

5 December 2019

More information on plans for transitional housing at Wood Street, Wainuiomata

What is transitional housing? How does it differ from public (state) housing?

- Transitional housing provides warm, dry, short-term accommodation for people and whānau in need. Usually people stay in transitional housing for around three months but can stay longer. Transitional housing includes support services to help people secure a longer-term home and get back on their feet so that they're in a stronger position to stay housed.
- Transitional housing is managed by experienced contracted providers who are responsible for making sure families living there are looked after and receive the support they need, such as budgeting advice or other social services, and help them find a permanent home. This could include public (state) housing or private rental.
- The housing provider will be responsible for managing the tenancies and the properties to ensure they are maintained and operated to a high standard.

Why do we need transitional housing?

- Affordable housing is in short supply and we're seeing rising numbers of families and individuals living in overcrowded accommodation or in emergency housing, including motels. It's hard for families, children or anyone to thrive when they're living week to week in motels or other emergency accommodation.
- There is an urgent need in the Hutt Valley to get people and whānau out of emergency accommodation and into warm, dry homes. More than 220 families or individuals in the Lower Hutt area, including Wainuiomata, received an emergency housing grant to pay for a motel in the three months ending September 2019.
- Transitional housing is a much better option than a motel or emergency accommodation. It gives people somewhere safe to live for three months or more, along with social services and support to help them find a longer-term home.
- Nationwide, in the three months ending September 2019, 6,064 families or individuals received an emergency housing grant to pay for accommodation such as a motel. In the same period last year, it was 3,840 – so that's an increase of about 58% in a year.

Why was the community only told about this development when resource consent was ready to be lodged?

- This development is being fast-tracked due to the urgent need for transitional housing. So we can get people into warm, dry homes during winter we're moving quickly with this and we acknowledge the speed this is happening can be unsettling for some people. We're committed to keep the community informed and updated at every step as this important work progresses.

Will the consent be notified? Is Kāinga Ora considering notifying the consent?

- Kāinga Ora has informed households living near the site and others, including council, about the proposed development, and we're committed to keep the community informed and updated at every step as this important work progresses.

How will you manage the extra pressure on the wastewater and storm water from this development?

- Those matters are covered in the resource consent application. There is enough capacity in the network to manage storm and wastewater discharge, once on-site infrastructure is put in place.

Who will live in these homes?

- They will be people and whānau who need somewhere warm, dry and safe to live while they look for a longer-term home.
- Many will already have been living, working or going to school locally. Others may be from nearby areas or districts.
- Before referring them to a transitional housing provider, the Ministry of Social Development will talk with each family or individual to understand their situation and make sure it's the right option for them.
- The Ministry of Social Development will look to refer Wainuiomata families currently in need of transitional housing to the provider managing these houses, so local people can remain connected to their community and other networks.
- The transitional housing provider will also interview them, and will work closely with them while they're in these homes, supporting them to find longer-term housing, and access the services they need.
- A key focus will be ensuring the residents settle into their homes and the community well, and get any support they need so they are good neighbours.

Will residents of the site be local?

- The Ministry of Social Development will look to refer Wainuiomata families currently in need of transitional housing to the provider managing these houses, so local people can remain connected to their community and other networks.
- Some residents may be families from the wider area who are in urgent need of somewhere to stay. Keeping connected to local services is considered in the placement process. Placements are managed on a case-by-case basis, and MSD work with each family to understand their situation and make sure a place at Wood Street is right for them.

What is being done to ensure schools, policing and the medical centre can support the needs from this site?

- Working with our partners and providers, Kāinga Ora and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development will discuss the proposed development with local police, schools and primary health providers between now and the expected completion of the project.

- In the placement process for people, access to local services for families is carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. We will be working through this in more detail with those organisations to ensure they have the support they need.
- Because families will be moving in and out of the homes, and because many of them will already live in or near Wainuiomata, it's not yet clear what the impact on services will be.

What guarantees are there that people brought in for 3 months won't stay longer?

- The intent with transitional housing is that residents move on to a permanent home after 3 months. However, this is dependent on there being a suitable home available. People can therefore stay longer if needed and will continue to be supported until a new home is found. Transitional housing is not intended to be a permanent solution.

Why aren't you building permanent housing?

- Kāinga Ora is increasing the supply of public housing as well. Throughout the Hutt Valley, Kāinga Ora is delivering more public housing at scale and pace, with up to 270 new state homes being built over the next two-to-three years. Up to 50 new homes will be available in Lower Hutt within the next four months. The largest site, which is at Eponi, will be a mix of public, affordable and market housing so we're already developing a site with a range and mix of housing. The Wood Street homes are part of a cross-agency response to help get people into warm, dry and secure housing.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Kāinga Ora– Homes and Communities, and registered Community Housing Providers are working together to bring on as many additional public housing places as quickly as possible within available funding. While we bring on additional public housing places, transitional housing will support people who urgently need housing in the meantime.
- There is an urgent and immediate need to get people out of emergency accommodation, like motels, and into transitional housing where a specialist provider can work with them to identify long-term housing options. This available land provides an opportunity for us to deliver this much needed transitional housing.

What are the long-term plans for the houses on the site?

- Kāinga Ora does not own the site of the proposed transitional housing. The land will be leased, so the houses may be removed at a later date, or the houses may remain, but be put to a different use, such as permanent public housing. Those decisions will be made in conjunction with the landowner.
- The houses will be warm, dry, and built to modern building and design standards. They will be built off-site and assembled on-site, so they can be in place quickly to meet urgent demand. The nature of how these homes have been built means there is the potential they could be moved to other sites as demand and need changes.

What could this site be used for in the future?

- These homes will be public housing that will be used to meet the urgent demand for transitional housing. The use of the homes may change to meet different public housing demand and need in the future, such as permanent public housing.
- It will also be up to the landowner, as Kāinga Ora is leasing this land. The houses might be removed altogether, made into permanent public housing, rental homes, sold, or some other housing solution.

Exactly what support is in place for residents? Will someone be on site 24/7?

- The exact details will be worked out with the contracted provider. They will be responsible for ensuring the development is run well, the property maintained to a high standard, and people living there are supported. They will ensure there are support services such as budgeting advice and other social support as needed to help residents into permanent homes.

How has the site been selected?

- The site has been selected, working alongside our partners, and through the Resource Consent process for availability and practicality.
- It is vacant crown land, readily developable with access to services such as water and electricity, and in area of high need.
- There is an urgent and immediate need to get people out of emergency accommodation, like motels, and into transitional housing where a specialist provider can work with them to identify long-term housing options. This available land provides an opportunity for us to deliver this much needed housing, with the right support services.

Are there other developments like this?

- Yes, there are already other similar complexes operating across New Zealand with families living quietly and safely. These are good quality, well managed homes and they are of benefit to our communities because they are helping people achieve independence.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact:

Renee Regal
Senior Stakeholder Relationship Manager
Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities
Email: Renee.Regal@kaingaora.govt.nz
Phone: 021 998 724