BRANZ

External Research Report

Industry perceptions of medium density consenting issues, challenges and suggested solutions

Funded from the
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Property Council
New Zealand

Beacon

MDC/1

Industry perceptions of medium density consenting issues, challenges and suggested solutions

Final

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About This Report

Title

Industry perceptions of medium density consenting issues, challenges and suggested solutions

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Abstract

This research explored with industry the challenges, problems and difficulties with consenting for medium density development, and sought potential solutions to the challenges. Interviews with 15 industry stakeholders were supplemented by a wider industry and council online survey.

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1 Executive summary

This research project explored with industry the challenges, problems and difficulties with consenting for medium density housing (MDH) development, and sought potential solutions to the challenges. It was undertaken by Beacon Pathway, with assistance from Property Council New Zealand, and was funded by the Building Research Levy.

The research commenced by identifying key building consent issues through a media review and foundation interviews with 6 industry / government players. This enabled the development of questions for qualitative in-depth interviews with 15 stakeholders drawn from government, councils, industry, and architecture/design/engineering/planning professionals. The findings from these interviews formed the basis for an online survey, with 279 respondents from across councils, government, professions and industry.

Several themes emerged from the interviews and survey:
1) The need for consistency in interpretation of rules, nationally, across council staff, and within an application process.
2) The need for clearer guidance and support, led by central government and specific to the medium density context. For example, case study exemplars of documentation, guidance for best practice, and guidance on the information required to achieve acceptable solutions were examples of where information could help clarify the process and requirements for both councils and industry.
3) Both industry and consenting officers need upskilling. Cross sector training/learning opportunities were suggested in a range of areas including: MDH design, compliance and construction; preparing consentable plans and technical documentation; keeping up to date with innovation; and specific technical areas such as fire, claddings and acoustics.
4) The right people involved in the process can make a huge difference. This theme canvassed the need for experience and decision-making authority in consenting officers, and consistency in personnel across the process, particularly from the pre-application meeting forward into the consenting process. A collaborative approach between all parties would be more likely to get good outcomes.

Guidance

The quality of MDH consenting guidance provided, as well as the quality of technical documentation submitted during the consent process, causes issues for all parties involved. Over fifty per cent of respondents supported the use of online consenting, case study examples, best practice guidance, and an MDH 'centre of excellence'. There appears broad industry support for the development of education, information, advice and potentially even mentoring for developers of medium density housing.

Respondents noted that additional guidance or support, particularly during the pre-application stage of the MDH consenting process, has the potential to improve the quality of applications, and may support faster processing times and fewer requests for additional information. A common suggestion was to provide a single point of contact at consenting authorities who can

support or champion a project to completion; this reflected a view that improving the consistency of advice will lead to less variation in discretionary approvals throughout the consenting process.

Requests for further information

Requests for further information negatively impacted at least 57% of participants, with themes emerging around under-resourcing (leading to delays in processing), the requirement for multiple RFIs rather than a single request, as well as the poor quality of submitted documentation. Insufficient or inconsistent feedback at pre-application stage, or decisions at pre-application stage not passed to the consenting officer were also identified as issues.

There was a wide range of proposed solutions to these challenges. Respondents suggested improved training of processing staff, use of experienced senior staff, a single consistent point of contact within the consenting authority from start to finish, a more collaborative approach to RFIs with face-to-face meetings as required and records kept of decisions for later consistency, central government guidance, and improved attention to detail in technical documentation. It was also noted that there was a need to improve the skills and knowledge of all involved in the process.

Acceptable and alternative solutions

Acceptable or alternative solution processes caused significant issues for participants relating to extended delivery time (74%), external consultant fees (73%), costs and staff time (69%), and negatively impacting design innovation (49%).

Examples of 'deemed-to-comply' acceptable solutions for key aspects of design were considered to be effective amongst 86% of participants alongside a clearer and more consistent approach to approving compliance for these types of solutions (82%) and clear guidance (68%). Further suggestions to help with acceptable or alternative solutions included: courses to help consenting staff and industry keep up to date with overseas innovation; and training to help all involved understand acceptable documentation, required information, compliance pathways.

Building code requirements

Nine design features caused significant issues for at least a third of participants: fire, carparking, acoustics, inter-tenancy walls, cladding, accessways, height limits, and façades. The current building code requirements for fire caused significant issues for the majority of participants (62%), suggesting a level of urgent need for attention.

Respondents suggested more training is needed of both consenting staff and industry to ensure understanding of fire, its impact and protection, and better guidance and information to help achieve a more consistent approach to fire regulation. A total of 75% of participants considered that industry should be more engaged in code revisions and 73% agreed that they should receive notification of upcoming changes in the building code.

New products

A large majority of respondents (70%) had found it either 'hard' or 'very hard' to gain approval for the use of new products. The main issues related to time delays, resulting in extra expense

while many had not tried to use new products as it was not worth the effort, citing increased paper work, time delays and frustrations. In some cases, the problems had led to poor outcomes, including poorer built form or poorer public amenity.

Over 75% of respondents supported the potential solutions of: recognition of existing international standards for overseas products; central government support to expedite appraisal or approval schemes such as CodeMark; and, clarified procedures for gaining approval (as with alternative solutions).

People and relationships

The top three issues were inconsistency in the current consenting processes and requirements, lack of collaboration between agencies, and a lack of specific skills and knowledge to address issues raised by MDH developments.

In terms of suggested solutions 84% of respondents supported a more collaborative approach, particularly during the pre-application process, and over 70% supported dedicated account holders for each project, and the establishment of a national consenting authority to improve consistency. There was wide recognition that the consenting process can operate more smoothly when a trusted relationship develops between stakeholders; and that this is more likely to develop when there is consistency in the personnel involved. The challenges with suitable staff recruitment and retention, particularly within building consent authorities, were also recognised, and that sometimes industry exacerbates this problem through 'poaching' well trained staff.

Costs and process

Most respondents had not calculated the additional costs that consenting issues are adding to their projects. 20% of respondents estimated costs of 3-5% and 14% believed it added 11-15%.

Recommended next steps

There is high engagement in the industry and councils to be involved in finding solutions to these issues; 74 participants (26%) wanted to participate in further solutions. The first recommendation of the authors is to maintain this engagement through a series of national workshops to disseminate and discuss findings and further evolve the prioritised solutions.

The second recommendation is to set up an inter-agency / cross-industry review panel focussing on medium density housing delivery.

Thirdly, the recommendation is to explore the potential for five **working groups** to look at:
1. Identifying requirements and providing **support and guidance for pre-application** meetings
2. **Building Code review,** prioritising the top nine issues identified by respondents
3. Build **library of case studies** (with details) for acceptable and alternative solutions.
4. **Review new products** approved by accredited international agencies and develop a mechanism to fast-track NZ approval for internationally approved products.
5. Identify examples of quality **technical documentation** at all stages. Develop consistent and clear templates for provision of documentation and information.

1.1 Summary of key numbers

Medium Density Housing Consenting

A summary of on-line survey results from 279 participants

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Participants have a high level of experience with MDH projects

Number of projects that participants have been involved with:

- None as yet — 10%
- 1-2 — 12%
- 3-5 — 21%
- 6-9 — 11%
- 10 or more — 47%

Almost half of the participants have been involved with 10 or more MDH projects

Regions where participants work:

- Auckland — 64%
- Canterbury — 28%
- Waikato — 23%
- Wellington — 23%
- Otago — 17%
- Bay of Plenty — 14%
- Nelson-Tasman — 9%
- Southland — 7%
- Hawke's Bay — 6%
- Marlborough — 6%
- Taranaki — 5%
- West Coast — 4%
- Manawatu-Whanganui — 4%
- Gisborne — 4%

*189 participants only worked in one region
67 worked in 2-5 regions
14 worked in 6-10
9 worked in 11 or more*

And the roles that they have:

- Architect / Designer — 32%
- Developer — 16%
- Planner — 9%
- Engineer — 7%
- Construction / Builder — 7%
- Project manager — 7%
- Urban designer — 6%
- Property owner / Investor — 3%
- Other (please specify) — 3%
- Materials supplier — 2%
- Finance — 2%
- Property / Facilities Manager — 1%
- Lawyer / Legal — 1%
- Surveyor — 1%
- Consenting — 1%
- Quantity surveyor — 1%
- Landscape Designer — 1%
- Sales / Real Estate — 1%
- Valuation — 1%

More than half of those surveyed were designers, developers or planners involved in medium density housing

MDH guidance could be improved

50% find existing **online consenting processes** very useful, suggesting potential to improve or expand this kind of service

80% consider that **case study examples** of quality technical documentation would be helpful

73% would welcome a national review to **improve the consistency** of best practice guidance

Requests for further information (RFI)

57% of participants are negatively affected by RFIs; in many cases leading to delays and increased project costs

Suggested solutions include:

Increasing resources to process RFIs

Greater use of electronic communication

Improving sector skills and knowledge for greater consistency

The impact of alternative solutions

The process for gaining compliance for alternative solutions creates a number of impacts amongst participants:

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Timeframe for delivery	75%	17%	8%
External consultant fees	73%	19%	8%
Costs and staff time	69%	20%	11%
Innovation in design solutions	51%	26%	23%
Quality of overall outcomes	40%	34%	26%

The following solutions could make a difference:

86% wanted access to **examples of 'deemed-to-comply' solutions**

82% thought a clearer and **more consistent approach** to alternative solutions would help

68% would welcome **clearer guidance** on developing alternative solutions

Creating homes and neighbourhoods that work well into the future and don't cost the Earth
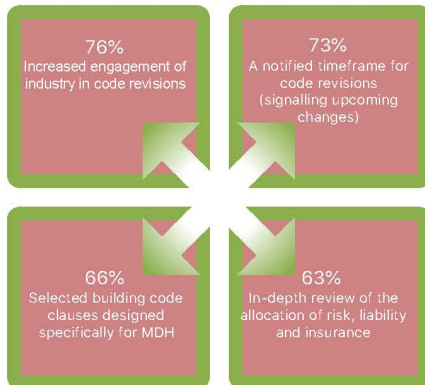
Feedback on the building code for MDH

200 participants identifed building code and design features that caused the most issues for them as they developed MDH projects:

Feature	%
Fire	62%
Car parking	44%
Acoustics	42%
Inter-tenancy walls / floors	41%
Cladding	38%
Access ways	38%
Height limits	36%
Facades	33%
Balconies	33%
Weathertightness	30%
Stairs	9%
Lifts	8%

The proportion of participants that agreed with the following solutions:

76% Increased engagement of industry in code revisions

73% A notified timeframe for code revisions (signalling upcoming changes)

66% Selected building code clauses designed specifically for MDH

63% In-depth review of the allocation of risk, liability and insurance

People and relationships

How can better relationships improve the MDH process?

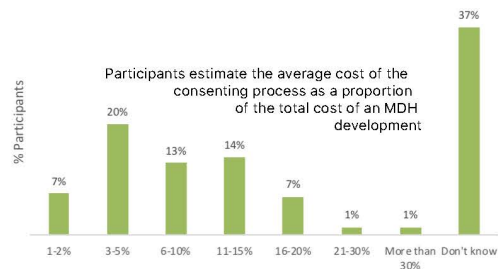*"Improved collaboration particularly during the pre-application process"*

"Dedicated account holders for each project"

"The establishment of a national consenting authority to improve consistency across NZ"

"More coordinated effort to encourage neighbourhood acceptance of MDH"

"Utilising private accredited certifiers for consenting approvals"

Costs of consenting

Participants estimate the average cost of the consenting process as a proportion of the total cost of an MDH development

Range	% Participants
1-2%	7%
3-5%	20%
6-10%	13%
11-15%	14%
16-20%	7%
21-30%	1%
More than 30%	1%
Don't know	37%

New products

70% found it 'hard' or 'very hard' to gain approval for new products.

There was wide-ranging support for the following actions:

Greater recognition of international standards for overseas products **84%**

Government support to speed up and reduce costs of appraisal schemes **84%**

Clarified procedures to gain approvals for new products **76%**
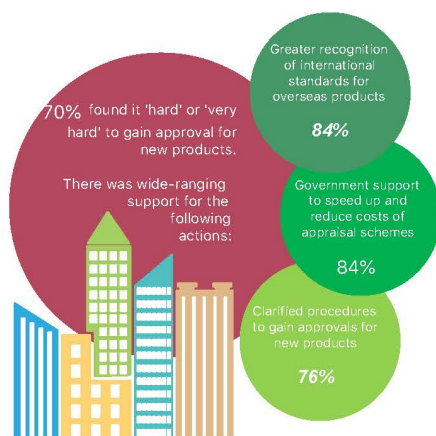
Immediate priorities

The issues that require the most attention...

1. Time taken for requests for further information
2. Time taken for consent sign-off
3. Extent of support for pre-application meetings
4. Costs of requests for further information
5. The level of skills and knowledge relating to requests for further information
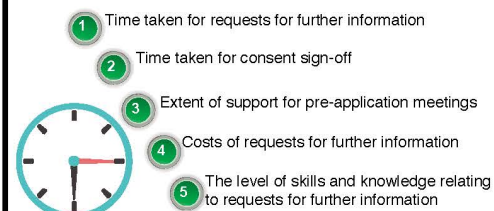
Further engagement

74 participants want to participate in developing solutions that will improve the effectiveness of MDH consenting

Industry perceptions of medium density consenting issues, challenges and suggested solutions: MDC/1

Creating homes and neighbourhoods that work well into the future and don't cost the Earth

2   Introduction

Building regulation and consenting has been identified as adding time and cost to new builds, especially in relation to medium density housing (MDH). In addition, feedback from developers and industry players indicates that some aspects of regulation are having unintended consequences, particularly in the less well understood and applied medium density settings.

The Productivity Commission's Housing Affordability Inquiry (2012) concluded that "Many inquiry participants raised concerns about quality, timeliness, cost and consistency in their interactions with the building control system." The Commission identified some of the ways that regulations could adversely affect the costs of building, including:

- Adding administrative costs
- Inconsistent or slow enforcement of regulatory requirements delaying project completion and/or increasing project costs.
- Affecting the incentives to innovate with new materials or processes.
- Influencing who carried risks and liabilities

This report outlines the results of research to explore these issues, undertaken by Beacon Pathway and funded by the Building Research Levy. The research addresses the key question "What are the specific challenges with the resource and building consent process for medium-density? In particular, what process issues are emerging, and what behavioural problems are occurring?"[1]

At an early stage of the research, Beacon identified that Property Council New Zealand had significant interest in this area and were happy to contribute to the research and engage their wide membership in taking part in the survey. Beacon acknowledges and thanks the Property Council for working with us to undertake the research and engage a wide cross-section of industry.

3   Research method

At the outset, the focus was to highlight challenges, problems and difficulties for consenting in medium density settings. However, the initial interviews that formed part of the foundation phase (see 3.1 Project phases) highlighted a number of useful suggestions and potential solutions to the challenges described. An early decision was made to utilise the research to examine and explore some of these solutions. The research was subtly refocussed to concentrate on solutions as an important aspect of the findings. Despite this change, the methodology followed that conceived of at the start of the project.

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[1] BRANZ (2017) Building Research Levy Prospectus 2017-18

3.1   Project phases

The programme of research was split into five key tasks that culminated in a final online industry survey. The stages of the research included the following:

1) The project commenced with a high-level **media review** to identify the type of building consent issues being raised and discussed by the industry in media. This assisted in the research team in developing a list of talking points for the interviews.

2) The **foundation phase** explored the issues raised in the media review, and built critical understanding of how to set up the main qualitative interviews. It comprised, in the main, consultation interviews with 6 key industry / government players, including MBIE, Auckland Council, a major Auckland developer, representatives from the design profession, and a construction firm involved in medium density housing. The output of this phase was a set of framed questions to be asked in the main qualitative interview phase.

3) The **qualitative in-depth interview phase** comprised of 15 face-to-face in-depth interviews of key stakeholders involved in the delivery of medium density housing and drawn from government, councils, industry, and professions including architecture, design, engineering and planning. These were focused, where practical, on five geographic areas with higher medium density growth (Auckland, Wellington, Tauranga, Christchurch, Queenstown). The outputs of this phase assisted the research team in an understanding of context and guided the development of the larger quantitative industry survey.

4) The **quantitative research phase** was based on the results of the foundation interviews and the more in-depth interviews. With a focus on solutions, the research team developed a survey that could be undertaken through an online survey sent to a wider range of people across councils, government, professions and industry (targeted in Auckland, Wellington, Tauranga, Christchurch, Queenstown areas but also available more widely throughout New Zealand).

5) In the **analysis and results phase**, results and comments from both quantitative and qualitative phases were combined and analysed, and are presented in this report to highlight key themes, barriers, challenges and solutions to the issues of consenting processes relating to medium density housing.

