

11 July 2024

Dean Chrystal  
Chair - Te Tai O Poutini Proposed Plan Hearings Panel  
c/- West Coast Regional Council  
Via email: [chu.zhao@wrc.govt.nz](mailto:chu.zhao@wrc.govt.nz)

Dear Dean,

**Re: Request for Early Release of Alma Road Westport Rezoning Decision**

Council writes to formally request the early release of the decision (or the issue of an interim recommending report) on the rezoning of the Alma Road, Westport area, if the Hearings Panel is not able to complete their recommendation on submissions prior to December 2024.

For your consideration, this request is based on the following information:

1. Council has been offered access to a \$6.4M tranche (of the \$13.6M total) of Crown Infrastructure Acceleration Funding (IAF) to underpin the (proposed) rezoning and development of the Alma Road, Westport area.
2. A genuine risk exists that Council may lose access to this potentially 'once in a generation' funding. Specifically, the Crown agency Kainga Ora has advised Council that should the outcome of the rezoning decision for this area not be known by December 2024, this funding offer may be withdrawn.
3. The Hearings Panel may be aware that, in part, owing to the ongoing risk of flooding and inundation to Westport, the Crown has funded several activities to support Council in providing land for housing that has a low natural hazard risk. The Alma Road area was identified as a key location that has a significantly lower natural hazard risk and climate change risk profile than the historic location of Westport, which is situated on the Buller River flood plain. The Crown's infrastructure funding and the rezoning of such land in the Te Tai O Poutini Proposed Plan (TToPP) will enable Council to support new development in this area and plan for the provision of future housing above the flood plain.
4. In addition, noting Council's low rating base, and in the absence of this \$6.4M tranche of Crown infrastructure funding, development in the Alma Road area would likely be unviable for Council to advance.

5. Council considers that the rezoning of this land is consistent with the strategic direction of the Proposed Plan to “manage urban growth integrating existing and future infrastructure, providing sufficient land, or opportunity to meet growth demands for housing and business”.
6. Further, Council considers that the achievement of the wider Central government goals of adaptation to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change is vital to the future health and wellbeing of our communities. Hence, the funding support for well-planned growth in areas of low risk, such as the Alma Road location, is considered a key step towards achieving these goals.
7. Council appreciates that there are submissions on the notified TToPP General Residential zoning of the Alma Road area, and that the Hearings Panel must in the first instance consider submissions and any evidence on the rezoning in its upcoming hearings on the Residential Zones and Special Zones Topic in the week of 15 July 2024. Council has engaged with submitters through two pre-hearing meetings and through informal communication in attempts to narrow, if not resolve matters raised in submissions.
8. Council also acknowledges that the related zone and District-wide provisions and rules have an important relationship with the zoning over the Alma Road area; and that by releasing decisions on zones in isolation may have the potential for complexities in plan administration.
9. Accordingly, if this matter is considered by the Hearings Panel as an impediment to the issue of its report on submissions in advance of other TToPP text, then Council kindly requests that the release of an interim recommending report on the zoning outcome and any location specific rules be considered as an alternative option; or further still, a formal decision by the TToPP Committee would also be of significant assistance in terms of Council fulfilling its obligations to the Crown for the release of this \$6.4m capital, and the subsequent ability to fund infrastructure to the Alma Road area.

Council appreciates your consideration of this request and looks forward to your correspondence in due course. Please do feel welcome to contact me via email [Nathan.Riley@bdc.govt.nz](mailto:Nathan.Riley@bdc.govt.nz) or on 0273 877 128, should you wish to discuss or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'N' followed by a horizontal line that ends in a small dot.

**Nathan Riley**  
Group Manager Regulatory Services  
Buller District Council