

# Top five things to consider when selecting a site for your next housing project

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Choosing the right site for your community housing project can save time and money. If you get it wrong, it can be costly. Harrison Grierson specialises in housing development and has worked with Kāinga Ora and Habitat for Humanity. See below the top five things for CHA members to consider when selecting a site.

## *1. Proximity to essential amenities*

The location of the site plays a significant role in the quality of life for future residents. A site close to essential amenities such as local shops, schools, medical facilities, and public transport options can greatly enhance convenience and accessibility.

Additionally, being near public transport can reduce reliance on private vehicles.

## *2. Site shape*

The physical characteristics of the site like shape, size and topography directly impact the design and yield potential of the development. A well-shaped, gently sloping site can facilitate efficient use of space, allowing for optimal layout and maximum number of housing units. Irregularly shaped sites, sites with poor access or natural features such as gulley areas may pose design challenges and limit the number of units that can be developed.

Assessing the yield potential involves evaluating how many units can be realistically and legally built on the site, considering zoning regulations, access and other constraints.

## *3. Regulatory constraints*

Understanding the regulatory environment is essential when selecting a site. You need to consider district plan zone requirements, the building code, and any constraints on the land titles.

Zoning rules can describe the density of development anticipated, as well as the types of buildings that can be constructed and uses, which can significantly influence the feasibility of a housing project.

Constraints such as easements or covenants, can also restrict development options. Thoroughly reviewing these constraints ensures there is a clear understanding for the scale and density of development anticipated in the neighbourhood and an assessment of the consenting challenges or timeframes that might be faced by the proposed development.

## *4. Site hazards and constraints*

Identifying potential natural hazards and physical constraints is critical for the safety and viability of the development. You'll need to assess risks from climate change such as flooding or extreme weather events, evaluating the site proximity to waterways and considering the

availability of infrastructure connections with capacity to accept the sites infrastructure demands once developed.

Ground conditions, such as soil stability and contamination, must also be examined to ensure the site is suitable for construction.

Considering these factors early in the site selection process can prevent costly delays and ensure the long-term safety of the development.

#### *5. Financial viability*

The financial viability of the development is a key consideration when selecting a site. Taking into account all of the above factors to develop early concepts and obtain preliminary development costings is crucial.

Costs can include the cost of finance (interest on loans), raw land value, professional fees, construction costs, council fees, development contributions and legal or sales fees.

Insurability of the development is another factor that can impact financing and long-term viability, so getting early advice from your insurance brokers is also important. Sites with high-risk factors, such as flood zones or unstable ground, may face higher insurance costs or difficulty obtaining insurance cover.

#### *When considering your next site*

Harrison Grierson recommends getting in touch with a community housing specialist when you're starting to think about your next project. It can save you time and money in the long run to engage with a specialist who understands the ins and outs of the regulatory environment and can help identify any risks or issues with your site.

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