

Innovative collaboration sharply reduces time and cost of building Selwyn homes



Photo: Harrow Green, Rolleston.

An innovative approach between the Selwyn District Council and builders Kevler Homes has sharply reduced the cost and construction time for building a new home.

Recent research concluded that the average build time in New Zealand had increased from 13 months to 19 months over the past decade, but the innovative new approach in Selwyn turned a paddock into new homes within seven short months, far exceeding the national average.



“As the fastest growing district in the country, Selwyn is at the pointy end of the construction and consenting challenges, and I am proud of our team coming up with new solutions to get more Selwyn families in their homes,” says Selwyn Mayor Sam Broughton.

“We have fundamentally changed the way the construction industry and

Photo: Rex Huang - Product and Procurement

Manager, Kevler Development, Mayor Sam

Broughton, and Rob Preston, Operations Manager

Kevler Development

councils traditionally build new homes and the results speak for themselves.”

Broughton explains that Kevler Homes presented the council with a new approach to deliver civil works in stages for their subdivision in Rolleston, Harrow Green, to speed up construction, reduce waiting times and stagger the financial investment for the company.

“Kevler Homes Operations Manager Rob Preston says that new developments traditionally first complete all their civil works, which adds significant cost to the builders and waiting times for customers who have signed a contract.

“By working very closely with our council staff, the houses can be built in the same sequence as the civil works,” says Preston.

Building and Construction Minister Chris Penk and Housing Minister Chris Bishop are currently developing building reforms and have called on councils to play their part in improving construction times, so Broughton hopes the successful collaboration in Selwyn can inform their program to address the national housing crisis.

“Cost and delays are the biggest problems in construction, and our approach with Selwyn District Council has demonstrated how close collaboration with effective communication can make a big difference on both those counts. As a result, the building company can offer customers high-spec housing at a more affordable price,” says Preston.



Video: Timelapse of construction from March to September.

Robert Love, the council's Executive Director Development and Growth explains that two council building inspectors have been working on-site with the construction crew, as part of the pilot project, to speed up the building process.

“Instead of different building inspectors having to visit the site and deal with different staff, our inspectors are familiar with the site and the people working on it, which creates strong relationships to have the difficult conversations and develop solutions swiftly and efficiently to address onsite challenges, ensuring progress stayed on track,” says Love.

He says that the new approach may seem obvious to some but represents a giant leap for councils and construction companies.

“Councils and builders tend to be conservative and risk averse. But a recent report showed that productivity in the building sector had not increased since 1985, despite all our new technology, so it may be time to start doing things differently.”

Love emphasises that the new staged approach has not created more work but merely affects the sequencing of that work.

“It just requires better planning and better communication, and we invite other building companies to come and talk to us if they are interested in a similar approach.”

Love says that his team has recruited two Strategic Relationship Managers in

consenting to work closely with the larger building companies and other agencies like the Ministry of Education, KiwiRail, and the New Zealand Defence Force. They will help to guide the larger customers through the application process to identify efficiencies or avoidable complications at an early stage and avoid delays later in projects.

“We welcome other scale developers to come and discuss how this new approach might also be able to work for them,” Love concludes.

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