

BEFORE THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 ('the Act')

AND

IN THE MATTER Of Resource Consent Application RMA/2020/2852 for the Canterbury Museum Trust Board for a comprehensive redevelopment of the Canterbury Museum complex including the Robert McDougall Gallery

BETWEEN **THE CANTERBURY MUSEUM TRUST BOARD**

Applicant

A N D **CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL**

Local Authority

EVIDENCE SUMMARY OF ANTHONY ERNEST WRIGHT

Dated 9 June 2021

Presented for filing by:

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1 The following summarises the main points of my evidence in chief dated 25 May 2021.

2 My name is Anthony Wright and I am the Director of the Canterbury Museum, and have been for the last 25 years.

3 I have over 40 year's experience managing and leading museums in New Zealand.

4 I am the Chair, Deputy Chair and trustee of several science, arts and cultural trusts.

INTRODUCTION

5 Canterbury Museum is 154 years old and at a cross roads.

6 It is rabbit warren of buildings that are no longer fit for museum purposes.

7 Three foundation documents were adopted by the Museum Board in 2019:

- Building Conservation Plan
- Museum Project Brief
- Cultural Narrative

8 If consented and built, confident that the redevelopment schema will deliver space and flexibility for the next 50 + years.

9 It will allow us to provide greatly increased access to the Museum's buildings and collections by the public, whom we exist to serve.

THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM BUILDINGS ON THE ROLLESTON AVENUE SITE

10 The Museum's history on its Rolleston Avenue site is 150 years of additive building development.

11 It starts in 1870 with a standalone, 2 storey stone building in the Oxford museum tradition – just 20 years after the foundation of the City. The Architect was the celebrated Benjamin Mountfort.

12 Haast, the first Director, was entrepreneurial and an avid collector. The Museum was soon bursting at its seams and in 1872 a second 2-storey stone building was erected on the Botanic Gardens frontage.

- 13 The third heritage building on site was the Whare Tīpuna Hau Te Ananui o Tangaroa, opened in 1874 and functioning as a gallery for the display of taonga Māori.
- 14 Further expansion out to Rolleston Avenue occurred in 1877 with two wings at right angles.
- 15 Followed by the addition of an entrance porch in 1878.
- 16 Soon there were space issues again so in 1882 the Whare Tīpuna was moved to the west side of the original 1870 building and the space between the 1870 and 1877 buildings was enclosed.
- 17 In 1908 the world's largest known blue whale washed up on Okarito Beach in South Westland. It was recovered and brought to Christchurch where it was erected in a 1910 whale house.
- 18 In 1932, the city's first public art gallery, the Robert McDougall Gallery, was opened. It's interesting to note that prior to this the Museum had functioned as the city's art gallery and amassed significant art collections.
- 19 Over the years the remaining Museum site was filled with temporary sheds and buildings, including the 1940 structure erected to house the large Relief Model of Canterbury, now at Okains Bay Museum.
- 20 In 1958, the Centennial Wing was opened, occupying the northern part of the site.
- 21 In the early 1960's a workshop and night entrance were added to the rear of the Robert McDougall Gallery.
- 22 The perimeter of the Museum site was finally enclosed in 1977 with the opening of the Roger Duff Wing.
- 23 Finally in 1995, the former Garden Court was infilled with a 5 level reinforced concrete building.
- 24 Leaving a fully occupied Museum site with the Robert McDougall Gallery adjacent.
- 25 When reduced to floor plan, the rabbit warren nature of the additive building development becomes apparent.

BACKGROUND

- 26 The Museum is home to nationally and internationally important objects from Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world – more than 2.3 million collection items.
- 27 Over 750,000 visitors per year, making the Museum the most visited indoor tourist attraction in Te Wai Pounamu (South Island).
- 28 Iconic feature of the Christchurch Cultural Precinct.
- 29 The Museum is a registered Charitable Trust and governance is vested in the Canterbury Museum Trust Board under its own Act of Parliament.
- 30 Trust Board is under a duty to protect the taonga within our walls, including the heritage buildings.
- 31 This project is critical, and in response to challenges that threaten the Museum itself as a physical structure and as an important community facility

CURRENT BUILDING INADEQUACIES CONSTRAINING THE PUBLIC EXPERIENCE

- 32 The public foyer is congested, particularly when school groups and bus tours arrive.
- 33 Bare wiring, water and wastewater pipes run through collection store rooms – all should be avoided in collection areas due to risks of fire and leaks.
- 34 Further constraints to the public experience:
- Only one lift for both people and collections
 - Limited toilets (well below Building Code requirements)
 - Limited education spaces
 - Poor space for innovative public programmes, talks and lectures
 - Poor accessibility for our physically impaired visitors
 - Ill-equipped to deal with the growing visitor numbers
 - Exhibition spaces constrained by lack of services and flexibility
 - Only 1% of our collection on display at any one time.

