agency • Private sector • Water entity	• Regional Spatial Plan • Regional Land Transport Plan • Water services plans



Legend

- Implementation dependency
- Information flow
- Priority
- Long-Term Plan / Investment signal
- Iwi Partnership signal

Proposed strategic interventions vs existing infrastructure limitations

The table below revisits the areas of interest initially outlined in section III: North Waipā – South Hamilton: Overview , and identifies the transport, access, environmental, and water-servicing constraints that must be resolved to enable the proposed strategic interventions and future land use, as well as a high-level sequencing horizon for these.

STUDY AREAS	PROPOSED FUTURE LAND USE	PROPOSED STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS	INFRA-STRUCTURE LIMITATIONS	INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS (Enablers of strategic interventions)	PROPOSED STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS Planning horizon (years)
SL1 (Whole Growth Cell)	Residential and Industrial	Priority area under investigation for Residential and Industrial development.	High	**Transport / Access** • Local road plan confirmed as per concept plan • NZTA reviewing interchange layout • Enabled further by HSL connection • Industrial blocks constrained by rail corridor • Securing triggers through PDA that will accompany consent, plus conditions **Water** • Water / Wastewater onsite servicing • Reticulation to SWWTP to be determined • Securing triggers through PDA that will accompany consent, plus conditions **Environmental / Cultural** • Mangakootukutuku Stream • Peat soil constraints – constructability challenges and carbon emissions • Predominantly LUC 1 • High groundwater table • Stormwater constraints • Acid sulphate soils - constructability challenges • Bat habitat and foraging areas.	Short term: 0-10 years
SL2 (West)	Rural / Lifestyle	Western area - No significant land use change proposed	Western – Low	**Transport / Access** • Existing assets suited to existing and proposed future land use **Water** • Existing assets suited to existing and proposed future land use **Environmental / Cultural** • Predominantly LUC 1 /2	Long term: 30 + years

STUDY AREAS	PROPOSED FUTURE LAND USE	PROPOSED STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS	INFRA-STRUCTURE LIMITATIONS	INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS (Enablers of strategic interventions)	PROPOSED STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS Planning horizon (years)
SL2 (East)	Industrial	Economic hub – Initial Stage	Eastern – High	**Transport / Access** • Enabled further by HSL Interchange – Raynes Rd • Connection between HSL central interchange and Peacocke **Water** • Needs wastewater connection for further development **Environmental / Cultural** • Predominantly LUC 1 • Sites of significance	Medium term: 10-30 years
Peacocke	Residential and Commercial	Priority area - Development underway	Low	**Transport / Access** • Local road plan confirmed • On the future BRT route **Water** • Reticulated and serviced **Environmental / Cultural** • Environmental enhancement measures in place, including the Mangakootukutuku gully system.	Short-term : 0-10 years Area is infrastructure-ready, and development is underway.
Rukuhia	Residential and Commercial	Future growth cells extension to HSL	High	**Transport / Access** • Enabled further by HSL connection • Local road upgrades may be required **Water** • Wastewater connection required. If wastewater servicing is unresolved, growth would need to be capped. **Environmental / Cultural** • Peat soil constraints – constructability challenges and carbon emissions • Peat lake (Lake Cameron / Kaeroatahi) • Predominantly LUC 1 • Acid sulphate soils - constructability challenges • Bat habitat and foraging areas	Long term: 30 + years

STUDY AREAS	PROPOSED FUTURE LAND USE	PROPOSED STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS	INFRA-STRUCTURE LIMITATIONS	INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS (Enablers of strategic interventions)	PROPOSED STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS Planning horizon (years)
Hamilton Airport and Precinct	Industrial and Commercial	Economic hub – Initial Stage	Medium - High	**Transport / Access** • Enabled further by HSL connection • On the future BRT route **Water** • Needs wastewater connection for further development **Environmental / Cultural** • LUC 1 / 2 towards river. • Waikato River • Bat habitat and foraging areas	Medium term: 10-30 years Precinct North underway
Mystery Creek	Commercial and Event	Economic hub – Initial Stage	High	**Transport / Access** • Enabled further by HSL connection • On the future BRT route **Water** • Needs wastewater connection for further development **Environmental / Cultural** • LUC 1 / 2 towards river. • Waikato River • Bat habitat and foraging areas	Medium term: 10-30 years
Possible Puaawai Precinct	Industrial	Economic hub – Future Considerations	High	**Transport / Access** • Enabled further by HSL connection • Risks of being stranded without adequate road access. **Water** • Needs wastewater connection for development **Environmental / Cultural** • Peat soil constraints – constructability challenges and carbon emissions • Acid sulphate soils - constructability challenges • Bat habitat and foraging areas • Predominently LUC 1	Long term: 30 + years