4   Media review

To set the scene for the interviews, a high-level, on-line media review was undertaken going back to 2012. This built off, rather than repeating, the work done in the earlier BRANZ Study Report SR381[2] (*Perceived barriers to getting resource and building consents for medium-density housing*) which undertook a literature review of New Zealand research and concluded "there was no research directly applicable to the subject of this report."

The media review looked at what medium density consenting issues were being raised and discussed in the media by industry, and assisted the research team (along with the findings of Study Report 381) in developing talking points to explore in the foundation interviews.

The review found the following issues raised, generally by builders and developers, occasionally by councils:

The cost of consenting and compliance - Councils also recognised the impact of costs - in one case in Kaipara, the District Council agreed to defer development contributions in order to encourage the development to go ahead[3]. In Tauranga in 2012 development fees were slashed to help a struggling building industry[4]. In Queenstown in 2015 the council cut red tape to make it easier and cheaper for development and removed the need for resource consents in some areas[5]. The Go Shift partnership between central and local government introduced simplified and standardised building consent application forms across all participating councils[6].

Changes to legislation and council regulations – these increase uncertainty and can impact the overall cost of projects. In 2013, RMA reforms were criticised for producing a longer shopping list of principles for decision makers, and perpetuate subjectivity and therefore unpredictability of decisions.[7] One comment was that district plans should outline what could rather than what could not be done, and that rules should be clearer with less room for staff discretion and public objection[8]. One developer commented that legislation which was open to interpretation by various parties was creating uncertainty for developers.[9] Councils' urban design requirements are accused by developers and property owners of adding cost and complexity to developments.[10]

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[2] *Duncan, A. & Brunsdon, N. (2017).*

[3] *http://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503450&objectid=11067936*

[4] *http://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503343&objectid=11055218*

[5] *http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/72281861/queenstown-lakes-district-council-to-cut-red-tape-for-development*

[6] *http://www.nzherald.co.nz/wairarapa-times-age/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503414&objectid=11582826*

[7] *https://www.nbr.co.nz/article/rma-reforms-will-increase-uncertainty-says-top-law-firm-bd-145476*

[8] *http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/67954097/rebuild-pace-extremely-disappointing*

[9] *https://www.foodstuffs.co.nz/media-centre/news-media/commercial-development-%E2%80%93-vital-to-achieving-long-term-community-growth/*

[10] *http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/business/90984733/Urban-design-panels-dumb-advice-revealed-in-Productivity-Commission-report*

Delays in consenting – again, both developers/builders complained about the impact of delays, particularly on overall build costs. Developers said trivial planning issues were unnecessarily holding up consents.[11] Councils also recognised issues with several councils having reviews of their consenting operations. Christchurch City Council was reviewed in 2013 after property developers complained that "delaying tactics" by the Christchurch City Council's consents department were costing them thousands of dollars a day. The review found, amongst other things, a shortage of skilled staff, and a silo culture with little coordination across consenting, inspections and compliance[12]. A Tauranga City Council review in 2017 found a $62m lag in consents, taking months longer, with the impact including additional consultant fees, lost productivity and lost profitability.[13] Two key issues in Tauranga were the overall timeliness of consent assessment and clear and timely communication in requesting additional information from the external user. Councils were addressing this in various ways: Selwyn and Kaipara district councils implemented an online consenting process which was halving consenting time.[14]

Increasing construction quality issues are contributing to councils struggling with consents – 25-40% of all building inspections continue to fail because of industry quality issues such as unskilled workforce and poor supervision.[15] The need to request more information was often cited as one reason for delays; developers saw this as micro managing, whereas councils noted that poor quality consent applications meant they needed to seek more information.

Lack of consistency across consenting staff and difficulty in constantly talking to different staff - builders and developers complained that navigating council bureaucracy was time-consuming and they struggled to find someone at the council they could speak to. Consistency in application of Building Act & Code from consent to consent was identified as a key issue in the Tauranga City Council review in 2017. One response from Christchurch City Council was the Partnership Approvals Programme, an initiative which works by pairing developers with case managers who help them to gain all the approvals necessary to complete their projects[16].

An issue identified by councils was the **difficulty in finding building control officers** to meet rising building consent numbers[17]. This translated into a lack of confidence by applicants in the competence of the consenting staff they were working with.

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[11] *https://www.stuff.co.nz/10065962*

[12] *http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/8926835/How-did-CCC-consents-go-so-wrong*

[13] *http://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503343&objectid=11879273*

[14] *http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/70499810/palmerston-north-awardwinning-software*

[15] *http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11459438*

[16]*http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/business/the-rebuild/75801585/developers-get-help-to-cut-through-christchurchs-red-tape*

[17] *http://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503343&objectid=11777030*

5   Qualitative in-depth interviews

The **foundation phase** explored the issues raised in the media review, and built critical understanding of how to set up the main qualitative interviews. It comprised of consultation interviews with 6 key industry / government players, including MBIE, Auckland Council, a major Auckland developer, representatives from the design profession, and a construction firm involved in medium density housing.

These initial broad-ranging conversations set the tone and general approach for the planned in-depth interviews with targeted industry and government stakeholders.   The output of the initial foundation phase was a set of framed questions to be asked in the main qualitative interview phase (as outlined below and explored in the results of this section).

As the insights and perspectives gained in the initial foundation phase interviews were in keeping with the in-depth interviews held during the later stages of the project, they have been combined in the discussion below.

In total, 15 in-depth conversations were held with industry stakeholders between March 2018 and August 2018. See Appendix Two: In-depth interviewees for a list of interviewees[18].

Interview participants were identified through informed stakeholder analysis undertaken by Beacon Pathway and Property Council New Zealand. A range of designers, developers, engineers, planners, council officers and central government agencies were utilised to inform the process. The main intention of the in-depth interviews was to uncover and expose key thematic avenues for exploration in the wider quantitative industry survey (see Section 7 Industry survey).

The interview guide is outlined below with a summary of the main points that emerged for each question. The views, information, shared experiences and insights gathered through the interview process were used to identify high level themes and design the online survey for wider industry participation.

1. **To begin, can you tell me about your organisation/company? What part of the medium density housing delivery are you involved with (e.g. development, engineering, designing, construction)? Approximately how many dwellings/units are you involved with each year? What sectors of the market do you provide for?**
   Interview participants included developers of medium density housing and those in associated professions, such as architects, engineers and consultants with involvement in medium density housing. Local government was also included in the interview process. Interview participants' experience with MDH covered all sections of the market from social to market

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[18] *Due to the requirement to provide anonymity of responses during all interview and surveying stages of the project, these lists of interviewees and survey respondents have been removed in the publicly available reports and documentation delivered as part of this research.*

housing, and ranged from single projects to working on large scale developments with a range of housing typologies including apartments, terraces and semi-detached medium density. Participants were located in Auckland, Hamilton, Christchurch, Tauranga and Wellington, and also had experience in working in these markets as well working in others such as Queenstown.

2. **What are the main barriers and/or challenges you face when dealing with resource consenting process and procedures in relation to medium density housing?**

    For the majority of interview participants, the resource consenting process was not identified as a major challenge in the delivery of medium density housing. Comments around the resource consenting process were made about the time taken to issue consents, uncertainty around RMA notification requirements and their outcomes, and the effect of specific planning rules on MDH developments.

3. **What are the main barriers and/or challenges you face when dealing with building consenting process and procedures in relation to medium density housing?**

    For the building consent process, councils' inconsistent interpretation of rules was cited as a common cause of frustration. Many felt that the consent process is not nationally consistent. Inconsistency has been experienced between different BCAs, but can also occur among different staff in the same council.

    > *"We're struggling with consistency, we can have a replica of a consented project a month later and we've got a whole different list of RFIs, it's shopped out to a different group of consultants that have got different views. It feels like every project we're basically starting from scratch."*

    Many labelled the interpretations of councils as 'over the top' with a number of examples given around difficulties getting new products, designs or systems approved. This was seen as impacting the design process and stifling innovation in MDH developments. Many recognised that the risk adverse nature of council is a result of the council being the 'last man standing' and liable under the joint and several liability regime.

    > *"For Council, there is everything to lose if things aren't done correctly, so I can see why the 'slow it down and make sure it's one hundred percent right' [approach], but I'm not sure if that's the best way for the overall system."*

    'Constantly shifting goal posts' was identified as an area of frustration for many, whereby the Council would adjust their expectations and requirements throughout the process. The peer-review process was also highlighted as an area of frustration, with councils insisting on peer-reviewing professionally prepared information such as engineers' reports at the applicant's expense.

    > *"In most cases, we have an engineer's report and a PS1, and then a second independent engineer, with a PS2 covering it. So there's a huge amount of review already gone in before we've even submitted it and then you effectively pay Council to review it a third time. It seems to me like there's too many layers there."*

From the Council perspective, documentation supplied to BCAs is not always satisfactory and this can be the cause of additional requests for information which may require the process to be delayed.

4. **Do you find any particular consenting issues especially frustrating – and if so, why?** (*explore elements such as acoustics, fire provisions, cladding, car parking, water etc*).

Interview participants raised a number of frustrations related to the application of the building code for MDH. There is a view that current requirements, acceptable solutions, and methods are based on stand-alone housing and are not suitable for MDH typologies. Lack of clarity about how to apply the building code can lead applicants to develop alternative methods, which can be a costly and lengthy exercise, which BCAs are often unwilling to approve due to perceived risk. Fire, acoustics and façade engineering were identified as some of the areas causing the most issues.

> *"We have issues with compliance and consenting and E2 restrictions around height limit on exteriors; and cladding that puts it into specific design that requires façade engineering that doesn't allow off the shelf solutions (even though the system was already tested… and didn't require 100k investment in façade engineer). Want a clear pathway through fire and facades to make it go faster and easier and more affordably – currently there is a bit of a disconnect"*
>
> *"Two of the bigger issues are understanding the 'dark arts of fire' and setting a sufficient standard for acoustic performance in medium density. In each project, there might be 50 things we can sort and make decisions on – and on 45 of them we can make a choice and be confident making a decision – but in fire and acoustics – well… these are the 5 decisions we don't know about or fully understand the implications… why select one option over another?"*
>
> *"The biggest challenge we have is car parking – in simple terms, our consenting process in NZ still favour tin cans (cars) over houses for people…we have a housing crisis but we still have hard and fast rules about the provision for cars which sit still for 90% of their life."*
>
> *"We're a country of only four and a half million people – with 76 different consenting authorities and 5,000 people with totally different view. The plans we use in Christchurch can't be used up in Tauranga."*
>
> *"There is a lot of subjective decision making and too much ambiguity… a different person has different viewpoint… and it's not always a rational decision – but we would have to appeal that and go through a process – and that is costly. That deters development."*
>
> *"We don't find much challenge with passive fire and acoustics – these haven't changed for years and are relatively straightforward… but there are some grey areas in acceptable solutions over a certain point (number of stories or density) – then façade engineers and fire issues rear their heads…"*
>
> *"Parts of the building code like E2 and E2AS1 are fine up to a height but then you get into specific design and complexity and cost… and you shouldn't underestimate the importance of the fact that council only wants to deal with acceptable solutions – and then outside of that it gets much more complicated. Either you do an acceptable solution – or you have to do a shit load of drawings"*

> *"Most of the issues mentioned like acoustics, fire provisions, cladding, car parking, water etc. are covered by acceptable solutions…the real issue is inconsistency from people processing documents – and some are more unreasonable than others. We experience inconsistency from one staff member to the next and from consent to consent and from council to council."*
>
> *"The Building Code and requirements for building consent have become more prescriptive – starting with issues around weather-tightness, and now rolled through into resilience post Christchurch earthquake, and now fire (the 'Grenfell fire effect'). All the areas get looked at more intensely – which is not a bad thing… but have they produced better buildings? Work needs to be done – building has become more complicated. Getting a building consent used to be a formality and we didn't get many questions. Now there's 100% more documentation than they used to require – and much is unnecessary"*
>
> *"It doesn't make sense to be the one on bleeding edge…."*

5. **Do you find any particular interactions with stakeholders (or other actors in the delivery of medium density housing) frustrating – and if so, why?**

Many of the frustrations felt by those in the MDH consenting process were directly related to interactions with other stakeholders, and, in the main, this related to employees of the Building Consenting Authorities (BCAs). Concerns were raised by interview participants about the capability and capacity of BCAs to deliver. A lack of resourcing was identified as a significant issue causing frustration. Councils appear to have difficulty attracting and retaining staff with the necessary capability to deal with complex consent applications. Interviewees described the frustrations of starting off the process with one planner, only to have them leave the Council and to have to start the process again with another representative. This had further implications when information was not passed between staff members.

Concerns relating to poor communication were cited as an issue throughout the consenting process. While there were a number of comments made about the impact of individual personalities, it was acknowledged by interview participants, that the BCA's employees are "doing the best they can" in the system they are operating in.

It was noted that, particularly outside of Auckland, there appears to be a lack of experience among those processing consents relating to MDH housing. The ability for BCA staff to make decisions was also highlighted as an area of frustration, with many indicating that decisions can be sitting with senior officials for final sign off, causing delay and uncertainty amongst the developer and design community.

> *"The Council and Auckland Transport and Watercare are not working well together – we don't think they speak with each other"*
>
> *"Some Council Controlled Organisations are faceless – they have no accountabilities and no direct customer interface… and no delivery to customers"*
>
> *"Urban design can present barriers –it's a personal agenda that people apply… consented the same design multiple times but now a new urban designer is not signing it off… precedents are that it works but the personal opinion has stalled it… burning money at that stage…"*

> *"A major barrier is the lack of integration and collaboration between different authorities we have to deal with – Auckland Transport, Watercare, Council parks and rec, every institution… there's a misalignment between agencies – not all swimming in same direction – some issues might satisfy two of them but not the third – and it's difficult to get all in a room to agree. It's a myriad of complexity that takes time and cost to get through"*

> *"We don't tend to have any face to face with council – it's all done via phone and email. Our only opportunity is at the pre-lodgment meeting but though it is best practice for pre-lodgment for resource and building consent it isn't always done. More social interaction between council and architects / designers would be useful – pre-lodgment meeting is a good model in theory - but in practice doesn't always go well"*

> *"Clients can be frustrating – depending on their level of experience. Some don't understand the consenting processes and don't understand the costs of consenting. Clients don't know what the responses are from council (RFIs etc.) – and the inconsistency drives the client crazy – in general, most clients don't know how long it takes, don't know how much it will cost, and don't have certainty about what they are going to be allowed to do – so it's a big problem."*

6. **How significant are the time / cost implications of the challenges you have described? Have you worked those out – and if so, how?**

Time delays were identified as one of the major issues related to the consenting process. Delays in the issuing of Code of Compliance Certificates (CCC) and obtaining 224c consents were identified as particularly problematic. A number of interviewees claimed that the actual time taken for councils to process building consents is well in excess of the statutory target. The majority of those interviewed indicated that the "stop the clock" process implemented by Council as part of their requests for further information (RFI) had significant impact on the final completion date and were a cause of significant uncertainty throughout the project.

> *"Agencies don't understand the time cost of money – delay costs a lot, especially when carrying costs of the land and interest on land – it doesn't take too long sitting still for it to rack up to a big number and this wrecks financial models. Swift decision making and certainty is required – if you're trying to deliver affordable housing those things are really important"*

> *"One of the big issues is resource levels for local authorities and for other providers like Watercare - everything seems to take a disproportionately long time… why does a Council need longer to review a document than it took to research and generate?"*

The phrase "time is money" was repeated by a number of participants and suggests that there are flow on effects, where delays to the timing of a project significantly impact budget. None of those interviewed as part of the in-depth interviews had calculated the actual financial impact of consenting delays. Participants highlighted that time taken to deal with consenting issues mostly means lost opportunity costs and, therefore, a constrained development capacity for future projects.

> *"We do quantify the additional costs of lawyers etc.- and the fees on one [simple] job might be $6k compared to the more difficult one which might be $30k. That's an increase of 5 times. It's not just the money though; when you have to deal with all that aggravation, it is like the straw on the camel's*

> *back – even though it is small amount overall on a project, it tips the scales – it carries much weight in terms of mindset and it can put you off starting another job – really you want to be encouraging"*
>
> *"Much medium density is sold off the plans - and this puts lots of pressure on people [to deliver what was on the plans] – but then you have to deal with a whole load of variable costs through consenting, tender, procurement, interest costs, delivery price etc. etc. – yet the top sale price is fixed [from the starting sale price] and then everything gets squeezed… putting pressure on contractors when money is often tight – and this results in lower quality"*
>
> *"The complexity of consenting adds a big time burden for those putting consenting in as well as those processing them. Quantifying costs is difficult – no-one wants to pay for the real time that it takes for building and resource consent. It's hard to quantify the time involved and it often gets out of hand. A recent consent fee which was anticipated at $5k actually cost $37k – that was at the architect's risk"*

7. Can you share any insights regarding potential solutions – *what would work better? (explore building consent areas, resource consent areas, actors and roles)*

Throughout the interview process, it was evident that those operating in this space have strong views and suggestions of what might improve the consenting process for MDH. Suggestions ranged from councils addressing their resourcing issues, to a need for information outlining best practice for MDH, including providing examples of acceptable solutions. A need for clear and consistent approach across consenting authorities was also highlighted. In discussions about risk and liability, it was noted that risk-averse behaviour is likely to continue as an underlying driver of decisions as long as councils remain in charge of consenting. A solution proffered by a number of the interviewees was the suggestion that the building sector may benefit from carrying more (or full) responsibility for its own work.

