



# Registered Master Builders Association of New Zealand Incorporated

## Submission on Going for Housing Growth

August 2025

## The Registered Master Builders Association submission on Going for Housing Growth

The Registered Master Builders Association (Master Builders) welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development and Ministry for the Environment on *Going for Housing Growth*.

### About Master Builders

The Master Builders represents over 3,000 commercial and residential builders and are the leading sector advocates on the built environment. Our members have been building the places where New Zealanders live, work, and play, since 1982.

Our sector is a key contributor to the New Zealand economy. For the year ended March 2024, the construction sector contributed 6.2 per cent of the country's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounting to over \$17.2 billion<sup>1</sup>. It also employed 294,100 people (or 10 per cent of the country's total workforce) in the year ended September 2024<sup>2</sup>.

We are working hard to lead the change our sector needs by ensuring we have the regulatory systems and processes in place to build faster and better. We are supporting our members to grow their capability and business acumen to ensure a strong and healthy sector; to innovate and make the most of new technologies so we meet the climate change challenge; and to attract, train and retain skilled talent. We are proud to be New Zealand's best builders.

At Master Builders we are committed to transforming the sector and rebuilding our economy. We are focused on building better homes, communities and workplaces, and ultimately better lives for all New Zealanders. We want to ensure that the houses that we build now are well-built, accessible, affordable, and appropriate to the needs of our ever-changing society. We are building a better New Zealand.

Our members are supported on the ground by 23 branches across 6 regional hubs:

Branch hub	Serving
Auckland	Auckland, Northland, Coromandel
Midlands	Waikato, Tauranga, Whakatāne, Rotorua, Taupō
Central North Island	Taranaki, Whanganui, Hawke's Bay, Manawatū, Gisborne
Cook Strait	Wellington, Wairarapa, Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast
Canterbury	Canterbury, Ashburton, South Canterbury
Southern	Otago, Central Otago, Gore, Southland

---

<sup>1</sup> Statistics New Zealand – Infoshare: Gross domestic product – March 2024

<sup>2</sup> Statistics New Zealand – Infoshare: Household Labour Force Survey – September 2024

## **1. Introduction: A Planning System That Must Shift from Restriction to Enablement**

- 1.1 Master Builders welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Going for Housing Growth proposals. As a leading voice for New Zealand's building industry, we represent the people who deliver the homes and communities New Zealanders live in. Our members regularly face delays, rising costs, and planning complexity that slow housing delivery and limit supply.
- 1.2 This submission sets out how the proposals can create a simpler, more consistent, and more practical planning system. The aim is to move beyond a system where restrictions on land use have become the norm rather than the exception, and instead enable responsive, well-served growth. Our views follow the core themes of the Government's consultation but apply a builder's lens with a focus on practical delivery outcomes.

## **2. Clear, Consistent Rules as the Starting Point for Certainty**

- 2.1 Builders operate across multiple council areas, yet planning rules such as what is allowed, how infrastructure is defined, and when intensification applies vary widely. Restrictions on land use should be the exception, not the norm.
- 2.2 This inconsistency leads to delays, confusion, and higher costs. We strongly support nationally standardised planning definitions and requirements, with any departures fully justified and documented. These should include:
  - 2.2.1 Standardised templates for spatial and implementation plans, with uniform formats and platforms, not left to each Territorial Authority to design.
  - 2.2.2 A much clearer legislative basis for environmental limits.
  - 2.2.3 Clear, standard definitions for walkable catchments, rapid transit corridors, and significant developments.
  - 2.2.4 Consistent building height minimums of at least six storeys in well-connected areas, with scope to go higher where demand and feasibility allow.
- 2.3 With consistent rules in place, the next priority is ensuring that land identified for growth is ready for development.

## **3. Land Supply Must Be Matched by Infrastructure Readiness**

- 3.1 Zoning land is not enough. It must also be serviceable. Work has stalled in areas zoned for housing for years due to a lack of infrastructure. We support the proposals to require councils to enable housing growth over a 30-year horizon, but this must be tied directly to infrastructure delivery.
- 3.2 We recommend:
  - 3.2.1 Councils use the most likely growth scenario, not the most conservative, when planning infrastructure.
  - 3.2.2 Infrastructure standards for roads, three waters, and stormwater be clearly defined to ensure land is build-ready.

- 3.2.3 Development contributions be phased rather than front-loaded, avoiding early-stage financial barriers. In Auckland, for example, some areas saw increases of up to 289 percent this year. In Drury, fees rose 268 percent in March 2023 and another 19 percent this year.
- 3.2.4 A more manageable 10-year incremental funding approach, with adjustments reviewed periodically in line with local government long-term plan cycles. This should be incorporated into Phase Three of the resource management reforms.
- 3.3 Without these linkages, housing targets risk being symbolic, representing theoretical capacity rather than real, buildable opportunity.