APPENDIX A – Case Studies

The case studies set out below are intended to demonstrate different mechanisms used to promote economic growth, deliver infrastructure, and improve the supply of quality housing, either in Aotearoa/New Zealand or internationally.

They are all different, from financial tools to legal and governance entities, although some may overlap; for example, a development corporation could be a council-controlled organisation. The case studies provide insight into which tools could support the implementation of the North Waipa South Hamilton Spatial Study, noting that some are not yet legislated or fully enabled in New Zealand. Additionally, a combination of mechanisms could also be used – it is not necessarily a matter of one option over another. Lastly, the case study of a successful City-Regional Deal in the UK (Cardiff Capital Region) has been presented, expanding the types of mechanisms used internationally to deliver development and economic growth.

DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Function

An organisation set up by government (central or local) to progress urban development within a defined geographical area.

Primary Use

Large-scale urban regeneration or new greenfield areas with significant infrastructure build-outs (e.g., waterfront redevelopment authorities).

Key Trait

They usually possess specific powers like compulsory land acquisition, planning override capabilities, and fast-tracked consenting.

Case Study

Western Sydney Aerotropolis – Bradfield Development Authority

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE (SEZ)

Function

A strictly delineated geographic area governed by different planning rules, tax incentives, and regulatory laws.

Primary Use

To attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), boost manufacturing, and create export-oriented businesses.

Key Trait

It applies to a physical location delineation, whereas SPVs, CCOs, and Development Corporations are financial, corporate or governing structures.

Case Study

Shannon Free Zone, Ireland

SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLE (SPV)

Function

A distinct, isolated legal entity (usually a company) created by a parent company to achieve a specific objective. This is often for a single, well-defined financial transaction or project and is used to isolate financial risk.

Primary Use

Used heavily in property development (e.g., ring-fencing debt), Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), or pooling venture capital.

Key Trait

Used heavily in property development (e.g., ring-fencing debt), Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), or pooling venture capital.

Case Study

Transport Infrastructure for Tauranga City

COUNCIL-CONTROLLED ORGANISATION (CCO)

Function

In New Zealand local government, a CCO is a company, trust, or joint venture in which one or more local authorities control 50% or more of the voting rights or director appointments.

Primary Use

To manage assets or deliver community services (like water, transport, or regional tourism) at arm's length from political interference while remaining publicly accountable.

Key Trait

COOs can generate alternative revenue, such as attracting external grants, running commercial ventures, or operating on a for-profit basis and are governed by the Local Government Act 2002.

Case Study

Epe Panuku – Urban Regeneration in Auckland

DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

WESTERN SYDNEY AEROTROPOLIS – BRADFIELD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Key Characteristics

An integrated airport economic precinct model which will leverage off the new Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport (due to open in October 2026).

- 11,200 hectares of rezoned land.
- Over $25 billion investment by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments in the airport and critical transport infrastructure (road and rail).
- Aerotropolis is expected to provide 10,000 homes and create 200,000 jobs.
- Dedicated planning framework.
- State-led infrastructure coordination.
- Long-term economic clustering strategy.

Bradfield Development Authority (BDA) is a NSW Government agency responsible for delivering, coordinating and attracting investment.

The BDA has an independent board and has wide ranging powers to drive economic development and job creation.

Infrastructure NSW is in charge of coordinating infrastructure, including 'step-in' powers to address roadblocks.