> *"Joint and Several liability is the issue – resolving that would be a good change but that would need to be politically driven. Where Joint and Several rests at moment is that successive governments understand the issues, but people are saying we can't just take that legal framework out of building sector [as applies to other sectors] – but how do we fix this? Could we move risk to contractor parties, so council doesn't have the risk – and therefore isn't risk averse? If the risk is sitting between builder and person procuring the building, they will find the most efficient way of divvying up the risk. Council could be more objective"*
>
> *"The whole thing could be summarised in terms of how risk is shared – the risk is distorting delivery. From risk on timeframes, performance, cost risk to clients etc. There are 4 parties involved – client, designer, contractor and council – and they need to share that risk. Whilst council takes their time to look after their own risk… that's costing everyone money. It means that all parties are fighting to shed risk – as a contractor and architect you are not resourced to fund it.".*

The interviews explored both Special Housing Areas (SHAs) and proposed Urban Development Authorities (UDAs) which provide potentially novel pathways for consenting processes. The idea at the outset of the research was to explore how the processes developed under these structures might either help or hinder the consenting process for medium density housing. The initial foundation interviews yielded little in the way of consistent feedback about either of these approaches. Some interviewees made mention of the relationships

developed with a single account holder of point of contact in the SHA jurisdictions providing benefits of consistency in some areas, but there was little evidence to suggest that this was transformational of the consenting process. Feedback about the potential for Urban Development Authorities related to the desire to achieve greater levels of certainty through an overseeing master planning approach. It is likely that the timing of the research, which coincided with greater activity at central government levels in pursuit of a housing development authority, led some in industry to adopt a wait and see approach. The formation of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on 1 October 2018 will potentially deliver more of a focus on key aspects within the medium density housing sector, especially those related to increase of public and private housing supply, affordability and development of a quality urban environment.

Several of the in-depth interviewees talked about the role of the planner, and suggested that empowering them to have a greater role in decision making could achieve better outcomes:

> *"[The solution is] very much about empowering the officers – they are constrained within the rule book they have been given and I would like to see them have a lot more discretion – that would have better results. When we work closely with urban design teams and town planners, we get a better outcome and also a happy outcome – that's why we like the consent officers coming into the practice"*
>
> *"We need to empower planners – teach planners how to be planners and how to interpret decisions and make judgements – they are not there as admin clerks"*

5.1   A focus on solutions

One of the interesting insights from the in-depth interviews was undoubtedly the focus (or desire) for the research and outcomes to focus on solutions to the challenges currently presenting in medium density housing consenting.

Suggestions included:

■ CodeMark lottery – this involved running a type of lottery for getting products that a developer / designer / builder wants to use that requires CodeMark approval – if the products meet required global standards and are picked from the lottery of products put forward each year then they get sponsored for CodeMark approval here, and (some or all) costs of achieving code mark are covered. This has resonance with another idea suggested by an interviewee for a national competition for the best alternative solutions, where each winner could receive $100,000 toward getting that alternative solution approved and documented.

■ Comprehensive Building Insurance. This was raised by a number of interviewees to overcome the current framework that can leave Council as 'last man standing' under joint and several liability situations. A variety of suggestions were put forward to provide building or indemnity insurance for developments. One interviewee succinctly stated "Because council always carry the can, they will always be risk averse. This inhibits innovative design solutions."

■ Delegating consent-granting authority to external organisations. Suggestions varied from privatisation of consenting activity through to the set-up of a centralised consenting authority with regionalised hubs of excellence. This was seen as a way to alleviate constraints at council and provide faster servicing. As one interviewee put it: "A big issue is to retain reasonable people at BCAs, and councils have multiple challenges – engagement, retention, resourcing, reducing costs and staffing, caps of rates – the services are self-funding… so if the process can be moved external to council it could be really effective."

■ Sponsoring innovation to deliver new acceptable solutions, whereby particularly innovative or elegant alternative solutions (for medium density housing construction) are 'sponsored' through the system and become part of a library of new available acceptable solutions.

■ A panel of experienced commissioners to look at European and overseas standards and agree which ones could be adopted for New Zealand. Some may require contextualising to NZ conditions, but many may not.

■ An evolving roadmap for building code changes with regular signposted updates so that all changes are brought in over a consistent timeframe (every two years, three years or every five years were mentioned by interviewees e.g. "The sporadic nature of changes is unsettling and uncertain… and developers need certainty. Forewarning would be beneficial – and then bring in all changes in one lump every 5 or 3 years – therefore all would know that building code will change in 2020 – and 2025 etc."

■ A pre-application pitching meeting to gauge probability of consent: One interviewee had made a suggestion to council for a one stop shop pre-application meeting where the developer pitches their idea to council and council gives them an answer right then and there as to whether consent is likely to be granted (provided all documentation is in order). "As a developer, we need reliable guidance as quickly as possible as to how the process might go

and whether it will be granted or not – maybe with 95% certainty. BUT at current pre-app meetings they [Council] just say 'probably this' and 'probably that' but don't confirm things. Council staff will know in back of their minds if it will be allowed or not, but they won't tell you. We need an interim step before resource consent meeting to formalise and make the pre-app outcome more reliable."

- ■ Better social engagement between stakeholders: Several interviewees enhanced on the theme of interpersonal dynamics and relationships between stakeholders with suggestions for social activities and events to build trust and understanding with one developer stating "It all comes down to personal relationships… It would be good to explore solutions to bringing both the developer and council together and find way to develop trust between them."

- ■ Strengthen and extend qualified partnership programs countrywide, where trusted developers and designers who deliver quality medium density developments get fast tracked consenting. One interviewee mentioned a scheme in Wellington where the design/development firm was visited regularly by a customer liaison person from council to get an understanding of the projects coming up and what was in the pipeline – this helped to build trust and rapport.

A number of the proposed solutions stemming from the in-depth interviews were explored in more detail in the online survey (see Results section below).

6 Clarification of themes and main issues

The in-depth interviews clarified the most important themes and main issues for the survey team and provided a range of key aspects that could be explored through the quantitative survey instrument. These came under the following key headings which helped to guide the development of the online survey:

- Process issues
- Technical issues
- Information issues
- People and relationships
- Capability, skills and knowledge

These challenging areas operate against a backdrop of risk and liability within the industry and are further influenced by the level of inconsistency and uncertainty that operate within consenting authorities as well as throughout industry. This leads to additional time and cost as illustrated.

Further analysis of these key interview themes against the current regulatory environment refined selection of the survey headings into the following summary areas that were chosen as the main survey headings:

- Guidance and documentation
- Requests for information
- Acceptable and alternative solutions
- Building code requirements
- New products
- People and relationships

7   Online survey

The survey design recognised the complex nature of the issues facing MDH as well as the range of stakeholders that are involved, the roles that they might play, and the levels of experience they may have. As a result, significant effort was made to create questions that encouraged rather than excluded participation. Topic areas were selected following a review of the main themes from the foundational interviews, and were further informed by existing research pertaining to medium density housing, notably:

> Duncan, A. & Brunsdon, N. (2017). *Perceived barriers to getting resource and building consents for medium-density housing.* BRANZ Study Report SR381. Judgeford, New Zealand: BRANZ Ltd.

BRANZ Study Report SR381 forms a preliminary survey into resource and building consent issues which provides a useful framing reference for the online survey which was developed to deliver a wider lens with more emphasis on industry. The breadth and reach of the online surveying held the promise of broader industry viewpoints beyond the more detailed face-to-face interviews. In this sense, the Duncan and Brunsdon research (2017) provided an excellent platform for further qualitative exploration of the issues through the foundation and in-depth interviews, and a quantitative data set that explores the level of the challenge provided by specific consenting issues.

The survey results for the 279 base participants are presented for each key section. Any statements that were used in the survey to provide context are also provided along with the number of responses to that question (N).

7.1   Introductory section

Q.1   What organisation do you work for?

The 279 participants came from 181 organisations. See Appendix Three for more details[19].

Q.2   What regions do you mainly work in? Select all that apply.
N=279

The graph shows that close to two thirds of respondents (178) worked in Auckland while over a quarter (77) worked in Canterbury (the next highest area).

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[19] *As per the earlier naming of interviewees, this information has been redacted in the final public report to protect confidentiality*
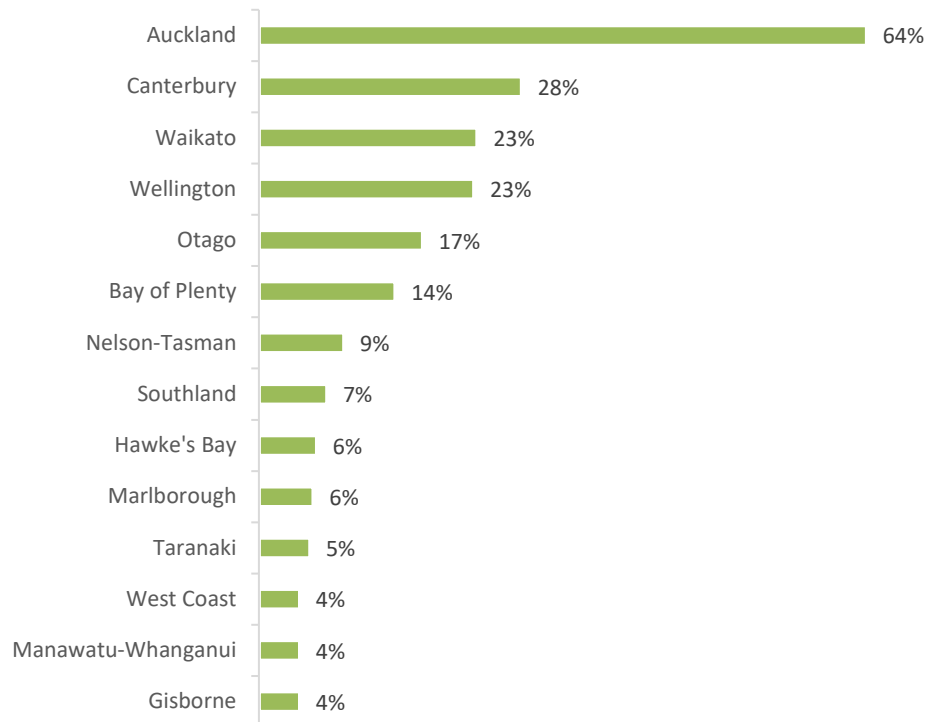
Figure 1: Regions where respondents work

Amongst these responses, by far the largest number only worked in one location (189). Sixty-seven worked in 2 to 5 regions, 14 worked in between six and ten, and nine worked in 11 regions or more.

Q.3 & 4   What best describes the sector you work in? / What is your role in delivering Medium Density Housing (MDH)?
            N=278

Of these two questions, the latter provided more specific information on the participants and their roles in MDH delivery. The breakdown of these roles is shown in the graph below.

Industry perceptions of medium density consenting issues, challenges and suggested solutions: MDC/1

Creating homes and neighbourhoods
that work well into the future
and don't cost the Earth

Page 21
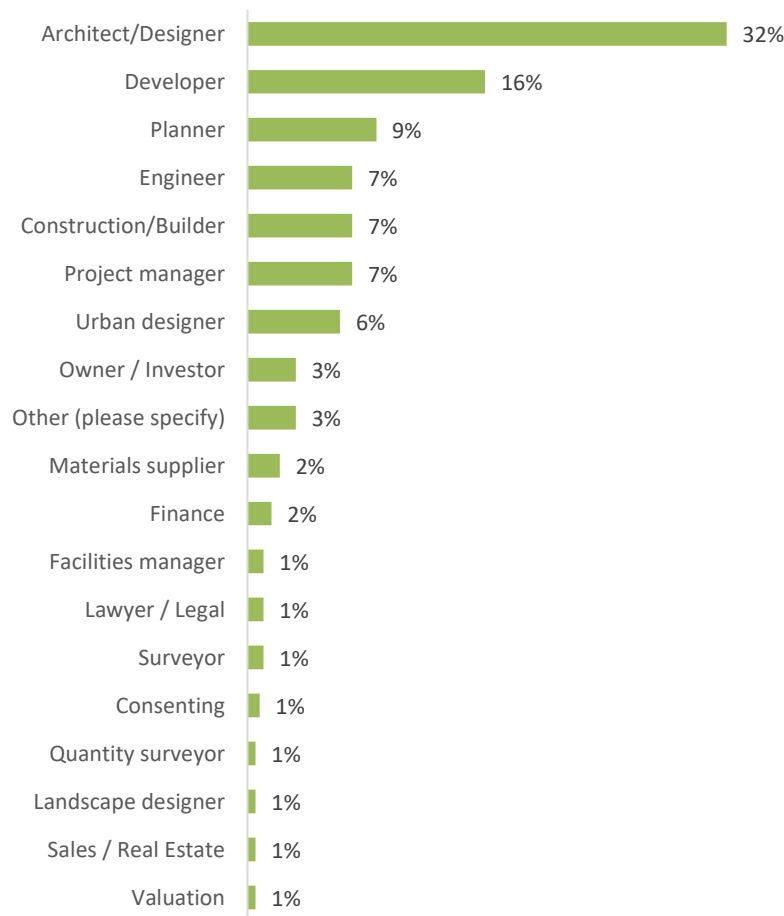
Figure 2: Roles of respondents in delivering MDH

**Q.5   Approximately how many MDH projects have you been involved in?
N=278**

The distribution of responses from 278 participants is shown below and highlights that close to half (130) have been involved in 10 or more projects while 10% (27) had not yet been involved but expected to be in future.
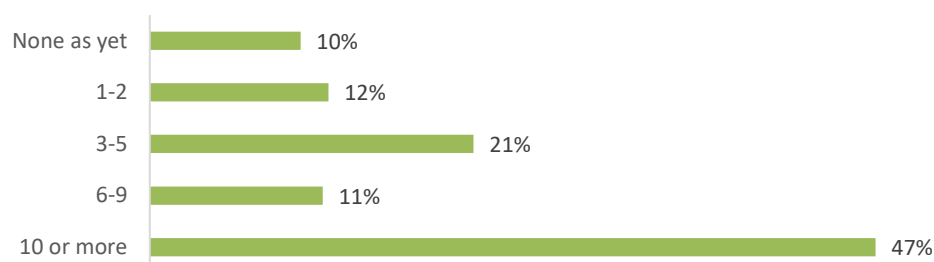
Figure 3: Number of MDH projects respondents were involved in

Overall, this suggests a very high level of combined experience amongst the participants

7.2 Feedback on MDH consenting guidance

Research indicates that the quality of MDH consenting guidance provided, as well as the quality of technical documentation submitted during the consent process, cause issues for all parties involved. Councils offer a range of different approaches to guide the MDH consenting process.