COLLECTION CARE AND MANAGEMENT INADEQUACIES

- 35 The poor condition of buildings also affects collection care and management negatively.
- 36 We have many cramped and inefficient storage spaces.
- 37 Collections are spread over 29 locations across the 6 levels of the Museum.
- 38 It is difficult to access and retrieve many collection items.
- 39 All collection stores suffer from less than acceptable environmental controls. We have dehumidifiers running 24/7 in this basement store.
- 40 In the worst cases, it can lead to cracking of inorganic objects due to humidity fluctuations.
- 41 Lack of reliable cool and cold storage leads to de-naturing of emulsion layers on glass plate and acetate negatives.
- 42 Leaks and damp air lead to multiple kinds of corrosion.
- 43 Even on display, poor air quality leads to accelerated tarnishing of precious metals.
- 44 Non-structural microcracks in buildings, and aged roof and wall claddings mean several of the buildings leak
- 45 Poor to non-existent insulation of walls and roofs prevent maintenance of acceptable environmental conditions
- 46 Unable to protect taonga from the proven and destructive force of earthquakes
- 47 Many international exhibitions will not be loaned to museums like ours due to the risk of earthquakes and inability to seismically protect the collections

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT

- 48 The Board's vision is to provide fit for purpose facilities and protect the heritage buildings and secure the Museum's future.
- 49 The plan celebrates the original architecture and reflects the city founders' intentions for the exterior, including the restoration of lost features.
- 50 The plan is driven by a new Building Conservation Plan and comprehensive Project Brief and underpinned by a Cultural Narrative.

- 51 The Museum and Cathedral redevelopments will restore city founders' plan for the two to 'speak' to each other – both with spires and rose windows.
- 52 The plan includes the base isolation of all the Museum heritage buildings, the Robert McDougall Gallery, and the proposed new buildings.
- 53 Base isolation protects buildings, people and collections.
- 54 The plan allows for modern technology to be integrated throughout the Museum.
- 55 New exhibition space will allow us to tell more of the stories that are important to Canterbury.
- 56 International standard temporary exhibition spaces will be provided for the first time.

ROBERT MCDUGALL GALLERY

- 57 The RMG will be returned as far as practicable to its original form and design as part of this redevelopment.
- 58 Work to be under taken includes:
- Earthquake strengthening and base isolation
 - Building services upgrade
 - Linkage to the Museum complex
 - Improvement of visitor facilities
 - Repair of heritage fabric.

NEW PUBLIC ATRIUM SPACES

- 59 The redevelopment will allow two new public atrium spaces to enable the return to public view of our two largest collection taonga – the Whare Tīpuna and the Blue Whale.
- 60 The first enables the introduction of Araiteuru – a Māori 'heart' to the new Museum.
- 61 It will allow Ngāi Tahu to tell their own stories with the help of Museum staff.
- 62 It will provide a home to a new contemporary Whare – Te Whare a Tahu
- 63 This space allows the return of the Whare Tīpuna Hau Te Ananui o Tangaroa.

- 64 Both will be displayed in a full height atria.
- 65 The Okarito Blue Whale skeleton was last on display in the early 1990s.
- 66 The redevelopment will see it return to public view in a second, axial atrium leading from a second entrance to the Museum, through the complex (beneath the whale), to link with the Robert McDougall Gallery.

CONCLUSION

- 67 The proposed redevelopment safeguards the heritage buildings and the priceless collections.
- 68 Redevelopment of the Museum is essential for the Board to meet the requirements of its Empowering Act.
- 69 Plans have been developed in wide consultation with a broad group of stakeholders including the public and Ngāi Tahu.
- 70 Redevelopment will enhance the visitor experience and enable the display and enjoyment of a significantly larger portion of the Museum's collections.

Anthony Wright

9 June 2021