What has worked

- Clear, overaching vision which was embedded in strategic planning documents and was part of a City Deal.[22]
- Early and long-term infrastructure commitment has driven investor confidence well before operations commence.
- Master plans co-designed between private sector (developer), key government agencies and the Technical Assurance Panel.
- Streamlined planning.
- Aerotropolis Sector Plan - identifies infrastructure delivery priorities that enable development.

What hasn't

- Lack of coordination between key government priorities of housing, energy infrastructure and jobs around the Aerotropolis. This included mismatches between agency priorities and timelines (now being addressed through Infrastructure NSW)
- Slow planning processes and delays at the beginning of the project.

Learnings

- Importance of integrated regional planning and having a clear vision.
- Co-designed precinct masterplans – led by the Aerotropolis Technical Assurance Panel[23]
- Aviation compatibility embedded from inception.
- The need think about liveability alongside productivity.
- Having an implementation model that co-ordinates all the public and private players.
- Alignment of infrastructure priorities and funding is critical.
- The importance of getting the governance right.

Image source: NSW Government Planning

22 Greater Sydney Regional Plan 2018 and carried through into the Draft Sydney Plan 2026

23 The TAP is made up of representatives from council and government agencies.

COUNCIL-CONTROLLED ORGANISATION (CCO)

EKE PANUKU – URBAN REGENERATION

Key Characteristics

- Eke Panuku was established in 2015 to lead urban regeneration in Auckland.
- Eke Panuku was a council-controlled organisation which managed a $2.3bn property portfolio of non-core Auckland Council assets.
- The organisation was disestablished on 1 July 2025, with its functions transferred to Auckland Council.
- It did not develop sites directly, but acted as the "master developer" to unlock development potential for others
- It leveraged Auckland Council landholdings for urban regeneration and social outcomes.
- One of its most significant redevelopments is Wynyard Quarter on Auckland's waterfront.
- It has also led urban regeneration within 'priority locations' across Auckland.
- Eke Panuku had an independent board.
- The CCO was bought back into Auckland Council and now functions as the Auckland Urban Design Office.

What has worked

- Strong place-making.
- Working closely with mana whenua.
- Supporting council to divest and optimise its assets.
- Acted as a direct intervention to try and achieve alignment between growth priority locations and optimising council property and investment in public transport.
- Provided a focused effort to place-based urban regeneration programmes, enabling delivery of complex and long-term projects by a focused team.
- Consistency and certainty to the public and private sectors.
- Delivered financial and non-financial benefits for council and Auckland.

What hasn't

- Difficulties setting clear expectations and ensuring accountability.
- Insufficient democratic accountability
- Can have situations where there is misalignment with council strategic direction or lack integration
- Lack of strategic oversight, advice and performance monitoring
- Potential duplication

Learnings

- CCOs, by their nature, are still subject to political interventions
- They are funded by councils and therefore still impact a council's balance sheet
- Proper use needs to be made of the Statement of Intent so that there is clear direction around priorities
- Greater clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Public buy-in and support for what is being done

Image source: Our Auckland, Auckland Council

[24] The City Deal - Cardiff Capital Region

Key Characteristics

- World's first modern free trade zone (established in 1959).
- An international business park adjacent to Shannon Airport, County Clare, Ireland.
- Introduced special tax incentives on staff and profits for businesses within the zone which attracted a large number of multinational companies – these incentives stopped in 2003.
- Exemptions from customs duties.
- One-stop development agency.
- Over 180 firms set up, with around 8,000 employees.
- Easy access to air, land and water transport.
- Capital, employment, training and research and development grants.
- Access to a skilled and educated workforce.
- Focus on high-value industries.

What has worked

- Revitalised a rural airport region by attracting export industries.
- Zero to low taxes drew attracted foreign investment.
- Integration with local colleges and suppliers built strong domestic linkages.
- Has become a key international distribution area for Europe.
- Has contributed significantly to the Irish economy.

What hasn't

- Shannon is still a small town - the town's size never boomed, as many workers commute from nearby cities.
- Most of the incentives are now gone as a number have become national policy and spread acrsoss Ireland.
- Increasing competition from other free trade zones and special economic zones around the world.
- Potential over-reliance on foreign direct investment and the potential for tax avoidance.