Q.6 Please tell us, if you have had any experience of the following, how useful they have been in assisting this process. (Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful').
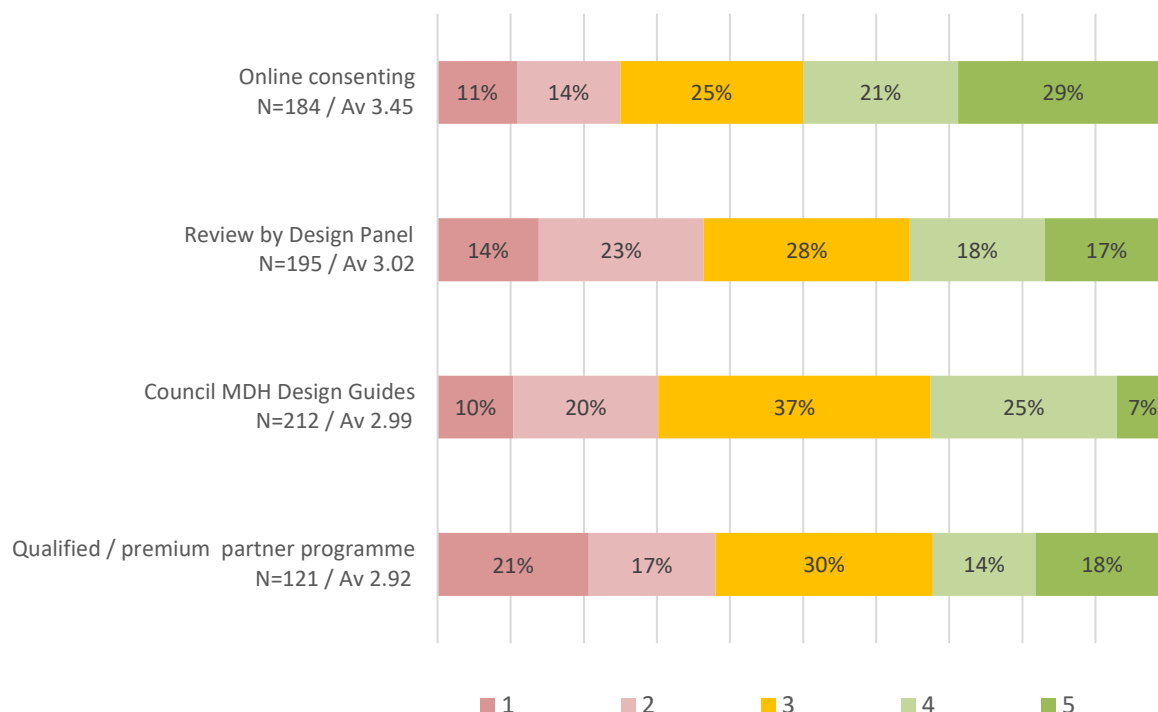
Figure 4: Usefulness of consenting guidance

The graph above shows and the total number of responses to each option (N) and the average rating (Av) alongside the distribution of those ratings from 1 to 5. These have then been sorted in order from top to bottom to show those that received the highest combined number of 4 and 5 ratings – that is, those that were considered to be either useful or very useful.

Using this methodology, the graph shows that a total of 184 respondents provided ratings for 'Online consenting' and 92 of these considered this to be either useful or very useful. 'The qualified partner programme / premium partner process' option had the lowest level of engagement (121) and the lowest cumulative 4 and 5 scores (37).

Q.7 **To what extent do you think the following suggestions might also be useful in improving guidance and support? (Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful')**
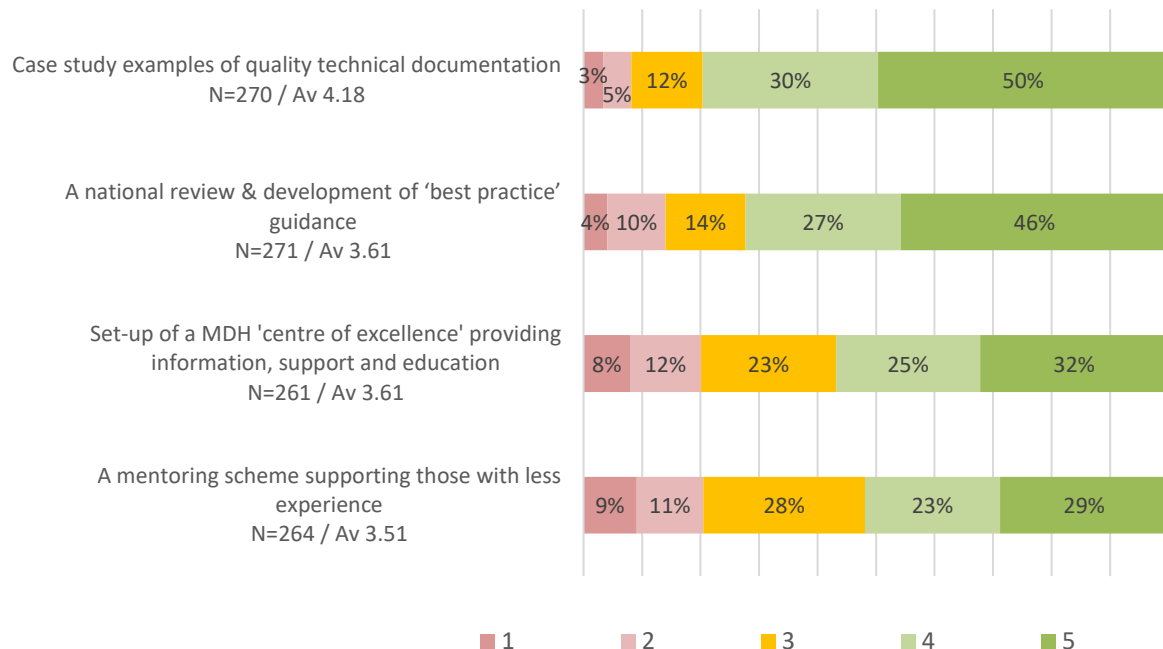
Figure 5: Usefulness of ideas to improve guidance and support

These ratings show that case studies and the development of best practice guidance have the highest ratings and would likely provide the most immediate benefit to MDH practitioners.

COMMENTS: Can you tell us anything else that may improve guidance during the MDH consenting process?

A total of 102 comments identified a number of themes including recommendations to provide a single point of contact at consenting authorities who can support or champion a project to completion as well as a view that improving the consistency of advice will lead to less variation in discretionary approvals throughout the consenting process. A summary of responses is provided below:

- Register a list of agreements made during initial meetings that cannot be subsequently overturned by other staff
- Develop agreements relating to consenting and inspection methodology at an early stage
- Increase qualitative feedback during pre-lodgement discussions including indications of likely outcomes as soon as possible
- Provide a help desk with experienced staff accessible by phone, email and in person
- Provide case management with a dedicated support / guide / account manager from the consenting authority responsible for each case from the start through to the finish
- Provide opportunities for the development of ongoing relationships between developers and consent providers over time
- Experienced consenting officers and helpline staff
- Access to an independent consultants' panel with experience in delivery
- Review C/AS1 to clarify compliance relating to terraced housing
- Update the NZBC code with specific MDH examples
- Explore the applicability of regional advice and guidelines for MDH (rather than a national standard as not all areas are seen as the same)
- Refer to overseas exemplars e.g. NSW Council advice for good medium density housing guidance
- Provide a checklist of what councils are looking for in applications
- Provision of quality technical advice (specific and detailed) rather than theoretical urban design ideals
- Clearer requirements for when peer reviews are required and how they should be undertaken
- Ensure processes remain consistent with any guidance that is provided
- Reduce the discretionary elements of consenting to reduce variations in advice and guidance based on personal interpretations
- Remove personal opinions by providing mandatory approval for projects that follow published 'best practice' guidance.
- Identify and provide for variations in advice or processes based on MDH project size
- Simplify processes
- Review the nature of risk transfer between council and developers which underpins increases in cost and time throughout the planning process
- Identify shared goals between developers and consenting organisations to deliver quality buildings

"Focus on the development of relationships between the applicant team and Council family at the pre-application stage. This enables all parties to 'eyeball' each other, and for the key issues to be identified in an environment where they can be put into context, and managed in an integrated manner. Design, transport, 3 waters, parks, planning. The most efficient and effective MDH outcomes arise from clear communication about expectations and outcomes specific to the circumstances, rather than static and generic guidance."

"Early engagement with consistent council officers is key so that they follow the project pathway and work collaboratively with the project team."

"Council staff who will process the application to give 'free and frank' advice prior to lodgement... pre-lodgement discussions often don't have the right people there and focus on the technical requirements rather than providing realistic qualitative feedback."

7.3 Feedback on requests for further information

Q.8 Thinking about your overall experiences with 'requests for further information' (RFIs under section 92 of the RMA 1991) in relation to MDH consenting - How have RFIs impacted the delivery of MDH projects that you have worked on? Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Very negative impact' and 5 is 'Very positive impact'
        N=220

How have RFIs impacted the delivery of MDH projects that you have worked on?
N=220 / Av 2.36

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22% | 35% | 31% | 7% | 5% |

■ 1   ■ 2   ■ 3   ■ 4   ■ 5
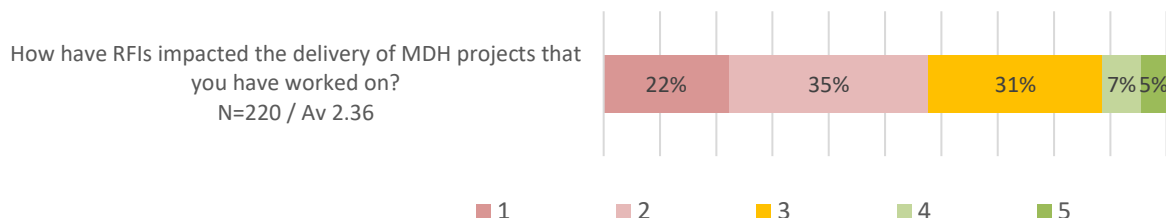
Figure 6: Impact of RFIs on delivery of MDH projects

There was a total of 220 responses to this question with 57% determining that RFIs either negatively or very negatively impacted MDH projects they had worked on. A total of 12% noted positive or very positive impacts.

Q.9   If you have had any issues with RFIs, what do you consider was the underlying cause of these and what was the impact they had?
        N=141

A total of 141 responses included a number of themes relating to under resourcing (leading to delays in processing), the requirement for multiple RFI rather than a single request, as well as the poor quality of submitted documentation. A synopsis of feedback included the following key issues:

- Individual RFIs for each discipline rather than one RFI with all items listed.
- RFIs arriving in 2-3 rounds making the process of updating the design very inefficient.
- Collate multiple requests into 1 single RFI
- RFIs in direct contradiction to pre-application advice need to be vetted before they are passed on
- Discussions at pre-application meetings not being forwarded on to the consenting officers - ideally the consenting officer responsible would be present at the pre-application meetings
- Insufficient or inconsistent feedback is provided at pre-application stage (often with different staff attending pre-application meetings to those who are making the final assessment)
- Lack of published guidance on what is required
- Used as a means to buy more time in granting consents
- RFI may be used as an excuse for Council to slow a project down – but this may be legitimate in the case where some consultants do not check their work (prior to submission)
- Lack of resources resulting in RFI not coming out in a timely fashion
- The withholding of RFIs until the last day of the time limit and requests for information that has already been provided
- Lack of quality information provided in the first instance
- The problem is most (consent) applications are poorly written and do not consider the effects on surrounding properties, infrastructure or the environment (adequately).
- Little or no regard to the financial constraints or viability of a project, or any delays caused, or the impact of RFI requests
- The RFIs usually tend to be reasonable and need to be addressed but in some cases the RFIs are not beneficial
- RFIs can, in some instances, result in reduced cost for delivery through identifying reduced requirements for infrastructure
- Some RFIs result from situations where rules in various parts of the district plan are in conflict with one another and an attempt to resolve through trial and error is occurring
- RFIs pertaining to the aesthetics of details and also colour are beyond the remit of the consenting authority
- The RFI process is very adversarial, with the RFIs appearing to be used as a reason to say "no" rather than working with the applicant to find ways to make the development work.
- Too much front loading of engineering issues
- It should be very clearly set out within RFI which specific requests have _statutory_ status and which are determined as _preferences_ or _recommendations_

"There is a persistent impression that Councils use the RFI process to 'buy more time' for their RC process. On larger MDH projects, the amount of engineering info (particularly geotech and civil) seems excessive, and some aspects should simply be made conditions, to be picked up at building consent stage."

"Lack of information supplied by applicant, poor design, or omission of details as part of submitted design results in delays to the processing of an application and confusion around who was responsible to provide and take ownership of the issue."

"Lack of familiarity at the design stage in terms of how MDH households function, how tenure works, all the associated processes such as servicing, can lead to lengthy RFIs or those that identify issues which can unravel a whole scheme."

"An ongoing frustration is that we have received MBIE multiproof consent for all our home designs (including for medium density applications), yet councils routinely ignore the multiproof and ask for "missing information" instead of following the guidance provided by MBIE on how to process multiproof consent applications. Increased awareness of alternative consent pathways such as multiproof in councils, and willingness to accept them, would significantly [reduce] the timeframe and cost to achieve consent for projects (both medium and low density)."

Q.10   Our interviews have raised the following possible solutions: (Please rate their potential effectiveness from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not effective at all' and 5 is 'Very effective')

	1	2	3	4	5
Increased resources to process RFIs N=231 / Av 4.01	5%	5%	17%	30%	43%
Increased use of electronic communication for RFIs N=232 / Av 3.63	9%	9%	21%	31%	29%

■ 1   ■ 2   ■ 3   ■ 4   ■ 5
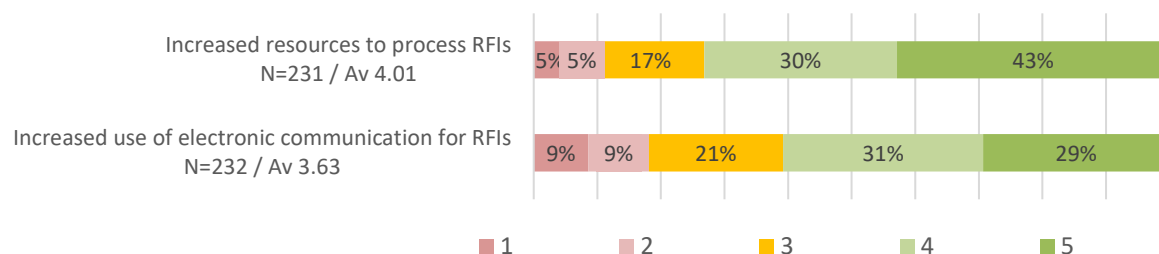
Figure 7: Effectiveness of possible solutions to improve RFIs

A significant proportion of participants identified that increased resources would be effective in processing RFIs (73%) while 60% considered that electronic communication would also improve processes.

COMMENTS: Do you have any other possible solutions?

There were 119 text responses highlighting the need for improved training, experienced staff, a single point of contact within the consenting authority from start to finish, a more collaborative approach to RFIs with face to face meetings as required, and improved attention to detail in technical documentation. A sample of the issues that were raised are summarised below:

- Unresolved RFIs could be resolved during a meeting
- More face to face interactions to go over RFI's particularly in cases where significant issues or numbers of issues are raised
- Increase qualifications and training of processing staff with industry participation
- Get senior council staff to be hands-on and process consents! They are the ones with the experience and ability to make judgement calls. MDH is a lot more complicated than traditional residential development. It needs skilled and experienced professionals working on both sides (for the developer and the council)
- Consistency of staff - i.e. those that attended the pre-application (pre-app) meeting
- Distinguish between information that is important/required from that which is nice to have
- Improved guidance from central government
- This is such a complicated industry. There should be more guidance and straight forward answers direct from MBIE
- Combining all RFIs into one letter (per application)
- Change liability coverage that leaves councils holding the ultimate liability for failures of others.
- Councils and developers should work together to agree timeframes and collaborative processes for responding to RFIs
- Transparency of adherence to the time frame. A counter indicating "average" processing time on the council website might drive a change of behaviour
- Get the design right the first time
- Maintain high standards of technical drawings and specifications to remove uncertainty in delivery
- More time invested in the initial application will save endless grief for both parties going forward
- Require planners to abide by the decisions and advice given in (accurately minuted) pre-application meetings.
- A list of questions that need to be answered on all projects (i.e. common RFIs) would allow designers to ensure those queries are answered ahead of lodging.

