

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	Masterton Ratepayers + Residents Assn
Contact Person (If different from above)	Lyn Riley (President)
Postal Address	[REDACTED]
Home Phone	[REDACTED]
Cell Phone	[REDACTED]
Email	[REDACTED]

### Details of the Proposal to which this Submission Relates

Name of Applicant	Masterton District Council
Address of Proposal	64 Chapel St, Masterton
Application No.	RM 240135
Description of Proposal	Demolition of Town Hall + Municipal Buildings, Masterton.

### Details of Submission

My submission:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supports the whole proposal           | <input type="checkbox"/> Supports part of the proposal |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Opposes the whole proposal | <input type="checkbox"/> 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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2 of 2

## Submission Statement

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

Please refer to attached submission

## Decision you want the Council to make:

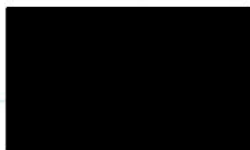
Grant the Consent

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

8 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.

# Submission on the Resource Consent Application No RM240135 for the Demolition of Masterton Town Hall and Municipal Buildings

To: The Masterton District Council

From: Masterton Ratepayers & Residents Association (MRRRA)

Date: 8 February 2025

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## Introduction

The Masterton Ratepayers and Residents Association (MRRRA), strongly oppose the demolition of the Masterton Town Hall and Municipal Buildings, supporting **Option 3: decommissioning and mothballing**. The project should be paused until essential infrastructure projects are completed and the impact of water rates under the Local Water Done Well initiative is understood and costed. Given inflation, high unemployment, struggling businesses, and increased rates arrears, rushing ahead with demolition is financially imprudent. Moreover, with few heritage buildings remaining in Masterton, demolishing these structures would erase a key part of Masterton's history and cultural heritage. The Council has not explored alternative funding options, such as heritage grants to retain the façade as a minimum, and there is no firm commitment by the Council to rebuild because it is impossible within the \$25M budget allowed. Demolishing the building for what will potentially become a carpark, without clear plans on a way forward, is poor governance. The statement it “will never be cheaper” is not a good enough reason to demolish.

## Key Concerns

### 1. Financial Implications and Lack of Cost Transparency

- The **\$25M budget** for a new Masterton Town Hall was arbitrarily set, without a clear business case or financial feasibility assessment.
- Cost escalations in large-scale projects are common (e.g. Wellington Town Hall's cost increased from \$70M to \$329M). There is a high risk that this project will similarly exceed budget estimates due to the limited design information available. The cost is already estimated by RPS Group in the Project Cost Plan at \$34.6M and is largely based on assumptions and benchmarked rates.
- The **cost of retaining the façade is estimated at \$3.6M**, which is comparable to the \$3.5M proposed for complete demolition.
- There has been no thorough assessment of **potential external funding sources**, such as grants, donations, or Lottery Board funding, that could significantly reduce costs for ratepayers.
- Ratepayers need to be informed of the full financial impact of **the Local Water Done Well** initiative before being asked to fund a new Town Hall.
- An **updated quantity surveyor assessment** is required to determine the current costs of demolition and any new construction, reflecting today's economic conditions.
- There is a lack of transparency regarding **the ongoing operational and depreciation costs** of a new Town Hall, which could create further financial strain on ratepayers, with the trickle-down effect on those residents who rent.
- Before its closure in June 2016, the Town Hall was used for 70 days a year. There is no business case to support a venue with ongoing operating costs paid for by ratepayers that is already being called a “dark building” by the Council when not in use.

### 2. Community Engagement and Democratic Process

- The consultation process was rushed and conducted over the holiday period, limiting public engagement.
- The requirement for hand-written and manually submitted responses discourages participation.

- Previous Town Hall public consultations have included community forums; pop-up hubs; open-house sessions, online surveys; major advertising campaigns. This current consultation has had the minimum legal requirement possible for such a controversial project.
- The Council claims that the Town Hall must be demolished or remediated by 2026, yet **recent legislative changes extend compliance deadlines for EQ prone buildings until 2031**. This means there is no urgency to proceed with demolition now.
- The Council is expediting the demolition process to avoid issuing an updated earthquake-prone building notice, which would extend compliance until 2031.