Learnings

- Shannon's success inspired global SEZs, including Shenzhen.
- Good planning and strong infrastructure investment.
- Providing investor confidence is key.
- These types of initiatves are susceptible to economic downturns and global economic fluctuations.
- The Airport was strongly linked to the success of the Shannon Free Zone.
- Adapting to the changing global economic environment is important.

Image source: The Clare Herald

CITY-REGIONAL DEALS

CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION

Key Characteristics

- Agreed in 2016 between the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the ten local authorities of South East Wales.
- A ring-fenced £1.2bn investment fund.
- Covers a period of 20 years with programmes of intervention.
- Clear targets to deliver 25,000 new jobs, generate an additional £4bn of private sector investment into the region and increase Gross Value Added (GVA) by 5%.
- Cardiff Capital Region has a regional body (joint corporate committee) made up of the 10 councils across South East Wales.
- This regional body is advised by an independent Regional Growth Board and an Investment Board.
- The joint corporate committee has legal status which means the region can borrow, either through the UK Government's Public Works Loans Board or other sources of finance.
- The South Wales Metro transport system is a significant component of the Deal.
- The Deal focuses on connectivity, skills, innovation & growth, and identity.

What has worked

- Key projects delivered – eg semiconductor foundry, South Wales Metro nearing completion
- Prioritising relationships and getting all of the councils to work together
- Becoming a statutory body that has the ability to borrow – allows funds to be leveraged
- Having an innovative investment fund – this acts as a recycling fund where projects aligned with the programme are loaned money or there is co-investment, that is then repaid to loan to the next project
- The focus of the fund has been on 'good growth and prosperity' which has allowed it to invest in more deprived parts of the region
- Scale and its impact as an investment instrument

What hasn't

- Potential duplication with the Welsh Government
- To date 3,000 jobs created or safeguarded – which is some way off the 25,000 jobs originally envisaged

Learnings

- Close monitoring of investments is required given they are accountable for a substantial amount of public funding
- Consistent leadership
- Scope exists for further engagement - particularly with businesses and the community
- The need for multi-year investment
- Importance of ensuring the City Deal isn't just doing 'more of the same' – but demonstrating how it is uniquely placed to solve problems the market won't

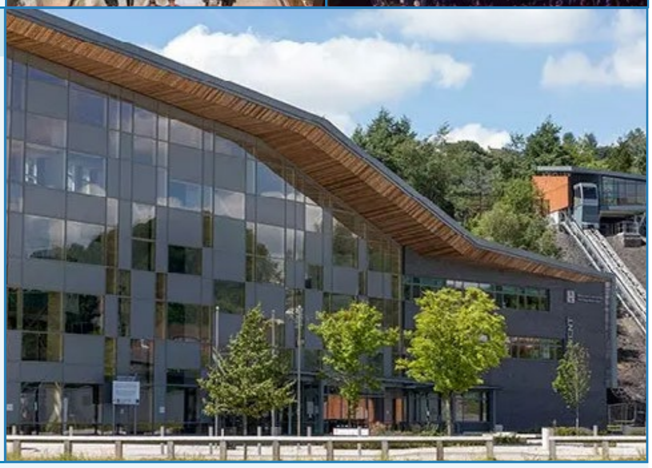


Image source: Cardiff Capital Region

APPENDIX B – Summary of Mana Whenua / Iwi Engagement

The project team was guided in this work by Future Proof's mana whenua liaison advisor, Steven Wilson, who suggested the following approach:

- Provide briefings to established forums (Ngā Karu Atua o Te Waka and Ngā Iwi Tōpū o Waipā)
- Engage directly with iwi and mana whenua.
- Throughout, ensure that groups are aware and comfortable with the project team's understanding of previous mana whenua input into relevant studies and planning processes.

The rest of this section summarises how this approach was applied throughout the study.

The scope, key study questions and timelines for the two studies were presented to Ngā Karu Atua o Te Waka in February 2025, and the group suggested that engagement occur directly with relevant mana whenua, while keeping Ngā Karu Atua abreast of study progress. In March 2025, a similar presentation was delivered to a group of Waipā-based mana whenua representatives that had gathered at Hamilton City Council regarding the Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant project.