> *"More national consistency/guidance in what needs to be included in an application and design guidance. Council's supporting this form of development at a higher level - i.e. politicians etc backing their staff in making positive decisions (in the face of neighbour complaints etc), so staff are more inclined to do this and be slightly less risk adverse."*

> *"Regular refresher courses, since new players come into the market each year. There is a concerning level of ignorance regarding requirements relevant to multi-unit developments that are contained in C1-C6, E3, G6 & G7"*
>
> *"We are on the Simpli (Go-Shift) system. It's not 100% user friendly. A lot of issues could be resolved with direct communication prior to generation an RFI But BCAs - what a paper trail, that's fine as long as they give one back If I query a BCA, I often get a phone response, so there is no paper trail."*
>
> *"[Private Building Surveyors in Australia were] very efficient. The Building Surveyor was part of the team from the building so issues could be highlighted early and dealt with before it was too late. With the council RFI process, we are in the dark largely until the RFI comes back. Private Building Surveyors are able to review information at each stage of the design process so by the time you are ready to lodge for consent, issues have largely been worked through."*
>
> *"The RMA encourages bad behaviour on both sides - Council staff save up RFIs as they only have one chance to 'stop the clock' and applicants sometimes have unreasonable expectations how long it will take to review technical information"*

7.4   Feedback on Acceptable and Alternative Solutions

Q.11   Based on your experience, how has the process of gaining compliance for alternative solutions in MDH affected any of the following? (Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Very negative impact' and 5 is 'Very positive impact')
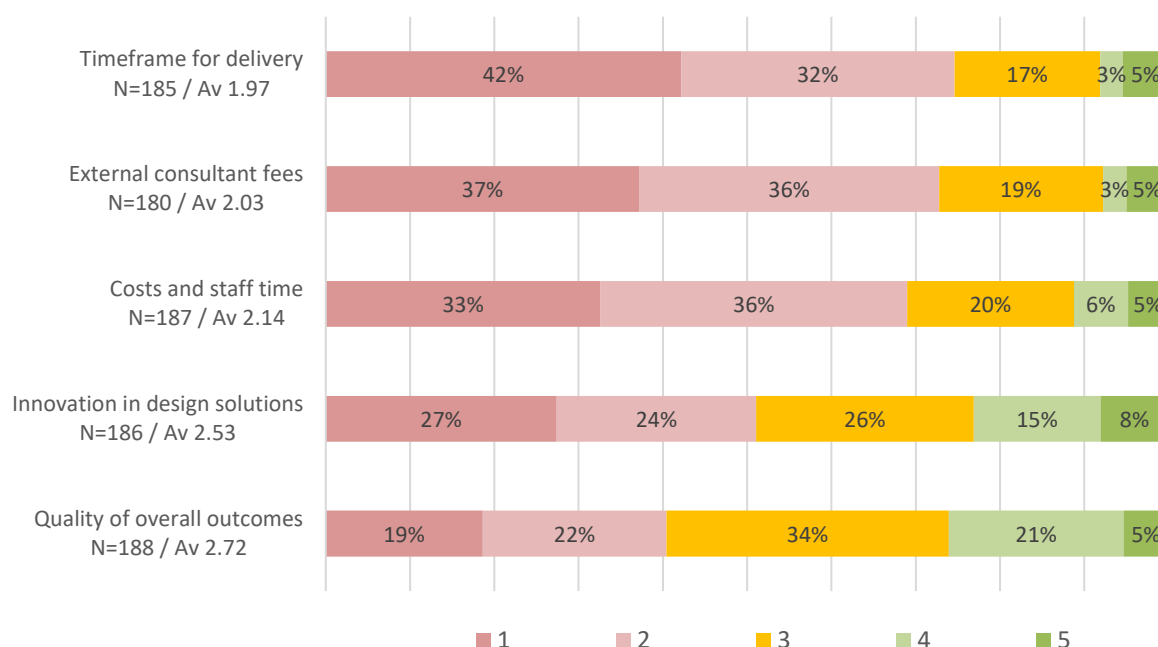
Figure 8: Impacts of process of gaining compliance for alternative solutions

This question identified that the process for gaining compliance has had either a negative or very negative impact on timeframes for delivery (74%), external consultant fees (73%) and costs and staff time (69%). At least half of the respondents considered that this issue negatively impacted

innovation in design solutions (51%) while 41% considered negative effects on the quality of overall outcomes.

COMMENTS: Have you faced any other issues relating to alternative solutions?

The main themes arising from the 64 responses to this question include an overall aversion to developing alternative solutions based on the time and costs involved, concerns that innovation is suffering as a result and issues relating to the technical quality of solutions offered. A summary of issues raised include:

■ The lack of good evidence provided by those who document alternative solutions - there needs to be a proven basis for "innovative" detailing
■ The additional cost involved and inability for BCAs to assess them encourages more mediocre standardised outcomes
■ Too hard and time consuming to be worth pursuing
■ Alternative solutions are not what the market wants
■ No attempt to develop alternative solutions - too hard to get through, too costly to verify or test,
■ Some alternative solutions clash with others; e.g. solutions for E2AS1 often clash with external fire envelope compliance
■ Some alternative solutions should now be acceptable solutions. PVC windows are now common and are still an alternative solution

---

"Sometimes we have designed alternative solutions, had great feedback throughout pre-app stage and even obtained resource consent, and then at EPA or Building Consent, the processing officers have disagreed and declined to approve the project. Developers are extremely reluctant to risk time and money on new solutions"

"In the tech industry, product development is hugely expensive. So tech companies standardise everything. Uniqueness of design in building must come from attributes that do not impact durability, safety or weathertightness. 3604 should be used as a base for creating a suite of industry standard solutions that can be 'mass produced', and yet allow the client and home owner to customise"

"There are not enough products in the country that allow for peace-of-mind alternative solutions. Data sheets, test sheets, BRANZ appraisals and code marks all have limitations and have not caught up the fast pace density that the Unitary plan allows for. There are not enough highly specialised technical people in the industry that can peer review - such as façade engineers etc."

"Everything relating to MDH is an Alternative Solution - the 'issues' generally concern the lack of qualifications/experience in anything other than Acceptable Solutions"

"Designers don't know what [Alternative Solutions] are and can't figure them out. They seem to think the onus is on Councils to establish compliance of their designs, rather than establish a RATIONAL and CLEAR CASE FOR COMPLIANCE (which Council can then assess)"

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"A lack of understanding and ownership - architects are happy to stand by their design under the terms of their indemnity; however, there is no power for designers to do so, with the constant requirement for cladding peer reviews and the discrepancy between the acceptable solution and all other projects regardless of size"

"Developers often use 'alternative' or 'innovative' solutions as headlines to hide the real intent to develop poor quality and overdevelopment sites. Similar issues with comprehensive rules that were designed for alternative solutions but which are used in practice as a loophole for greater yields"

Q.12   From your perspective, how effective might any of the following measures be? (Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not effective at all' and 5 is 'Very effective')
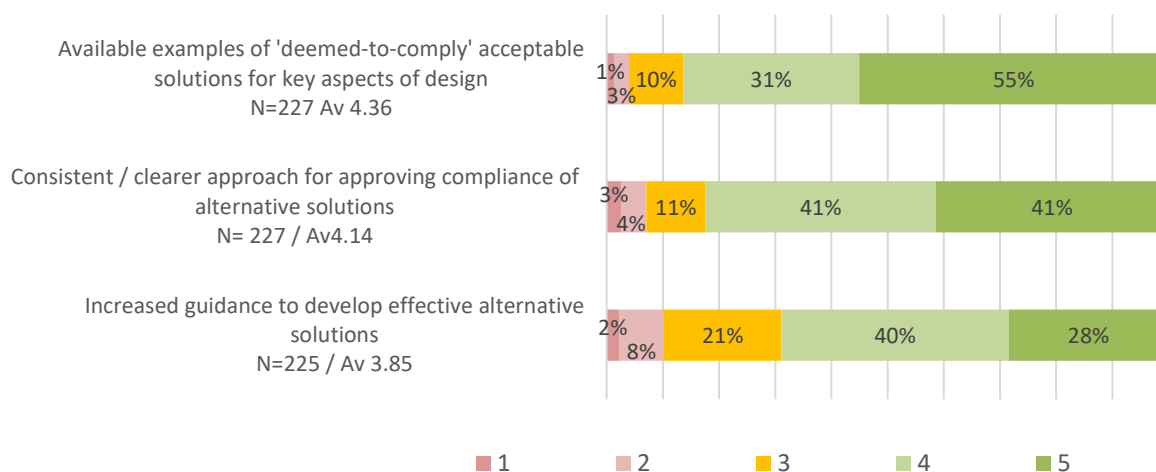
Figure 9: Effectiveness of measures to improve compliance for alternative solutions

Publicly available examples of 'deemed-to-comply" solutions were considered to be either effective or very effective (86% of 227 responses) followed by a more consistent or clearer approach to approving compliance for alternative solutions (82%) and increase guidance (68%).

COMMENTS: Do you have any other suggestions?

There were 42 responses to this question. The key themes include improvements in specific guidance recognition of international certifications and continued education to help all professionals remain up to date with changes. Comments are summarised below alongside key relevant quotes.

■   Encourage testing of façades as part of a means of demonstrating compliance and obtaining a building consent (enabling changes to be made cost-effectively and incorporated in the consent)

- Proper worked examples (of acceptable and alternative solutions), with details, would be fantastic
- Courses to keep council officers and those in the industry up to date with innovative technologies
- Ensure guidance for developing effective alternative solutions also documents the Council process to evaluate them
- Design guides tend to become rules instead of guides having a negative impact on design resulting in a monoculture of design
- A quality guidance solutions booklet and examples, even overseas examples
- Revise E2/AS1
- Better education at University and adult training in compliance with Building Code and RMA (especially understanding acceptable documentation, required information, compliance pathways)
- Reciprocity in international certification, independent testing and certification of systems.

"Worry a bit about 'deemed to comply' solutions - these seem a lot like writing more Acceptable Solutions (aka 'Building code for Dummies'). Surely the answer is to 'help people to fish (think)' not 'give them a fish (answer)'"

"Giving people full access to the IP involved in implementing new tech will help it become the norm. The acceptable solutions of the building act are largely restricted to single family two to three level housing. It needs to be updated"

"The acceptable solutions of the building act are largely restricted to single family two to three level housing. It needs to be updated"

"Until NZ provides an education pathway to designing weathertight buildings, we'll constantly be searching for central government advice which will severely curb innovation"

"A more consistent / clearer approach for approving compliance of alternative solutions is a must. Architects and engineers need the freedom to design beyond standard detailing, for the sake of our built environment and keeping quality staff in our country"

"The risk with 'deemed to comply solutions' is that the processing officers can tend to view these as the only solution. The same can be said of acceptable solutions where a lack of understanding of construction principles can mean the default position is limiting. There is a general reluctance to undertake alternative solutions because of the perceived risk of time and understanding"

7.5 Feedback on Building Code requirements

Q.13 **The list below shows particular building code and design features that have presented complex issues for MDH development. Please tick any of these that have caused significant issues for you during either the design or consenting process.**
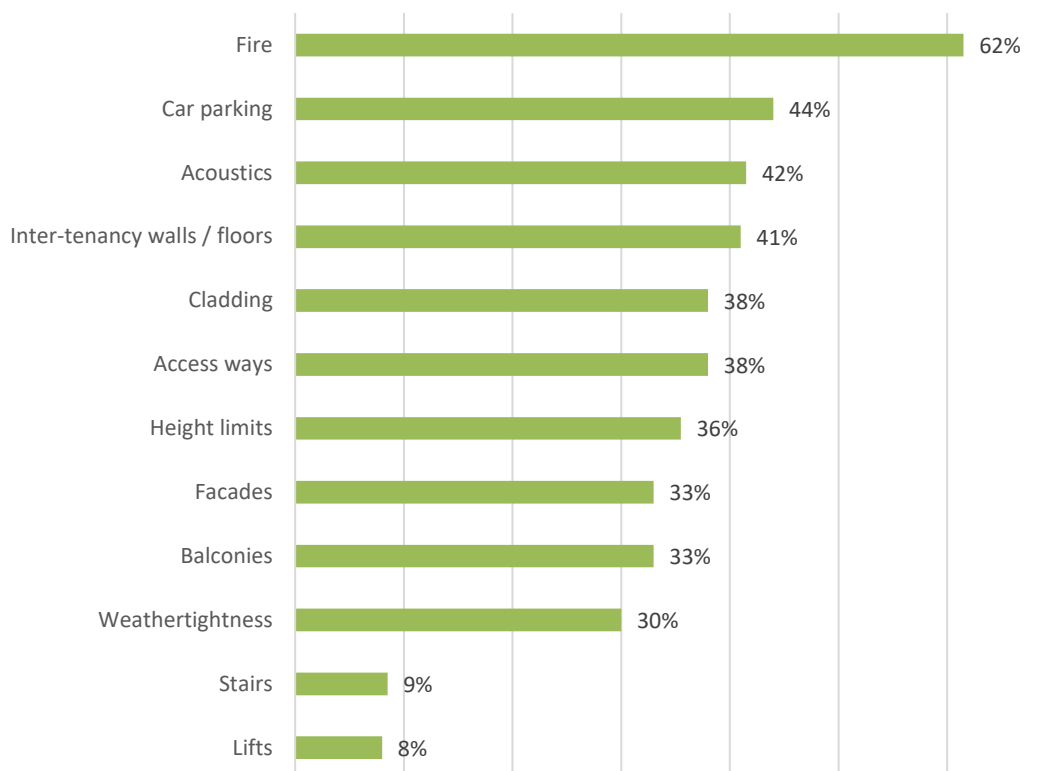
N=200

Figure 10: Building Code and design features presenting complex issues for MDH

The Building code requirement relating to Fire was identified as a significant issue amongst 62% of the 200 respondents that answered this question. Carparking, acoustics and inter-tenancy walls and floors were the next most significant issues, followed by cladding, access ways, height limits and façades. Balconies and weathertightness were identified as significant issues by about a third of respondents while stairs and lifts were identified as significant for only 9% and 8% or respondents respectively.

COMMENTS: Briefly outline any issues you have faced or list any other building code requirements or features that have caused significant issues in your experience

Building code requirements relating to reducing fire risk were the most often cited amongst 69 comments. In relation to this issue, respondents highlighted some key aspects that were causing difficulties which related to education, information and an inconsistent approach to fire regulation as exemplified in the following comments:

> *"Passive fire protection is poorly understood at both designers and Council level. This will translate in significant extra cost. Council fails to understand fire requirements for façades, and this is evident in the tone of queries received"*
>
> *"Fire is a big one, people's understanding of the Code (including trained staff and Government) changes regularly depending on the input of MBIE, Council and Determinations. Wider education on fire, its impact and protection, should be provided"*
>
> *"Fire rating is not an exact science and if, by chance, you deviate away from an acceptable solution, be prepared for months of delay, lots of peer reviews, and deep pockets. This needs to be significantly simplified"*
>
> *"Fire Engineers, and their work, is THE single biggest issue I have ever faced in the Building Industry! Please give them more guidance so they can be prescriptively solution focused"*
>
> *"Façade engineering now 'compulsory' - Approach to fire inconsistent between fire engineers, with Council officers often disagreeing"*

Other issues identified by respondents included:

- Aspects that involve water or transport agencies (including council-controlled organisations or CCOs)
- Acceptance and demonstration of compliance of engineered timber elements that provide combined structural, fire and acoustic performance
- Glass balustrades
- Surface and storm water management
- Ventilation and indoor air quality
- Thermal performance of slabs, balconies and thermal bridging
- Seismic separations
- Plumbing and drainage
- Shadowing caused by other units
- Easements and overhanging eves/balconies
- Live load calculations
- Fencing provisions
- Garage location
- Inter-tenancy earthquake separation
- Recessed window details

Additional code specific areas were highlighted including provisions in E3 (floor waste requirements - containment of accidental overflow), car parking demands and requirements of AS/NZS 2890, G7 and the impacts of depth of room/plan as well as impacts of overhead balconies were noted in comments[20].

---

[20] *It is also worth highlighting the discussion provided in relation to building code issues outlined in the Duncan & Brunsden report (2018) which makes specific reference to the following:*

C Protection from fire

G6 Airborne and impact sound

E2 External moisture.

Q.14   Based on your experience, how effective would any of the following measures be: (Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not effective at all' and 5 is 'Very effective')
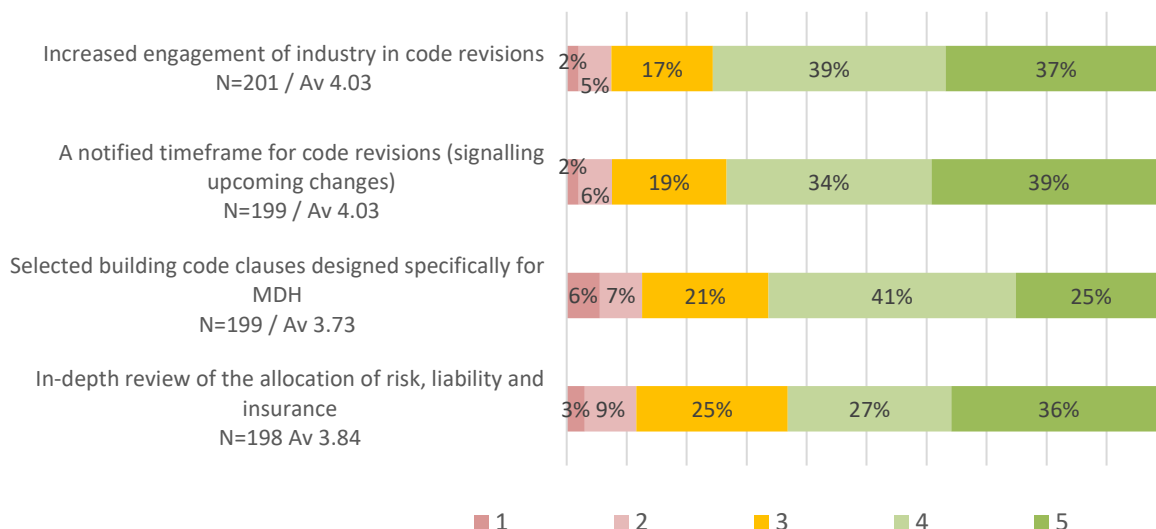

Figure 11: Effectiveness of measures to improve Building Code and design requirement issues

The numbers of participants providing ratings of either 4 or 5 for these options suggest that they should all be considered with particular emphasis on 'increased engagement of industry' and 'notified timeframes for code revisions'.

