

# SUBMISSION ON A NOTIFIED RESOURCE CONSENT APPLICATION

FORM 13 - Pursuant to Sections 95A, 95B, 95C, 96, 127(3), 137(5)(c) and 234(4) of the Resource Management Act 1991



## Submitter

Name  
Contact Person  
(If different from above)  
Postal Address  
Home Phone  
Cell Phone  
Email

*Lyn Riley*

[Redacted]

## Details of the Proposal to which this Submission Relates

Name of Applicant  
Address of Proposal  
Application No.  
Description of Proposal

*Masterton District Council*

*64 Chapel St, Masterton*

*RM 240135*

*Demolition of Masterton Town Hall + Municipal Buildings*

## Details of Submission

My submission:

- Supports the whole proposal
- Opposes the whole proposal
- Supports part of the proposal
- Opposes part of the proposal

In the event this application is subject to a Resource Consent Hearing. Do you wish to be heard in respect of your submission?

- Yes
- No

If others make a similar submission I will consider presenting a joint case with them at the hearing

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## Submission Statement

The specific parts of the Proposal that this submission relates to.

*Refer attachment.*

## Decision you want the Council to make:

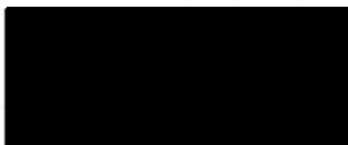
Grant the Consent

Decline the Consent

Grant the Consent with Conditions

## Signature

To be signed by the submitter or person authorised to sign on behalf of the submitter.



Name *Lyn Riley*

Date *10 Feb 2025*

## Important notes for the Submitter

1. In accordance with the Privacy Act 1993, submissions will be made available for viewing by Council and members of the public.
2. This form is for your convenience only. You may make a submission that addresses the points above in a letter or other suitable format.
3. Submissions will not be returned, so please keep a copy.
4. A copy of your submission must be sent to both Council and to the applicant.

**To:** Masterton District Council

**From:** Lyn Riley

**Resource Consent Application No: RM240135 – Demolition of Masterton Town Hall, Municipal Buildings, including the façade.**

**Introduction**

I strongly oppose the demolition of the Town Hall and Municipal Buildings, including the façade, and support **Option 3: decommissioning and mothballing the buildings**. Given the current economic pressures on ratepayers and uncertainty surrounding impending water rates under the Local Water Done Well initiative—projects such as this, which are considered “nice to have,” should be put on hold until all essential water and roading infrastructure is completed.

Demolishing these buildings would also erase a key part of Masterton’s history, which is why more than 1000 people demonstrated their desire to keep these buildings, including the façade, at the Hands around the Town Hall protest in June 2021. The Council has not adequately explored alternative funding options, such as heritage grants, to preserve them. Additionally, once these buildings are demolished, there is no opportunity to reverse the decision, making this an irreversible and costly mistake.

**Financial Implications**

- The financial burden of this project will fall on ratepayers. Pensioners and lower-income residents will be the most directly affected. Masterton has the highest demographic of over-65s in NZ, many who are widows and widowers living on one income and in survival mode already.
- The \$25M budget for a new town hall appears arbitrary, with no detailed design or cost breakdown available. Actual costs could easily escalate once a design plan is drawn up.
- No recent cost-benefit analysis has been conducted, likely because the results would not justify spending ratepayers’ money, and is not what this Council want to hear.
- The cost to retain the façade (\$3.6M) is almost the same as full demolition (\$3.5M), yet the option to retain it has not been thoroughly explored. If the façade can be saved for nearly the same price as demolition, why has the Council dismissed this as a viable compromise in their preferred option?
- The Council has publicly stated there is no firm commitment to rebuilding within the \$25M budget, raising concerns that ratepayers will be left with a demolished site and further debt. Alternative funding sources, such as heritage grants, need to be adequately investigated before demolition is allowed to happen.
- Given that urban ratepayers are still awaiting full disclosure of water rates under the Local Water Done Well (LWDW) initiative, committing to such an expense now is fiscally irresponsible. By avoiding the LWDW submission process due in April, it avoids drawing attention to the affordability of the “nice to have” projects in the Long Term Plan on top of massive increases in water rates. Ratepayers deserve better.
- There is no publicly available evidence that a new Town Hall will actually generate any anticipated economic benefits, so mothballing allows for a better long-term decision to be assessed. The Council should not rush into a costly demolition without having exhausted all preservation, re-purposing and funding options.
- Why the rush? One has to question what the specific urgency is behind the demolition timeline if compliance has been extended to 2031 by Cabinet. Is the Council manipulating and hastening the demolition process to avoid having to issue a new EQ prone building certificate? The Resource Consent Application states that this must be remedied by February 2026, which is factually incorrect.
- If the Council demolishes the buildings but cannot rebuild within the \$25m budget what will happen to the empty site? The Application states it will be left vacant. It therefore becomes an abandoned lot with no community benefit; just a carpark used for Council staff benefit?

- A formal review of external funding options needs to be explored before demolition proceeds. Has the Council consulted with Heritage New Zealand, the Lottery Grants Board, or other heritage preservation bodies to at least save the façade?
- While the Council has set up a trust with local fundraisers to explore funding options, what has been raised to date, and what is anticipated? The public has seen no evidence of progress.

#### **Consultation Process and Lack of Transparency**

- The consultation process was rushed, occurring over the holiday period with minimal advertising, limiting public engagement. Requiring hand-written and manually submitted responses further discouraged participation.
- Many residents were waiting for a public announcement of an independent commissioner to oversee the process, which did not occur, resulting in fewer submissions.
- The urgency for demolition is questionable, as compliance deadlines for earthquake-prone buildings have been extended to 2031.
- Given these concerns, why is the Council pushing this through so quickly without full disclosure of future ratepayer costs? A transparent cost-benefit analysis is needed, including an ongoing breakdown of operating and depreciation costs.

#### **Cultural and Heritage Preservation**

- The Municipal Buildings are a significant cultural and heritage asset to Masterton and should be preserved as part of our town's identity. Once demolished, the site cannot generate revenue or be preserved as a historical asset.
- Other towns have successfully retained heritage buildings through public-private funding initiatives—why hasn't Masterton explored these?

#### **Recommendations**

Given these concerns, I urge the Council to:

1. Pause the demolition process and adopt Option 3: Decommissioning and mothballing the buildings to save ratepayers money.
2. Commission an independent cost-benefit analysis comparing demolition and rebuild costs versus retention and repurposing.
3. Explore alternative redevelopment options, including leasing or repurposing the Municipal Building for commercial or community use.
4. Provide full financial transparency, including a detailed breakdown of anticipated costs, funding sources, and ongoing operational expenses.
5. Pursue external funding sources, such as heritage grants, to reduce financial pressure on ratepayers.

#### **Conclusion**

This is not just about a building; it is about responsible financial management, community well-being, and preserving our heritage. Why rush into a costly demolition when affordable alternatives have not been fully explored? The Council must take a prudent and transparent approach, delaying any demolition until all financial implications are clear and community concerns are addressed to avoid costly mistakes. I strongly urge the Council to prioritize fiscal responsibility and consider decommissioning and mothballing the buildings until ratepayers have clarity on future financial commitments.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Lyn Riley