### 3. Alternative Cost-Saving Options: Decommissioning and Mothballing

- Decommissioning and mothballing the buildings preserves community funds while allowing time for further assessment.
- The Municipal Buildings could be **repurposed or leased for commercial or community use**, generating income rather than incurring demolition and rebuild costs.
- The Council has not adequately explored **alternative funding mechanisms**, such as heritage grants to retain the façade as a minimum, which could reduce the financial burden on ratepayers.

### 4. Cultural and Heritage Value

- The Masterton Town Hall and Municipal Buildings have high heritage significance, as confirmed by the Heritage Significance Report.
- Demolishing these structures erases a key part of Masterton's history and identity.
- Other councils have successfully preserved and restored heritage buildings using a mix of public and private investment (e.g., Hastings Municipal Building restoration).
- Alternative uses for the buildings, such as community spaces, commercial developments, or heritage precinct attractions, have not been adequately explored (e.g. a heritage or arts hub that celebrates the history of Masterton while generating tourism revenue; community co-working spaces that support local entrepreneurs and non-profits; a multi-purpose cultural events centre to attract visitors and businesses to celebrate our diverse population).

### 5. Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

- Demolition will result in **significant construction waste**, contradicting sustainability goals.
- Retrofitting or repurposing existing structures aligns with sustainable building practices, reducing material waste and energy consumption.
- Modern construction methods often use cheaper materials, **resulting in a shorter building lifespan** compared to the solid construction of the existing structure.

### 6. Economic and Social Impact on the Community

- There is **no business case** demonstrating that a new Town Hall will generate sufficient economic benefits to justify the cost for ratepayers.
  - The burden of debt for this project is **unsustainable for many residents**, particularly those on fixed and low incomes, with the impending massive water rates under Local Water Done Well.
  - In excess of 1000 residents attended the "Hands around the Town Hall" protest to save the façade in June 2021.
  - A residents' survey undertaken by the Council in June 2023 noted Masterton's confidence in the Council's performance was 41%, the lowest in New Zealand, while more than half of respondents (51%) mistrust the Council.
  - Removing a historic landmark without clear public support or clear desire to rebuild **could further damage trust in local government** and reduce community engagement in future projects.
  - Constructing a new venue may **negatively impact existing local businesses** that rely on conference and event hosting (e.g., Copthorne Solway Hotel and Carterton Event Centre).
  - The **cumulative effect of rate increases and rising costs of living** will negatively impact on the financial well-being of our community.
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## Requests and Recommendations

Given these concerns, we urge the Council to:

1. **Pause the demolition process and adopt Option 3: Decommissioning and mothballing the buildings.**
2. **Commission an independent cost-benefit analysis** to compare the costs of demolition and new construction versus retention and repurposing.
3. **Explore alternative redevelopment options**, including leasing or repurposing the Municipal Building for commercial or community use.
4. **Ensure full financial transparency**, including providing ratepayers with a breakdown of anticipated costs, funding sources, and ongoing operational expenses.
5. **Pursue external funding sources**, such as heritage grants (to retain the façade), to reduce costs for ratepayers.

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## Conclusion

This decision is not just about a building; it is about **responsible financial management, community well-being, and heritage preservation**. Demolishing the Town Hall and Municipal Buildings without a comprehensive cost analysis is short-sighted and financially reckless, especially as the Council has publicly stated “there is no firm commitment to build” because they know it is impossible within the \$25M budget allowed.

We strongly urge the Council to slow down, reconsider its approach, and **prioritize decommissioning and mothballing the buildings** until the full impact of upcoming water rate increases is understood with the consequential impact on ratepayers. This is the most fiscally responsible path forward for our community.

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**Lyn Riley**

President, Masterton Ratepayers and Residents Association (MRRA)