COMMENTS: Do you have any other suggested solutions based on your experience?

There was a total of 24 written responses with recurring considerations relating to the need to spread risk and liability and specific comments relating to reviewing code clauses relating to fire and also acoustics. See the summaries and quotes below:

- Transferring more risk to the contractor
- Increase in "cross sector" training and learning opportunities for MDH covering design, compliance and construction fields
- Project specific insurance rather than using consultants as insurance would make everything quicker
- A cross industry body that brings together all elements to create acceptable solutions for full cladding systems, including testing and best practice, that does not require peer review
- If BCAs had less risk, they would allow more flexibility
- Promote sustainability and wellbeing throughout

> *"Councils have been left as the last man standing and had to pay out on a lot of leaky homes. Their response has been predictable but now the consenting process is so slow due to their risk adverse approach. There needs to be a new way of sharing the risks"*

> *"Have clearly written building codes with examples of what you should do rather than many obscure clauses of what you can't do that are open to subjective interpretation. Have access to the authors when contended interpretations of the meaning of clauses occurs"*

> *"Stop moving the goal posts. Select the code as required and stick with it. New codes and brain storms don't help"*

> *"The whole design memorandum thing needs looking at. Given that designers seem to be placed at the bottom of the heap in the building sector, it seems unreasonable that we carry so much liability. Also, the type and quality of training provided for designers/draftspeople is terrible. Courses provide little grounding for the reality of producing consentable plans & supporting documentation"*

Some proposed solutions included:

> *"... place consenting under the remit of central government, which then needs to look carefully at liability - and just who is responsible for the performance of completed buildings: the developer, the builder, the consultant team. Perhaps we could depart from the current Project Management delivery model and get back to full time clerks-of-works on building sites, proper supervision, and a re-assignment of responsibility based on project roles"*

> *"Building Code clauses focusing on MDH would be most useful for Fire and Acoustics between low rise (1-2 levels) & medium rise (3-5 or 6 levels) MDH. So Acceptable Solutions for Fire and then Acoustics between the two would be useful. These might align with Building Categories (2 or 3) for LBPs"*

7.6 Feedback on new products

Q.15 Considering any issues you may have had with either newly developed products and materials, or products new to New Zealand:(Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Very hard' and 5 is 'Very easy')

How easy has it been for new products or materials to gain approval?
N=140 / Av 1.98

| 41% | 29% | 21% | 9% |

■1 ■2 ■3 ■4 ■5
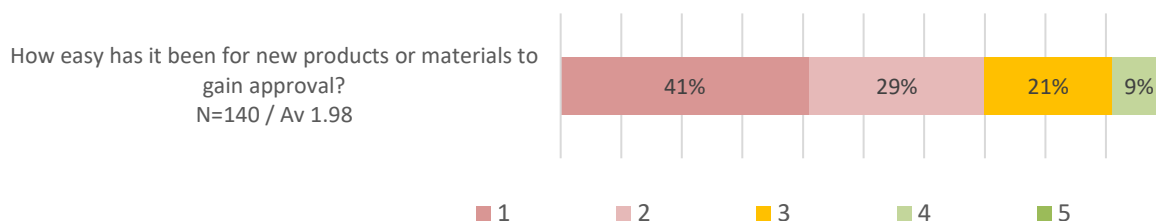
Figure 12: Issues with newly developed or new to New Zealand products

A total of 140 respondents answered this question and 70% found that it was either 'hard' or 'very hard' to gain approval for the use of new products. A total of 9% found it 'easy' and no respondents found it 'very easy'.

COMMENTS: If you have experienced problems, how have these impacted the delivery of Medium Density Housing?

Of the 45 respondents that provided comments here, the main themes related to time delays, resulting in extra expense while many determined that they had not tried to use 'new' products as it was not worth the effort. In some cases, the problems had led to poor outcomes – including poorer built form or poorer public amenity. In addition, the following key themes were highlighted:

- Many avoid new & potentially better products, unless they feel the developers of medium density are not concerned with time delays
- New products often result in increased paper work, time delays and frustrations
- There is a lack of choice amongst existing product suppliers - there is a need to allow other / overseas products to access a fairly priced testing and approval process
- There are problems with low quality or marginal products expecting to be approved
- There are specific buildability issues arising – e.g. recessed windows

> *"We don't bother, it's hard enough to consent to elements that have been around for years"*
>
> *"Authorities are particularly risk averse; largely driven by lack of commercial experience. When time is money, it's hardly worth it. Current monopoly industry players seem to control building codes and regulations, to benefit their own product and service range"*
>
> *"If tests (e.g. fire &/or weathertightness) are non-NZ specific, almost impossible to achieve compliance. Either apply a reasonable amount of discretion or forbid these materials/components from entering or being marketed in NZ"*

"Essentially impossible for any individual project to introduce new methods and materials, unless that project was huge and not in a hurry. In the 6-12 unit space, only proven techniques and approaches are realistically practicable if an economic return is sought"

"[It] depends on the level of information surrounding that material - if it's been properly tested/ evidence provided from a compliance pathway and installation perspective, and it's used for the correct purpose, then it should not be an issue"

"NZ manufacturers close ranks and do their best to keep new, innovative and cheaper products from entering the market. This is further exacerbated by local authorities not wanting to take any risk or even accept overseas certification or test results. This places a huge barrier in front of new products"

"...with 'new' systems, the costing sector (QS) have difficulty in providing valid costing as default is to price in risk for unknowns and not to account for programme savings in use of product or system. This provides a hurdle to innovation"

Q.16   How useful would the following solutions be in resolving these issues: (Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful')

Greater recognition of international standards for existing overseas products
N=175 / Av 4.38 — 3% | 13% | 27% | 57%

Government support to speed up or reduce the costs of appraisal/approval schemes such as CodeMark
N=174 / Av 4.37 — 3% | 12% | 28% | 56%

Clarified procedures to gain approvals for new products
N=164 / Av 4.08 — 7% | 17% | 38% | 38%

■1   ■2   ■3   ■4   ■5
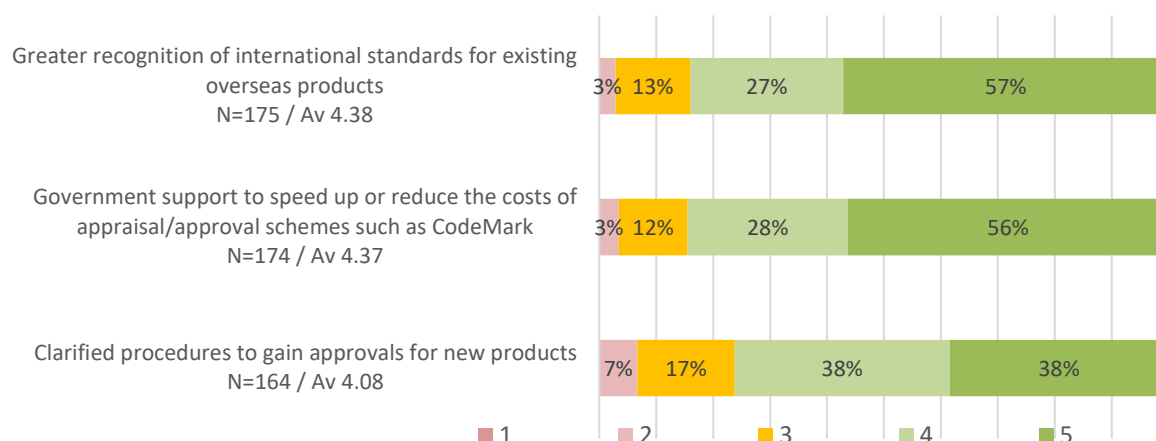
Figure 13: Usefulness of solutions to new product issues

Each of these solutions received a high enough overall rating to warrant further consideration.

COMMENTS: Do you have any other suggested solutions?

A summary and some specific quotes from the 25 responses to this question are provided below:

■ Provide a list of substitute products (e.g. any bricks meeting XYZ standard can be swapped)
■ Greater recognition of international standards
■ International Standards - but from Europe & America only
■ Better / clearer information around conversion of Australian, US and European standards to NZ standards - particularly for Fire

- Better education from Government regarding what information / evidence installation or standard information should be provided for new products to allow for ease of approval and installation

> *"1. The NZBC Handbook already provides procedures; the manufacturers aren't bothering to engage with them. 2. Some overseas standards aren't necessarily relevant to NZ conditions (e.g.- NZ rain or wind levels, NZ UV exposure levels)"*
>
> *"Allow engineers with suitable competency to legally grant CodeMark/code compliance for weathertightness. Engineering NZ needs to play a part in this innovation"*
>
> *"Increase testing / appraisal processing capacity in NZ critical however preference would be through BRANZ as a common platform. CodeMark is not rigorous and in many areas of appraisal discredited – i.e. ACP panels"*
>
> *"International standards are already perfectly good alternative solutions they don't need 'greater recognition'. CodeMark is already somewhat bastardised because the certificates are either very limited in their use or have limited clauses or are overly onerous (e.g. CodeMark for Equus based on BRANZ appraisal which is in turn based on international stuff!) We already have a perfectly good sandpit. We just need everyone in the sector to learn how to play in it"*
>
> *"Remove responsibility for approving new products from TAs and give to a national body. Ensure Central Government fully underwrites these approvals so that we do not repeat the disaster of untreated framing timber"*
>
> *"'Approved to use' products for New Zealand should be kept on a Government database. Manufacturers should have to keep up-to-date documentation here for all to access"*
>
> *"Improving the flexibility and scope of existing consent pathways such as Multiproof, which are virtually a necessity for any non-standard construction methods"*
>
> *"Perhaps tenants/renters/owners could interact with the process by the use of IT. The advantage of this would be the opportunity to educate and familiarise clients with the characteristics of the property which may lead to better care and maintenance"*

7.7 Feedback on people and relationships

Q. 17 **Our interviews strongly indicate that relationships between stakeholders involved in MDH can become a major roadblock to delivery. (Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Very negative impact' and 5 is 'Very positive impact')**
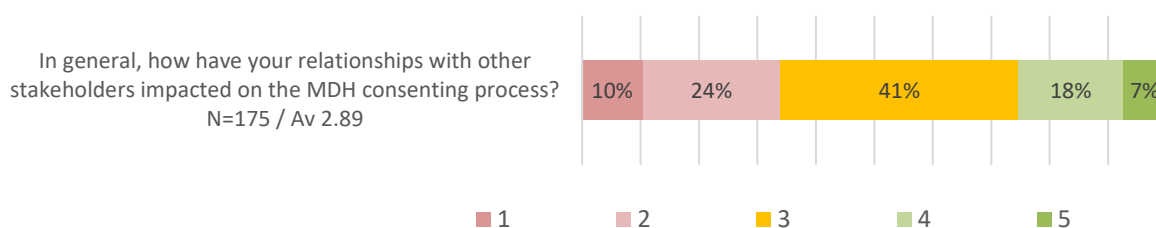   **N=175**

In general, how have your relationships with other stakeholders impacted on the MDH consenting process?
N=175 / Av 2.89

1	2	3	4	5
10%	24%	41%	18%	7%

Figure 14: Impact of stakeholder relationships on the MDH consenting process

The results from this question suggest a wide range of experiences in regard to relationships being a roadblock to delivery. This was reflective of the more in-depth interviews which allowed a greater exploration of the positive and negative impacts when stakeholders work together on MDH projects. The qualitative feedback provided in the follow up question below provides additional insight.

Q.18 **If you have experienced issues, what do you believe were the underlying causes (tick as many as appropriate)?**
          N=182
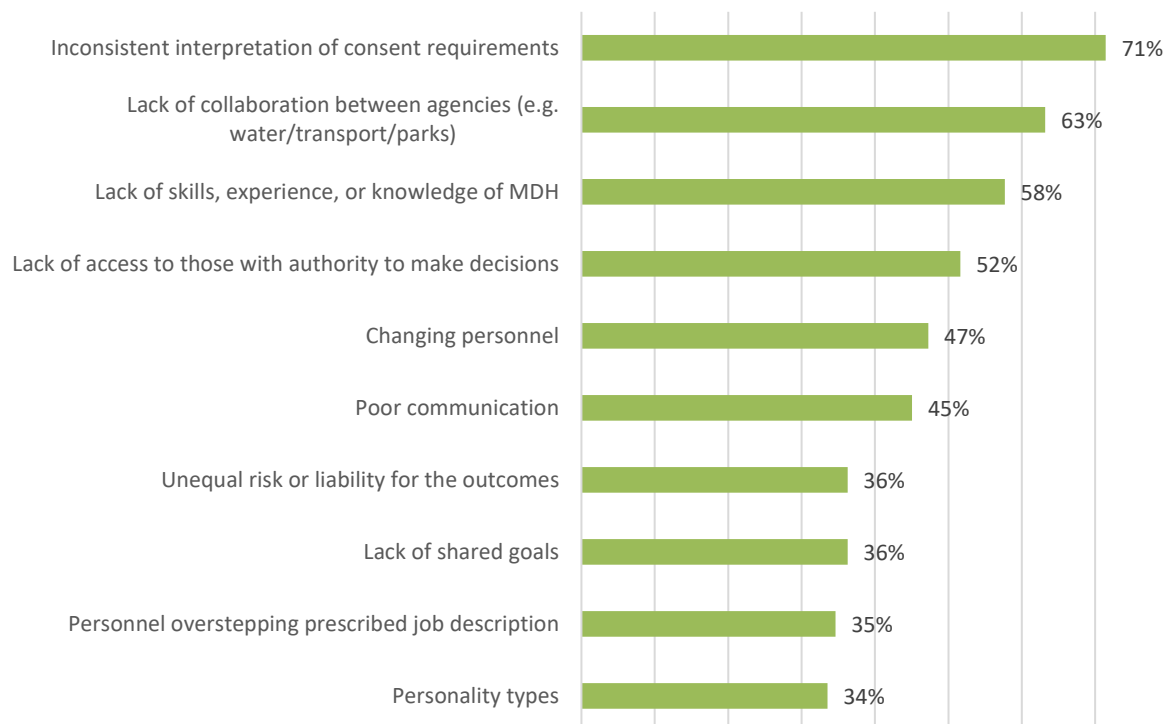
Figure 15: Causes of relationship impacts on MDH consenting

Four issues were each selected by more than half of the participants. Top of these was 'Inconsistent interpretation of consent requirements (71%) followed by 'Lack of collaboration between agencies' (63%).

COMMENTS: Feel free to provide any other comments

37 respondents replied to this and raised comments in line with the following themes:

- Issues with transport and water agencies (including Council Controlled Organisations CCOs)
- A lack of meaningful communication where existing agendas predetermine outcomes
- Difficulties where the advice provided is not clear and leads to variations in interpretation - consistent standards and benchmarks are needed
- Provision of access to individual representatives within council (including requests for contact details so that communication lines are open)
- More collaboration and a sense of partnership needed between Council officers, designers and developers
- Clarity and greater consistency around inspection processes
- A desire for more rigorous oversight to ensure consenting standards are consistent across all types of projects.

"As an urban designer, I feel urban designers are over stepping their mark. Also planners not leading the process and council orgs following their own path and not coordinating"

> *"Our experience shows that when all stakeholders come together at the beginning of a design we obtain the best outcomes so relationships work better for us than working alone"*
>
> *"Any communication should come from a central source, Currently we get everybody's individual opinion / interpretation of a Rule / idea Instead of industry arguing behind closed doors and them issuing a single agreed result"*
>
> *"Lack of role definition has led to a break-down in communication and a greater evolution of blame culture"*

Q.19   How effective would any of the following options be in resolving these issues? (Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful')

A more collaborative approach, particularly during the pre-application process N=197 / Av 4.26 — 3% 3% 11% 33% 51%

Dedicated account holders for each project N=182 / Av 4.12 — 1% 5% 17% 34% 43%

The establishment of a national consenting authority to improve consistency across NZ N=198 / Av 3.93 — 8% 7% 15% 26% 45%

More coordinated effort to encourage neighbourhood acceptance of MDH N=192 / Av 3.59 — 6% 9% 28% 34% 23%

Utilising private accredited certifiers for consenting approvals N=195 / Av 3.41 — 15% 14% 17% 22% 32%

Increased networking events for all involved in the delivery of MDH N= 193 / Av 3.28 — 8% 19% 31% 21% 21%

Legend: ■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

Figure 16: Effectiveness of possible solutions to relationship impacts on MDH consenting

A total of 84% of 197 respondents considered that a more collaborative approach during the early pre-application process would either be useful or very useful in resolving relationship issues that otherwise hinder the MDH consenting process. Having dedicated account holders for each project and the establishment of a national consenting authority to improve consistency were also considered useful or very useful by more than 70% of respondents; indicating wide ranging support for these potential solutions.