In late June, parallel to Stage 1 stakeholder engagement on the draft vision / outcome statements and gap analysis reports, e-mails were sent to approximately 28 representatives of mana whenua groups in the study area, advising them of the stakeholder engagement materials and an upcoming opportunity for online "Zui" in early August.

Six timeslots for online Zui were offered on 4 and 6 August, covering both this study and a parallel Hamilton-to-Tauranga Corridor spatial study. Material was pre-circulated summarising key mana whenua-related themes extracted from key documents such as the Future Proof Strategy, Ahu Ake (Waipā Community Spatial Plan) and various Iwi Management / Environmental Plans. A shortened version this material was presented at the Zui, and discussion occurred on what opportunities and risks each study should consider with respect to mana whenua aspirations.

Attendees on 4 and 6 August included the Chair of Ngā Karu Atua o Te Waka, and representatives from Ngāti Wairere, Ngāti Koroki Kahukura, and Ngāti Hauā.

Stage 2 Zui on Scenarios / Options occurred in the week of 17 – 21 November 2025, using the same approach as Stage 1. Four mana whenua representatives attended these (from Ngā Karu Atua o Te Waka, Ngāti Raukawa, Maniapoto ki te Raki, and Waikato-Tainui) and provided feedback.

Between the Stage 1 and Stage 2 Zui, the project team presented a study update to the 15 September 2025 meeting of Ngā Iwi Tōpū o Waipā, a collaborative group of Waipā-based mana whenua representatives. An excerpt from the meeting minutes is as follows:

"Vanessa and Jim delivered a presentation on the South Hamilton Spatial Plan to discuss mana whenua perspectives, noting that full stakeholder engagement is planned to begin around November. Gaylene noted there are many historical sites in the area and discussions followed about the appropriate channels in which the project team should engage for mana whenua voice. The group also discussed the impact of district boundary changes which may occur but noted this would be of greater impact to homeowners than mana whenua. The themes from Ahu Ake were considered fit for purpose, and the protection of mana whenua intellectual property was also raised. The presentation then shifted briefly to the Hamilton to Tauranga corridor."

APPENDIX C – Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

A Communications and Engagement Plan for the study, including an initial key stakeholder list, was developed with the project team and approved by the Spatial and Strategy PCG in April 2025.

Stage 1 engagement

The first engagement phase (Stage 1) focused on the draft Vision and Outcome Statements, and the Stocktake / Gap Analysis report. Of the initial stakeholder list, based on prioritisation and availability of contact information, approximately 70 stakeholders were sent e-mails inviting them to review this material and provide feedback. A survey was open for two weeks from 16 June through 30 June, and 1:1 meetings were held with interested stakeholders.

A total of 14 survey responses were received, two of which were duplicates from KiwiRail, and two of which referred to stand-alone submissions (Ed Grayling for Rukuhia Village, and Harrison Grierson for Titanium Park Ltd and Rukuhia Properties Ltd).

The survey responses indicated a general level of comfort with the work to date, but highlighted some areas to be strengthened in subsequent analysis. Specifically, the feedback included suggestions to consider:

- The importance of leveraging the airport for aviation-related activities.
- Consideration and prioritisation of plan-enabled growth around the Airport.
- The importance of coordination with Southern Links and the Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- The importance of building on existing protections for long-tailed bat (peka peka) habitat.
- Some specific wording suggestions for the draft Vision and Outcome Statements, regarding Rukuhia and residential development.
- Numerous factors shaping the potential future growth of Rukuhia.
- The need for full mapping of constraints such as Lake Kareaotahi and peat soils.

- Potential impacts on the Tamahere community.
- The importance of the area and its soils as a horticultural hub.
- The value of nature-based solutions.
- Future consideration of rail's role, and existing constraints re: capacity.
- The need for more information on historic heritage, archaelogy and areas of cultural significance.
- Potential impact on local school capacity and school transport.
- Potential value of integrated catchment management plans (ICMPs).

This feedback was considered and addressed where possible in the subsequent Scenarios / Options report, as well as in revisions to the draft Vision and Outcome Statements.