#### **4. Land Must Be Released Responsively and Monitored to Avoid Market Distortion**

- 4.1 Beyond zoning and servicing, agile land release mechanisms are essential so councils can bring forward land quickly. Triggering mechanisms such as infrastructure availability or demand indicators offer a smarter way to respond to market changes.
- 4.2 Over-zoning too far in advance risks land banking, where land is held without development, distorting the market and stalling supply.
- 4.3 We recommend:
  - 4.3.1 Nationally guided, clearly defined release triggers.
  - 4.3.2 Mandatory monitoring of uptake, with review and adjustment tools if land is not brought to market in a reasonable timeframe.
  - 4.3.3 Phased release in line with real demand to prevent sprawl or underused infrastructure investment.
- 4.4 Removing outward growth constraints must be balanced with rules that enable smart intensification in existing urban areas.

#### **5. Rural-Urban Boundaries: An Increasing Barrier to Growth**

- 5.1 Artificial growth controls such as rural–urban boundaries, or policies preventing leapfrogging to viable adjacent land, have long blocked efficient city growth. These tools suppress competition, inflate prices, and encourage inefficient development.
- 5.2 We support their removal and recommend councils be prohibited from replacing them with similar containment tools under spatial planning.
- 5.3 Safeguards are still needed to avoid land banking. If purchasers anticipate boundary removal and hold land for price gains, the result may be more expensive land rather than more development.
- 5.4 We also support ending sequential development rules that prioritise less viable areas over better-connected ones. The focus should be on infrastructure readiness and accessibility, not arbitrary containment.

## **6. Intensification Rules Must Be Clear, Enforceable, and Balanced**

- 6.1 We support intensification in the right locations, particularly near services and public transport. Too often, councils have weakened these rules through inconsistent definitions or restrictive overlays.
- 6.2 We recommend:
  - 6.2.1 Minimum walkable catchments of 800–1,200 metres depending on location.
  - 6.2.2 Clear national rules for where and how intensification applies.
  - 6.2.3 Offsetting capacity loss elsewhere in the same market when overlays such as special character areas reduce development potential.
  - 6.2.4 Greater height limits of eight to ten storeys where the market and infrastructure can support them.
- 6.3 Intensification rules should be backed by flexible zoning that allows more diverse, mixed-use development.

## **7. Design Standards Should Be Led by the Market, Not Over-Regulated**

- 7.1 Builders want to create homes people want to live in, but overly prescriptive design rules such as mandatory balconies or fixed apartment sizes can stifle innovation and add costs without meaningful public benefit.
- 7.2 We support:
  - 7.2.1 Flexible mixed-use zoning in high-growth areas.
  - 7.2.2 Removing minimum floor size and balcony requirements unless there is demonstrable impact on neighbours or urban design quality.
  - 7.2.3 Allowing developers and buyers to determine the right balance between amenity and cost.
- 7.3 Simplified, outcome-focused rules will help deliver faster, more affordable housing without compromising quality.

## **8. Transitioning to Phase Three**

- 8.1 In transitioning to Phase Three of the reforms, it would be prudent to suspend the current requirements for councils to produce Future Development Strategies (FDS) and Housing and Business Assessments (HBA). This is particularly important if these planning documents will be superseded by requirements in the new Acts. Continuing with the current process risks duplication of effort and misalignment between short-term planning work and the longer-term legislative framework.
- 8.2 Suspension should be the default position unless there is a clear public interest in producing these documents. For example, if they are necessary to provide the sector and the public with confidence in areas where development and housing delivery are urgently needed, then work on them could continue on a targeted basis.

## **9. Conclusion: A System That Enables, Not Blocks**

- 9.1 The Going for Housing Growth proposals are an essential step toward a planning system that enables rather than restricts. To be effective, the system must:
  - 9.1.1 Deliver clear, nationally consistent rules.
  - 9.1.2 Align housing targets with infrastructure delivery.
  - 9.1.3 Enable land release while preventing land banking.
  - 9.1.4 Remove artificial barriers to growth and support smart intensification.
  - 9.1.5 Avoid over-regulation of design.
  - 9.1.6 Be implemented fairly and efficiently.
- 9.2 Master Builders supports the intent of the reforms and looks forward to working with Government to ensure the new system delivers the homes our communities need, on time and at scale.

**Master Builders Policy and Advocacy team**