COMMENTS: Do you have any comments or other suggestions to improve stakeholder relationships?

34 comments were received from this prompt highlighting potential issues with a national consenting authority while also identifying a stronger role for central agencies. Specific themes included:

- Early consultation and continuing involvement throughout the process (of developing and consenting medium density housing)
- Clear guidance on how to interpret guidelines and rules would be useful
- Private consenting was seen as 'essential'
- Limiting neighbours' control regarding approvals
- Development of a central Government policy on density
- A specialist MBIE panel for referral of disputed technical items during consent processing (idea of an independent arbitrator)
- Concerns that a national consenting authority might lower overall standards rather than raise standards to some of the more 'advanced' regions.
- A concern that national standardisation might lose local context and local knowledge
- Clear parameters for peer reviewing (developments and consenting documentation) and setting or adopting these as a benchmark
- A requirement for an increase in council resources for processing
- More self-accreditation by engineers, professionals etc, backed by robust and sustainable insurance (in respect to longevity of the insurance timeframe)
- Improvements in the understanding of district plan and legislation amongst designers and developers (better education and information)

> *"A sole consenting authority will lack valuable local knowledge of important mitigating/impacting factors...the real problem is lack of consistency across all agencies (public & private), arising from the lack of clarify & direction that MBIE should provide which should be underpinning the sector (designers & compliance staff) as a whole"*
>
> *"Private certifiers would only work if instructed by Councils. They would lose their objectivity otherwise, and transfer the risk onto Councils"*
>
> *"I suggest meeting with consenting authority management to talk through these results would be hugely valuable"*
>
> *"1. Get rid of standalone local government infrastructure providers and put them back in the fold. 2. More good news stories in professional publications about when things go well - reward those that build positive relationships and sing their praises! 3. Promote more cross-industry graduate programmes - e.g. a graduate engineer has spent three years moving around between roles at a local government, consultancy and contractor - Getting more professionals to have experience in all sides of delivery will help the understanding of all professionals involved and might help find better ways to work together"*
>
> *"The building code applies nationwide... there could be a list of 5-10 councils authorised by central government to accept 'out of zone' applications. They could be monitored to determine what was 'best practice' & encourage wider use of it"*
>
> *"Utilising private accredited certifiers for consenting approvals is a great suggestion, so long as their fee and outputs are reasonable"*

> "Councils should assign an internal project administrator/ account (relationship) manager to each Building Consent Project as it's lodged and they see the project right through to Code of Compliance issue. They know the project intimately. They are the first point of contact and hold and maintain the relationship with the Designer(s)/ Applicant or Agent/ Constructor throughout the project. They manage/ co-ordinate council internal staff involved"
>
> "Good quality MDH in [an] area reduces fear of new projects. Maintaining a consistent quality is the key to acceptance of MDH in an area"

7.8   Feedback on costs and process

Q.20   Based on your experience, please estimate the average cost of the consenting processes as a proportion of the total cost of a MDH development.
N=204
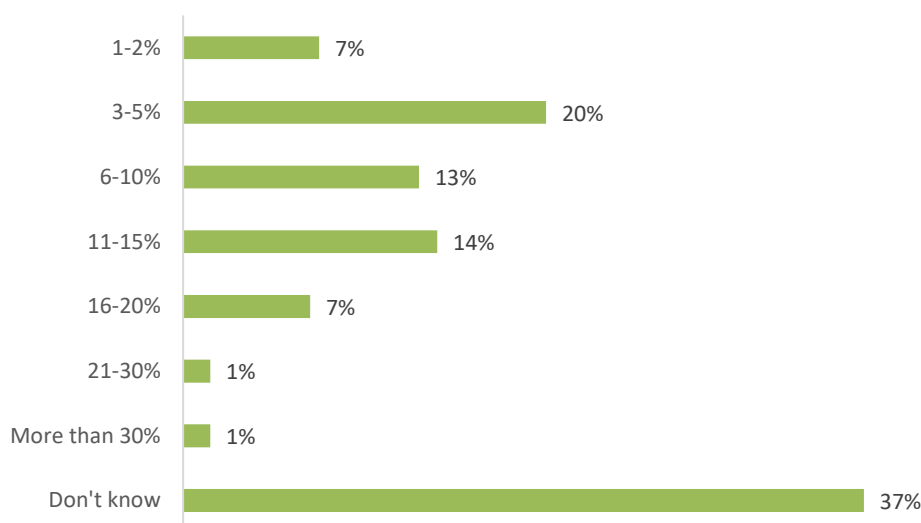
Figure 17: Consenting costs as an estimated proportion of total development cost

Over a third of respondents to this question (75) were unaware of the financial impact of the MDH consenting process. Of the remainder, 20% (40) estimated costs in the region of 3-5% of the overall development and 14% (28) estimated costs at 11-15%.

Q.21   To   summarise,   please identify the   areas   in   the   consenting   process   that you feel require the most attention. You can select as many of these as you like.

For this question, respondents were given the opportunity to select a combination of 'issues' (at each of the consenting stages. The table below shows the number of participants that contributed responses and how these were distributed.

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Table 1: Areas in the consenting process that require most attention

CONSENTING STAGE	IDENTIFIED ISSUE				
	Extent of support or guidance N=246	Technical quality of submitted documentation N=226	Time taken at this stage N=403	The costs associated at this stage N=312	The skills / knowledge required to complete this stage N=371
Pre-application planning N=169	60%	22%	34%	22%	43%
Consent preparation N=162	25%	44%	33%	40%	43%
Consent submission N=157	22%	31%	43%	43%	41%
Requests for further information N=181	26%	26%	67%	51%	51%
Consent signoff N=160	14%	14%	64%	32%	44%

In this case the higher percentages indicate an issue that most participants felt required attention. The table therefore shows that the 'Time taken' for 'Requests for further information' required the most attention overall. The table is recreated below as a heatmap – highlighting the most significant issues in darker red and the least significant issues in darker green.

Table 2: Heat map table showing significance of various issues

	Extent of support or guidance N=246	Technical quality of submitted documentation N=226	Time taken at this stage N=403	The costs associated at this stage N=312	The skills / knowledge required to complete this stage N=371
Pre-application planning N=169	60%	22%	34%	22%	43%
Consent preparation N=162	25%	44%	33%	40%	43%
Consent submission N=157	22%	31%	43%	43%	41%
Requests for further information N=181	26%	26%	67%	51%	51%
Consent signoff N=160	14%	14%	64%	32%	44%

Here we can see the most significant issues ranked by their colour and percentage:
1) Time taken for requests for further information   (67%)
2) Time taken for consent signoff   (64%)
1) Extent of support for pre-application meetings   (60%)
2) Costs of request for further information   (51%)
3) Skills and knowledge for further information   (51%)

Overall, when looking at participant engagement at each stage and by each issue, we can see that 'Requests for further information' received the most attention (181) followed by Pre-application planning' (169). When looking at the issues for each stage, 'Time taken' was the most identified issue (403) followed by 'The skills and knowledge required' (371).

COMMENTS: Please provide any additional comments

There was a total of 31 comments for this last question. Of these, four participants noted that they had difficulty interpreting the above question. A summary of quotes from the remaining respondents are shown below:

> *'The cost of the consenting process is not the issue it is the lack of certainty in obtaining consents which put projects at risk. Developers want certainty and at present there is little compared to conventional and therefore all we are getting is cookie cutter brick and title developments"*
>
> *"You don't get value for money in the pre app phase, Often, a different planner processing the application when lodged. We have had this happen twice and the new planner did not agree with the pre app planner and did not support the proposal"*
>
> *"Please develop MBIE as [a provider of] guidance & technical leader for the rest of us"*
>
> *"A significant % of the consenting cost, comes from the fact that the consenting authority, in effect, acts as an insurer against durability, weathertightness and safety claims. A % of the consenting fee is, in effect, an insurance premium. The industry, as a whole, needs to work together to increase standardisation and reduce risk to lower these premiums. A change to the pricing or costing of consenting may allow increased staffing, reduced lead times for technical staff to review consents, and a greater sense of collaboration. As a suggestion, I would propose a quite substantial cost to 'type approve' a new design, and then a lower cost to review individual dwellings constructed with this design. This would encourage developers to standardise. Again, this is no different from say the automobile industry where safety and durability are critical factors"*
>
> *"There is too much focus on consent departments having to cost recover their time. Suggest moving to the Australian model where the cost is capped at a percentage of the project value. Even though there is a private benefit from obtaining a consent, there is also a public benefit too of getting good developments. The costs shouldn't just be all put on the developer"*
>
> *"Consenting costs can't be defined accurately as, while the fees are relatively small (apart from development contributions), the time related costs with accumulating interest at peak debt exposure for*

> *224C and CCC are astronomical. Costs for Resource Consent and Building Consents delays are also huge. Example 6 months RC, 6 weeks BC, 7 weeks to build the house, 10 weeks for CCC!"*
>
> *"Just good Urban Design input at an early stage so we know what they are looking for"*
>
> *"The key is to get it right at the beginning. With modern systems, this is particularly important to check detail before the green button is pressed"*

7.9   Further engagement and contact information

This final section of the survey identified participants that would be interested in taking part in any further development of solutions to MDH consenting, if they would like to receive a summary report on the survey results or if they wanted to enter into the prize draw.

A total of 74 participants wanted to participate in further solutions, representing 26% of the base participants that took part in the feedback section. In addition, 119 (43%) wanted to receive a summary report on the survey results and 116 (42%) entered into the prize draw.

8 Conclusions

This project aimed to investigate and address the question *"What are the specific challenges with the resource and building consent process for medium-density? In particular, what process issues are emerging, and what behavioural problems are occurring?"*

The work has included both in depth industry interviews and a wider online survey that has identified a range of issues. The survey aimed to confirm these issues, test proposed solutions and help consider next steps.

The survey received high levels of engagement with a base number of 279 respondents that provided feedback on one or more of the survey topics. A selection of quantitative and qualitative questions helped determine the extent of issues with MDH consenting, the effectiveness of current processes and the potential effectiveness of solutions.

Feedback from both the in-depth interviews and the online survey confirmed a significant number of issues affecting MDH were resulting in extended timeframes and increased costs for development. There was considerable desire to see solutions to these challenges; those operating in this space have strong views on what might improve the consenting process for MDH. A wide range of solutions were identified which will help to guide future efforts to improve MDH consenting.

Several themes emerged across the issues:
1) The need for consistency in interpretation of rules, nationally, across council staff, and within an application process.
2) The need for clearer guidance and support, led by central government and specific to the medium density context. For example, case study exemplars of documentation, guidance for best practice, and guidance on the information required to achieve acceptable solutions were examples of where information could help clarify the process and requirements for both councils and industry.
3) Both industry and consenting officers need upskilling. Cross sector training/learning opportunities were suggested in a range of areas including: MDH design, compliance and construction; preparing consentable plans and technical documentation; keeping up to date with innovation; and specific technical areas such as fire.
4) The right people involved in the process can make a huge difference. This theme canvassed the need for experience and decision-making authority in consenting officers, and consistency in personnel across the process, particularly from the pre-application meeting forward into the consenting process. A collaborative approach between all parties would be more likely to get good outcomes.

Findings in each of the key thematic areas explored in the survey and interviews are summarised below.

Guidance

- Current use of online consenting is considered to be useful or very useful amongst 50% of those that have experienced it with 11% considering it is not useful at all. This suggests potential to expand and improve on this kind of service.

- Existing MDH design guides could also be improved and expanded on particularly in terms of the provision of case study examples of quality technical documentation and the development of more consistent 'best practice' guidance.

- A MDH 'centre of excellence' and mentoring for those with less experience of medium density approaches were also considered to be 'Useful' or 'Very useful' by 57% and 52% of participants respectively. This indicates broad industry support for the development of education, information, advice and potentially even mentoring for developers of medium density housing.

- Participants also considered that additional guidance or support was required, particularly during the Pre-application stage of the MDH consenting process. This has the potential to improve the quality of applications which may support faster processing times and fewer requests for additional information. It also has the potential to improve consistency within building consent authorities as well as potentially between agencies throughout the country.

Requests for further information

- Requests for further information were identified as negatively impacting at least 57% of participants

- This included direct impacts on time and costs for this stage of the MDH process

- Respondents supported the suggested solutions to these issues included increasing resources (73%) and increasing use of electronic communication (60%). Such systems could be linked to the further development of online consenting processes noted above.

- Respondents suggested improved training of processing staff, use of experienced senior staff, a single consistent point of contact within the consenting authority from start to finish, a more collaborative approach to RFIs with face to face meetings as required and records kept of decisions for later consistency, central government guidance, and improved attention to detail in technical documentation.

- It was also noted that there was a need to improve the skills and knowledge of all involved for this stage in the process.

Acceptable and alternative solutions

- The processes relating to acceptable or alternative solutions raised a number of significant issues for participants relating to extended timeframes, increased consultant and staff costs and also a negative impact on design innovations.

- Examples of 'deemed-to-comply' acceptable solutions for key aspects of design were considered to be effective amongst 86% of participants alongside a clearer and more consistent approach to approving compliance for these types of solutions (82%) and clear guidance (68%).

- This coincides with earlier noted considerations for clearer and more consistent guidance and support overall.
- Suggestions to help with acceptable or alternative solutions included: worked examples of acceptable and alternative solutions, including overseas examples, the need for courses to help consenting staff and industry keep up to date with overseas innovation, and the need for training to help all involved understand acceptable documentation, required information, compliance pathways.

Building code requirements

- The current building code requirements for fire caused significant issues for the majority of participants (62%), suggesting a level of urgent need for attention. Respondents suggested more training is needed of both consenting staff and industry to ensure understanding of fire, its impact and protection, and better guidance and information to help achieve solutions and a more consistent approach to fire regulation.
- A total of nine design features caused significant issues for at least a third of participants: fire, carparking, acoustics, inter-tenancy walls, cladding, accessways, height limits, and façades. Two thirds considered that some clauses should be specifically designed for MDH applications - suggesting that the top nine features identified should be considered as a priority.
- A total of 75% of participants considered that industry should be more engaged in code revisions and 73% agreed that they should receive notification of upcoming changes in the building code. This suggests that there is broad industry support for better signalling of code revisions and a more regular and consistent timeline for code review.
- Close to two-thirds of respondents agreed that an in-depth review of risk, liability and insurance should take place. This was further supported by the in-depth interviews which raised the issue of risk and liability as an enduring theme. Further engagement with industry around these issues is warranted.

New products

- The use of new, or innovative, products and solutions also creates problems in the MDH process and 84% considered that recognition of existing international standards for overseas products would be either 'useful' or 'very useful' alongside central government support to expedite appraisal or approval schemes such as CodeMark.
- The use of new products would also benefit from clarified procedures for gaining approval (as with alternative solutions).

People and relationships

- Feedback on people and relationships suggest that difficulties arise largely due to inconsistency in the current consenting processes and requirements alongside a lack of specific skills and knowledge to address issues raised by MDH developments.

- As a result, it is considered that many of these issues could be reduced through a shared recognition that MDH processes need collaborative on-going development in order to deliver quality outcomes.
- Participants recognized the potential for this, with 84% identifying that a more collaborative approach was required, particularly during the pre-application process.
- There was wide recognition that the consenting process can operate more smoothly when a trusted relationship develops between stakeholders; and that this is more likely to develop when there is consistency in the personnel involved. It was also recognised that there are a number of challenges with suitable staff recruitment and retention – particularly within building consent authorities, and that sometimes industry exacerbates this problem through 'poaching' well trained staff.
- In depth interviews supported the findings of the wider survey and indicated that personality types of those involved in medium density housing often play a part in the delivery of quality results within effective timeframes. This reinforces the social dimensions of collaboration and indicates that solutions that examine how to improve relationships between stakeholders could be a worthwhile avenue to explore.

Costs and process

Most respondents had not calculated the additional costs that consenting issues are adding to their projects. Of those that had, 14% believed it added 11-15%.

Ranked by respondents, the most significant issues emerged as:

1) Time taken for requests for further information   (67%)
2) Time taken for consent signoff   (64%)
3) Extent of support for pre-application meetings   (60%)
4) Costs of request for further information   (51%)
5) Skills and knowledge for further information   (51%)

Overall, the survey confirmed a significant number of issues affecting MDH resulting in extended timeframes and increased costs for development. A wide range of solutions were identified and rated which help to determine priorities for further consideration and future efforts.

9 Recommended next steps

Based on the results of the in-depth interviews and the online survey it is clear that a significant amount of work is required to address the challenges, overcome behavioural problems and to transform consenting processes for medium density housing.

A number of exciting solutions have been thought about and are being considered by various stakeholders involved in the delivery of medium density housing. In reference to this research, the project team suggest the following next steps.