Stage 2 engagement

The second engagement phase (Stage 2) focused on the Scenarios / Options report, using the same two-pronged approach as Stage 1 engagement:

- Targeted stakeholders identified through the project work to date were approached directly for their feedback, to be provided through an online survey (open for four weeks from 10 November through 5 December) or through 1:1 meetings by request.
- The wider community had an opportunity to provide feedback via the online survey on the Future Proof website.

Feedback was received from 13 organisations: 7 through the online survey form, 5 through stand-alone submissions, and 1 through both the survey and a supporting submission.

Most feedback received supported the conclusions of the Scenarios / Options report, including the relevance and usefulness of the scenarios explored, including constraints, opportunities and tradeoffs. There was variation as to which scenario was most likely or most desirable, and which policy options were advisable. A high-level summary of the feedback received is as follows:

- **Support for compact village growth:**
  Feedback indicated general support for compact, serviced village growth at Rukuhia and Ōhaupō. Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of recognising these as distinct settlements, each with its own character, constraints, and growth considerations, rather than treating them as a single or uniform growth area.

- **Concentration of industrial activity around the Airport:**
  There was broad support for clustering industrial and employment-generating activities around the Airport, rather than dispersing them across the wider rural area. This was seen as a way to maximise economic benefits, reduce land-use conflict, and make better use of strategic infrastructure.

- **Managing incompatible land uses:**
  Stakeholders highlighted the need to carefully manage incompatible activities, particularly in proximity to the Airport, to protect aviation operations, manage reverse sensitivity effects, and ensure long-term operational flexibility.

- **Growth assumptions and population projections:**
  Feedback questioning the testing of alternative high- or low-growth population scenarios was noted. However, it was recognised that under the Government's Going for Housing Growth (updated in December 2025), Waipā and Hamilton as high growth Tier 1 Councils must enable (zone) for 30 years of feasible housing capacity in their city / district plans and must use high population growth projections, reducing the relevance of testing lower-growth alternatives at this strategic stage.

- **Interaction with Fast Track applications:**
  Stakeholders raised the issue of how the spatial study interacts with multiple Fast Track applications currently underway. While the outcomes and timing of these applications remain uncertain, there was recognition that their cumulative effects should be acknowledged in the final report as part of the broader growth context.

- **Green corridors and environmental connections:**
  Engagement highlighted interest in identifying and strengthening green corridors to the Waikato River, bat habitat, etc.

- **Governance and alignment tensions:**
  A recurring theme was the tension between sub-regional objectives to grow the Airport as a regionally and nationally significant economic asset, and the Airport entity's desire to retain operational autonomy. This highlights the importance of clear roles, partnership-based approaches, and alignment mechanisms in future governance and delivery discussions.

Stakeholder meetings March 2026

Once draft strategic directions and interventions had been developed, a series of targeted stakeholder meetings were held from 9 – 16 March to check the level of comfort and test for any major concerns.

These meetings were held with:

- Waikato Regional Airport Ltd
- Mystery Creek (National Field Days Society
- Puaawai Estate
- Waikato River Authority
- Tainui Group Holdings

No opposition to the proposed direction was expressed, with views ranging from neutrality and 'guarded support' to enthusiasm. General agreement was evident on the value of a combined multi-stakeholder forum to discuss the future of the area – setting and delivering on agreed outcomes (short-term and long-term).

Future Proof partners

The members of the Future Proof Partnership are considered to be more than 'stakeholders' and as such were able to have input and information throughout the project, not just at Stage 1 and Stage 2 engagement phases.

Communication and engagement with Future Proof partners occurred throughout this project, as follows:

- Official regularly-scheduled or as-needed meetings of the standing Future Proof groups (Policy and Planning Working Group, Project Control Group, Programme Management Group, Chief Executive Advisory Group, and Future Proof Implementation Committee)
- Core project team workshops and e-mail exchanges throughout the project and at key stages (e.g. Multi-Criteria Analysis of Scenarios in November 2025).
- Informal briefings of senior executives, Chief Executives and Elected Members of the relevant Councils in March – April 2026.

The feedback received through these processes is too voluminous to summarise here, but it was invaluable both to the project outcomes and to keep Future Proof partners informed and supportive of the emerging direction.

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