

Penfold's Cob Cottage project consultation summary

Community consultation was undertaken from 12 July until 14 August 2017. During that time two drop-in sessions were held at the Mount Pleasant Yacht Club near the Cottage.

Forty submissions were received during the consultation phase. Thirty two (80 per cent), supported the stabilise or repair option, six (15 per cent) opposed this option, and two submitters (five per cent) chose the 'have concerns' response.

The project was paused in October 2017 while staff collated funding information relating to earthquake repairs to heritage buildings across the city for the draft 2018-2028 Long Term Plan. In November submitters were advised that the project had been put on hold and were referred to the Council's have your say site which included an update and a link to all submissions and project team responses.

The project was reactivated in February 2018 following a Linwood-Central-Heathcote Community Board resolution seeking to remove Penfold's Cob Cottage from the list of heritage buildings for which the Council is currently asking for expressions of interest from the community.

Prior to community consultation the Council's project team engaged with Mahaanui Kurataiao Limited (MKT) to better understand the context of the Cottage and the area's significance to early Maori. The area's cultural values were highlighted in a report by MKT for an Archaeological Authority before drainage works were undertaken around the Cottage last year.

Reasons for supporting proposal

Submitters who strongly supported the stabilise and repair option emphasised the importance of retaining as much of the Cottage's original sod and cob fabric as possible, and retaining the landmark building to keep its history alive. One submitter said she believed it was the only remaining sod Cottage in Christchurch. "I remember as a child being driven past and at times having to stop and peer in its windows, a real fairytale Cottage. The proportions and scale of this building have become a rarity in this day and age," she commented. "It gives the opportunity to tell the stories linked to the area, the people involved and their lives from the Penfold family through to Ernie Parish."

Six submitters are related to Ernie Parish, who twice organised the restoration of the Cottage in the 1940s, the second time after a fire. Two granddaughters commented that later he spent many Sundays telling visitors and locals about the history of the Cottage which was a memorial to the Canterbury pioneers. One of them added: "He would be so happy to know of the Council's plans to repair and stabilise the Cottage. It was important to him that the Cottage be preserved for future generations to enjoy and learn about our early history,"

Ferrymead Heritage Park expressed strong support for the stabilisation and repair option saying it would like to integrate the Cottage into its heritage programme. The Education Manager said Penfold's Cob Cottage could enhance what Ferrymead already has and provide the opportunity to work with a community group to show students not only how this Cottage has been repaired, but to be able to see how it was constructed.

Heritage New Zealand supported the stabilisation and repair option, saying the proposed modifications would ensure its survival and best protect heritage values.

The Christchurch Coastal Pathway Group wants to make the Cottage a feature along the pathway. It said it was very keen for the Cottage to be retained, mostly because of its historic value to the local community. As restoration would destroy some of the original fabric of the Cottage, it supports the stabilise and repair option - with graffiti resistant glass and interpretation.

Opposing views or concerns

Submitters representing the Christchurch Civic Trust and the Earth Building Association of New Zealand opposed the preferred stabilisation and repair option as they considered the Cottage should be rebuilt, on suitably enhanced footings, using reworked earth material. The Council's project team advised them that this approach would destroy the original sod layers and therefore be contrary to the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value.

Other concerns expressed by submitters including traffic now passing close by, condensation on the glass, vandalism, ongoing maintenance costs, and lighting spill affecting residents on St Andrews Hill. They were advised that maintenance issues will be addressed when detailed designs are progressed.

Two submitters believed the Cottage was not original but this view is not supported by available information, including the 1870 deed between James Penfold and the Road Board of the Heathcote County. Another submitter said the stabilisation and repair option was a waste of money.

Several submitters referred to the need for appropriate planting around the Cottage, with the Coastal Pathway Group saying it could help to maintain this.