Stage One: Priority issues

Maintain engagement with participants – distribute reports and engage more widely with industry to share the results and discuss opportunities for solutions. Consider a series of national workshops to disseminate and discuss findings and further evolve the prioritised solutions.

Develop inter agency / cross industry review panel focussing on medium density housing delivery (include water / transport representatives as well as CCO representation)

Explore the potential for five **working groups tasked with progressing each of the following** within agreed timeframes:

i.   **Pre-application support and guidance** as the first stage in developing an approach between stakeholders, recognising the need for shared goals that seek overall quality outcomes.
     Identifying requirements – provide support and documentation for pre-application meetings to enable a revised collaborative approach with early identification of key issues and opportunities for quality development

ii. **Building Code review** with a medium density housing focus. Utilise the findings of this survey to explore and review the nine key areas for priority (the cause of most of the challenges and frustrations with current code – see Question 13 in section 8.5 Feedback on Building Code requirements). Open the results to wider industry and consider additional areas for focus as the top nine are considered and the process evolves.

iii. Build **library of case studies** (with details) for acceptable and alternative solutions that assist with an understanding of, and help to define, good/best practice. Develop consistent approach (and clarified mechanisms) for approving innovative and elegant alternative solutions.

iv. **Review new products** (and systems) that have received approval outside New Zealand by appropriate accredited agencies and develop reference catalogue. Develop a mechanism for fast-track NZ approval for products and systems that meet specified and approved international standards.

v.   Identify examples of quality **technical documentation** at all stages. Develop consistent and clear templates for provision of documentation and information. Use as basis for developing

/ enhancing online mechanisms in communication and consent application processes. Explore the potential for a centralised or countrywide approach to deliver efficiencies and greater consistency between building consent authorities.

Stage Two

Following the establishment of the inter-agency panel outlined above, utilise the evolving work programme as the foundation for **developing best-practice guidance and additional case studies**. Make linkages with existing supportive approaches (e.g. Auckland Design Manual, MBIE medium density housing programme, MHUD, Ministry for Environment Urban Design Protocol).

Then consider feasibility of:
- Using private accredited certifiers for consenting approvals
- Establishing a national consenting authority
- Creating a centre of excellence for MDH
- Reviewing risk and liability across the sector
- Developing a mentoring scheme for medium density housing (design, consenting and construction)

This research has assisted with a deeper understanding of the critical barriers and challenges presented by the consenting stage of medium density housing provision in New Zealand. It is clear from the results, and the tone of many of the comments, that there are significant issues causing delays, added costs and frustrations to all players involved in MDH. There is also considerable will to be involved in possible solutions, as evidenced by 26% of respondents being keen to continue engagement on these issues.

This is an important time for medium density housing in New Zealand, and this report comes out as new mechanisms, as well as new Government departments, are being formed to tackle these issues. It is hoped that the solutions discussed here can assist councils, government and industry to identify areas where consenting and red tape is creating a barrier to growing investment in medium density, and may help to prioritise specific areas for action in relation to future policy, strategy and implementation.

This should enable regulatory authorities to improve processes, reducing time and cost for developers, and therefore assist in reducing overall housing costs for stakeholders in the housing market. It will, therefore, make it easier to build more affordable housing (for those aiming to deliver it) by potentially reducing at least one major cost component.

10   References

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11 Appendix One: Survey design

The survey was developed along the following format:

a) Introductory section

Questions in this section were designed to identify key information about the participants and filter out those that were not actually involved in MDH projects.

b) Feedback section

Following the introduction, the feedback section focused on six main topics that were identified in the interviews and background research:

- Guidance and documentation
- Requests for information
- Acceptable and alternative solutions
- Building Code requirements
- New products
- People and relationships.

Specific issues were raised under each of these topics and questions that broadly aimed to:

- determine the extent to which participants had experienced any issue
- understand their underlying causes and how these affected the MDH process
- understand how participants rated specific solutions that were previously proposed by interviewees or identified during background research
- identify any other solutions participants may have

c) Costs and summary of process

This section aimed to identify:

- estimated costs of the MDH consenting process as a proportion of overall project costs
- key areas in the MDH process that participants considered needed the most immediate attention

d) Further engagement and contact information

This final section determined if participants would be interested in taking part in any further development of solutions to MDH consenting, would like to receive a summary report on the survey results, or would like to participate in the prize draw.

These sections combined multiple choice selections with significant opportunities for respondents' open comments giving opportunities to provide comprehensive feedback on the selected topics. The final survey is shown in Appendix Two.

It was estimated that this would take around 10-15 minutes to complete which was recognised as being both in-depth and quite long for surveys of this nature, and therefore likely to test levels of engagement amongst potential participants.

11.1 Survey promotion

An introductory email with embedded survey link outlined the nature of the project and the need for participation. This was circulated to the following databases:

- Beacon Pathway – a database with an estimated 1,326 industry and government recipients
- Property Council – a targeted database of 9,000 professionals who are members of the Property Council and drawn from a wide variety of professions including developers, financiers, architects, engineers, and property owners and managers.
- BRANZ – An email with embedded survey links were sent to a selection of 5,750 individuals from the BRANZ Build database in the main centres (in an effort to exclude those unlikely to be involved in medium density housing) and drawn from a large cross section of the construction industry.
- NZIA / ADNZ memberships and other networks – emails containing embedded links were sent out to NZIA and ADNZ membership databases and links were also promoted via websites of interested organisations (e.g. NZGBC) and through membership newsletters (e.g. NZIA monthly bulletin).

The survey was accessible from 25 October to 15 November and several reminder emails were sent out from the databases above to encourage participation. Survey incentivisation was through a prize draw for 10 x $50 Restaurant Association vouchers that could be used at a range of bars and restaurants throughout New Zealand.

11.2 Defining participation and reporting results

The nature and type of survey questions provide a range of options for analysing and reporting data and a number of factors were considered in order to ensure that this is done with the key research question in mind.

a) Firstly, as noted above, the introductory section aimed to filter out participants that had no specific involvement with MDH. This has proven to be useful as 28 out of the 397 participants that started the survey identified that they had no direct experience in this field. In addition, a further 90 respondents opted out of the survey after the initial introductory questions, perhaps as the survey was not relevant for them, or perhaps as they were put off by the nature of the questions or the length of the survey.

Table 3: Participants, exclusions and opt-outs

	Number of participants
Introductory section	**397**
Excluded - Not directly involved in MDH	28
Opt-out after introductory section or otherwise excluded	*90*
Base respondents answering one or more feedback questions	**279**

This leaves a total of 279 participants that answered at least one feedback question. As this is considered to be the most important part of the survey only these participants' responses are included in the survey analysis.

b) The survey questions include a number of opportunities for participants to rate certain aspects or options. These rating questions consistently use a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Ratings questions fall into two categories:
-   Firstly, respondents were asked to rate the usefulness or effectiveness of a particular option from 1 ('Not useful/effective at all') to 5 ('Extremely useful/effective').
-   In the second case, respondents were asked to consider how a certain option or initiative affected their MDH consenting process. In these cases, ratings ranged from 1 ('Very negative impact' or 'Very hard') to 5 ('Very positive impact' or 'Very easy').

As with all questions in the survey, participants could opt not to answer individual questions and some chose not to. This may be because they had a limited understanding of an issue, considered it not to be relevant, were pressed for time or simply ignored it. As a result, the numbers of responses to each issue varied, at times quite considerably. As such, the ratings analysis presents a count of responses (N) and the average of all given ratings for a particular issue. These are shown alongside the distribution of ratings (determined as a percentage of the N responses). Together, these allow for a comparison of ratings between issues either by overall engagement (N), by the average of ratings, or by their distribution.

c) A number of the survey questions provided options for respondents to identify additional issues or solutions or to provide further comments. A total of 733 comments were collected in this way, covering not only additional issues and solutions but also describing specific examples or providing reasons why a particular rating was provided in a preceding question. For the purposes of this report, participants' comments have been reviewed in the first instance to identify ideas that may be helpful in progressing solutions to the issues faced. These are summarised as a list in the relevant section alongside any notable quotes that help to provide more context. It is envisaged that the comments will be further explored at a later date in order to explore future engagement as outlined in Section 10 Recommended next steps.

12 Appendix Two: Survey questions

Beacon Property Council New Zealand

ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH MEDIUM DENSITY HOUSING

1. What organisation do you work for?

2. What regions do you mainly work in?
Select all that apply

☐ Northland ☐ Hawke's Bay ☐ Marlborough

☐ Auckland ☐ Taranaki ☐ West Coast

☐ Waikato ☐ Manawatu-Whanganui ☐ Canterbury

☐ Bay of Plenty ☐ Wellington ☐ Otago

☐ Gisborne ☐ Nelson-Tasman ☐ Southland

3. What best describes the sector you work in?

◯ Central government ◯ Industry

◯ Council Controlled Organisation ◯ Research

◯ Local government

◯ Other (please specify)

4. What is your role in delivering Medium Density Housing (MDH)?

◯ Developer ◯ Construction / Builder

◯ Architect / Designer ◯ Property or Facilities Manager / Operator

◯ Engineer ◯ Finance

◯ Planner ◯ Property owner / Investor

◯ Urban designer ◯ Project manager

◯ Quantity surveyor ◯ Materials supplier

Other (please specify)

5. Approximately how many MDH projects have you been involved in?

◯ None as yet, but expecting to be involved in the future ◯ 6-9

◯ 1-2 ◯ 10 or more

◯ 3-5 ◯ I'm not directly involved in the delivery of MDH

GUIDANCE AND DOCUMENTATION

6. Research indicates that the quality of MDH consenting guidance provided, as well as the quality of technical documentation submitted during the consent process, cause issues for all parties involved.

Councils offer a range of different approaches to guide the MDH consenting process. Please tell us, if you have had any experience of the following, how useful they have been in assisting this process.
(Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful').

	Not useful at all 1	2	3	4	Very useful 5	N/A
Council MDH Design Guides	○	○	○	○	○	○
Review by Design Panel	○	○	○	○	○	○
Qualified partner programme / premium partner process	○	○	○	○	○	○
Online consenting	○	○	○	○	○	○

7. **To what extent do you think the following suggestions might also be useful in improving guidance and support?**
(Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful')

	Not useful at all 1	2	3	4	Very useful 5	N/A
A national review, and development of 'best practice' guidance for MDH consenting	○	○	○	○	○	○
Case study examples that illustrate the expected quality of technical documentation	○	○	○	○	○	○
A mentoring scheme to provide support for those with less experience of MDH	○	○	○	○	○	○
Set-up of a MDH 'centre of excellence' providing information, support and education	○	○	○	○	○	○

Can you tell us anything else that may improve guidance during the MDH consenting process?

[ ]

10. Our interviews have raised the following possible solutions:

(Please rate their potential effectiveness from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not effective at all' and 5 is 'Very effective')

	Not effective at all				Very effective	
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Increased use of electronic communication for RFIs	○	○	○	○	○	○
Increased resources to process RFIs	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you have any other possible solutions?

ACCEPTABLE AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

11. Based on your experience, how has the process of gaining compliance for alternative solutions in MDH affected any of the following?

(Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Very negative impact' and 5 is 'Very positive impact')

	Very negative impact				Very positive impact	
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
costs and staff time	○	○	○	○	○	○
external consultant fees	○	○	○	○	○	○
timeframe for delivery	○	○	○	○	○	○
innovation in design solutions	○	○	○	○	○	○
quality of overall outcomes	○	○	○	○	○	○

Have you faced any other issues relating to alternative solutions?

12. **From your perspective, how effective might any of the following measures be?**
(Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not effective at all' and 5 is 'Very effective')

	Not effective at all 1	2	3	4	Very effective 5	N/A
Increased guidance offered to develop effective alternative solutions for MDH	○	○	○	○	○	○
A more consistent / clearer approach for approving compliance of alternative solutions	○	○	○	○	○	○
Publicly available examples of 'deemed-to-comply' acceptable solutions for key aspects of MDH design	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you have any other suggestions?

[   ]

BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS

13. **The list below shows particular building code and design features that have presented complex issues for MDH development.**
Please tick any of these that have caused significant issues for you during either the design or consenting process.

☐ Access ways ☐ Cladding ☐ Lifts

☐ Acoustics ☐ Facades ☐ Stairs

☐ Balconies ☐ Fire ☐ Weathertightness

☐ Car parking ☐ Height limits ☐ Inter-tenancy walls/floors

Briefly outline any issues you have faced or list any other building code requirements or features that have caused significant issues in your experience:

[   ]

Creating homes and neighbourhoods
that work well into the future
and don't cost the Earth

14. **Based on your experience, how effective would any of the following measures be:**
(Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not effective at all' and 5 is 'Very effective')

	Not effective at all 1	2	3	4	Very effective 5	N/A
Selected building code clauses designed specifically for MDH	○	○	○	○	○	○
Increased engagement of industry in code revisions	○	○	○	○	○	○
A notified timeframe for code revisions (so that upcoming changes are signalled well in advance)	○	○	○	○	○	○
In-depth review of the allocation of risk, liability and insurance associated with MDH	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you have any other suggested solutions based on your experience?

[text box]

15. New Products

Considering any issues you may have had with either newly developed products and materials, or products new to New Zealand:

(Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Very hard' and 5 is 'Very easy')

	Very hard 1	2	3	4	Very easy 5	N/A
How easy has it been for new products or materials to gain approval?	○	○	○	○	○	○

If you have experienced problems, how have these impacted the delivery of Medium Density Housing?

16. How useful would the following solutions be in resolving these issues:

(Rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful')

	Not at all useful 1	2	3	4	Very useful 5	N/A
Clarified procedures to gain approvals for new products	○	○	○	○	○	○
Greater recognition of international standards for existing overseas products	○	○	○	○	○	○
Government support to speed up or reduce the costs of appraisal/approval schemes such as CodeMark	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you have any other suggested solutions?

17. Our interviews strongly indicate that relationships between stakeholders involved in MDH can become a major roadblock to delivery.

(Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Very negative impact' and 5 is 'Very positive impact')

	Very negative impact 1	2	3	4	Very positive impact 5	N/A
In general, how have your relationships with other stakeholders impacted on the MDH consenting process?	○	○	○	○	○	○

18. If you have experienced issues, what do you believe were the underlying causes (tick as many as appropriate)?

☐ Poor communication

☐ Lack of shared goals

☐ Unequal risk or liability for the outcomes

☐ Lack of skills, experience, or knowledge of MDH

☐ Changing personnel

☐ Personnel overstepping prescribed job description

☐ Lack of collaboration between agencies (e.g. water / transport / parks...)

☐ Inconsistent interpretation of consent requirements

☐ Lack of access to those with authority to make decisions

☐ Personality types

Feel free to provide any other comments:

[ ]

19. How effective would any of the following options be in resolving these issues:
(Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'Not useful at all' and 5 is 'Very useful')

	Not useful at all				Very useful	
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Dedicated account holders for each project	○	○	○	○	○	○
A more collaborative approach, particularly during the pre-application process	○	○	○	○	○	○
Increased networking events for all involved in the delivery of MDH	○	○	○	○	○	○
More coordinated effort to encourage neighbourhood acceptance of MDH	○	○	○	○	○	○
The establishment of a national consenting authority to improve consistency across NZ	○	○	○	○	○	○
Utilising private accredited certifiers for consenting approvals	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you have any comments or other suggestions to improve stakeholder relationships?

[   ]

Process overview

20. Based on your experience, please estimate the average cost of the consenting processes as a proportion of the total cost of a MDH development.

- ( ) 1-2%
- ( ) 3-5%
- ( ) 6-10%
- ( ) 11-15%

- ( ) 16-20%
- ( ) 21-30%
- ( ) More than 30%
- ( ) Don't know

21. To summarise, please identify the areas in the consenting process that you feel require the most attention.
You can select as many of these as you like.

	Extent of support or guidance	Technical quality of submitted documentation	Time taken at that stage	The costs associated with this stage	The skills/knowledge required to complete this stage
Pre-application planning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consent preparation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consent submission	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Requests for further information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consent signoff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please provide any additional comments

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Thank you very much for your time.

If you would like to take part in the prize draw for one of ten $50 bar/restaurant vouchers, or receive a summary report on the results of this survey, or take part in further development (e.g. future workshops on potential solutions), please indicate below and provide your name and contact details.

22. **Please select any of the following:**

☐ I would like to go into the prize draw

☐ I would like to receive a summary report on the results of this survey

☐ I would like to participate in further development of solutions to MDH consenting

23. **If you have selected any of the above, please provide your name and contact details.**

Your name: _____

Your contact phone
number: _____

Your contact email: _____

THANK YOU

Thank you for your interest.

We are really keen to hear from people that have direct experience of Medium Density Housing developments.

Please feel free to pass the following link on to anyone else who you think could offer their insights.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MDH-consenting