



Applicants statement

Introduction

This statement supports the Resource Consent application being made by the Masterton District Council. The proposal is a critical part of the decisions confirmed under the 2024-34 Long-Term Plan (LTP), adopted in June 2024.

The demolition of the Masterton town hall and municipal building is one that has been the subject of much debate and consideration by the Council. The buildings are no longer fit for purpose and would require significant upgrading to meet earthquake strengthening requirements.

Following public consultation undertaken as part of its 2024-34 Long Term Plan, at its ordinary meeting of 30 June 2024 the Council has resolved to demolish the buildings and start afresh with a new building on the existing site.

Background

When the town hall and municipal buildings had to be closed after checks in 2016 found they were earthquake-prone – we started thinking about what the best option for a future facility might be.

We asked the community over several rounds of consultation, and in 2021 the Council voted to build a modern civic facility at the north end of town that would:

- support the performing and visual arts with a flexi-form black box theatre space
- house a modern, accessible, and fit for purpose library and archives
- create an information hub for our communities (Council services; a-site; box office etc)
- allow access to a purpose-built function-come-exhibition space
- provide suitable kitchen facilities to support the event space
- facilitate meetings of all sizes with meeting rooms for community groups and other users.

In May 2022, the Council agreed to move away from the Civic Facility decision following a quantity surveyor cost estimate for the project increasing from \$30.3 million to \$57 million, plus \$14 million contingency and public sentiment that any future facility should remain on the existing site.

Through the 2024-34 LTP consultation and deliberations process, Council again considered further options for a dynamic, flexible venue that can support a wide range of performances and events as well as providing a point of difference to other venues in the district. This included the Council's preferred option of demolishing the existing town hall and municipal buildings and building a new town hall on the current town hall site, retain the municipal building façade, and expand Waiata House at a total cost of \$42.6 million.

In June 2023, Masterton District Council resolved to demolish the existing town hall and municipal buildings, including the façade, and build a new multi-purpose town hall on the current site, with a total budget of no more than \$25 million, allocated through Years 1-4 of the LTP.

This project is the subject of this Resource Consent application.

Key Objectives

Masterton District Council prioritises providing community facilities and activities that support our thriving and diverse district.

Through this project, we hope to remove risks associated with redeveloping ageing infrastructure and creating a fit-for-purpose community facility that will best meet the needs of current and future Mastertonians.

Our new facility will be built on the current town hall site, and we will work with specialists and our architects to incorporate elements of the old town hall in this new facility. This will include salvaging materials during the demolition phase that can be re-used in the new build –allowing us to retain those elements which hold architectural or historical significance.

Masterton District Council is intent on improving the resilience of its facilities, including improving public safety and sustainability.

Since the closure of the town hall and municipal building site in 2016, Civil Defence have operated out of Waiata House in a space that is not fit for purpose. In the 2024-34 LTP we have committed to extending our existing office (Waiata House) to allow for the inclusion of a modern Civil Defence space that meets the building standards recommended for an Emergency Management Centre to support the district. This project will also provide a council chamber with public gallery space, to create an inclusive civic space that will allow our community to better participate in local government proceedings in an accessible setting.

For all projects, we work to achieve the best economic value for our ratepayers. This has included staff assisting local fundraiser, Bob Francis, in setting up a charitable trust with the primary purpose of fundraising for the new facility, with the aim of reducing the cost burden on local ratepayers and improving the quality of the final development through supporting a quality fitout. Bob is a well-known and highly

regarded ex-Mayor of Masterton. He and the team he has assembled are determined to help support our growing district and region achieve a positive future for locals and visitors by creating a fully flexible space we can all be proud of - an asset for all of us.

Importantly, our replacement facility will be designed in partnership with mana whenua to recognise and uplift their mana and tikanga. During development of an architect's brief of the previously planned civic facility, conversations with both Rangitāne o Wairarapa and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa highlighted that the existing Masterton town hall and municipal buildings did not achieve this for local iwi. The building was not built with tikanga in mind, and representatives at the time were excited to be part of developing a new facility that would not only reflect their cultural connection to Whakaoriori, but uphold and celebrate tikanga within our community.

Other community members have voiced their support of a new facility. Local theatre and event specialists lent their voices to previous Civic Facility planning, with many community members showing their support as part of our recent Long-Term Plan consultation. As an example, during a public meeting discussion the town hall, community members who represented local theatre, performance - even a local religious leader - noted how they would use a new facility if it was available for key events in their calendars. Written and verbal feedback received throughout the consultation process echoed this desire to create a fit-for-purpose space for current and future generations.

The Proposal

The proposal has been designed to achieve the above objectives. It will enable the demolition of the now defunct buildings and the creation of a more suitable replacement facility.

The positive effects of the proposal will be significant and ongoing for our community, allowing a modern, flexible, and scalable space that can support a wide range of social and cultural activities, all of which will contribute to the economic development of Masterton.

The current building is unable to be safely occupied by public and it is unlikely that it can be rehabilitated. As such the granting of the resource consent will have a positive affect for the community.

Public Notification

MDC supports the application for resource consent being publicly notified to provide the opportunity for interested persons to have their say. Ahead of this notification, consultation has been undertaken with the community with support for the proposal of demolition and rebuild works. This consultation has been ongoing since the Town hall's closure in 2016 - most recently via the 2024-34 Long Term Plan

consultation process. This is detailed in the application for resource consent documents.

Conclusion

We seek this application as the first stage in enabling the improvement of the public facilities that Masterton District Council is intent of providing our community.

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Masterton District Council