



Submission of Civic Trust Auckland

Notified Resource Consent Application R/LUV/2016/2243

To authorise the demolition of the St James Church Hall, a Category B scheduled building.

Applicant: View West Limited
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Civic Trust Auckland

Civic Trust Auckland is a non-profit public interest group, incorporated in 1968, with activities and interests throughout the greater Auckland region.

The aims of the Trust include:

- Protection of natural landforms.
 - Preservation of heritage, in all its aspects.
 - Encouragement of good planning for the city and region.
1. CTA has made numerous submissions to Auckland Council with regard to planning matters.
 2. CTA is most concerned about this proposed demolition of a Category B building, as scheduled under the legacy Auckland City Council District Plan Isthmus Section, and now under the Auckland Council Unitary Plan.
 3. CTA does not support the proposed demolition and asks that the Auckland Council declines this application.
 4. We have read through all the documents tabled on the Auckland Council website in regard of this application and find we do not agree with many of the stated opinions and assessments provided.

5. The relevant planning legislation is discussed in the Assessment of Environmental Effects by Campbell Brown Planning, the Heritage Impact Statement by Dave Pearson, and the Archaeological Assessment by CFG Heritage.
6. Under the previous Auckland City District Plan, demolition of a Category B building was discretionary, and now under the operative Unitary Plan, demolition of a Category B building is now a non-complying activity.
7. The Unitary Plan is now operative and therefore weight should be accorded to the non-complying activity status, rather than the directive under the old plan. This is contrary to Campbell Brown planner Lee Boyt's view, although it is noted that this report was completed prior to the Unitary Plan becoming operative.
8. CTA disagrees strongly with the statement by Campbell Brown in 10.0 that "On balance the proposal is considered to be consistent with the objectives and policies of both the Operative District Plan and the PAUP and the assessment of environmental effects has concluded that there would be a minor adverse effect on the heritage values of the site".
9. CTA suggests that the heritage values of the site will suffer a major adverse effect, with the demolition of the oldest, and arguably more significant, building on the site.
10. The Structural Appraisal by No 8 Engineering Ltd, is barely one and half pages, and is full of suppositional conditional statements about the condition of the building. From this very insubstantial document, Campbell Brown and others have built a case for demolition.
11. CTA considers this Structural Assessment manifestly inadequate and no basis from which to justify demolition of a scheduled Category B building, the St James Church Hall.
12. The Campbell Brown Planning document suggests that retaining and redeveloping the 1900 St James Church, also a Category B building, somehow mitigates the loss of the Church Hall. This is stated over a dozen times, but repetition does not make it a true statement. These are two separate Category B scheduled buildings and should be treated on their own merits. The proposal to redevelop that church is a stand-alone proposal and its retention cannot be considered mitigation for demolition of the Hall.
13. In 5.0 the Campbell Brown document clearly states that there are two stages to the developer's proposal, Stage 1 being the redevelopment of the church, and Stage 2 being the demolition of the Church Hall. The two proposals are presented separately, so each building should be considered without reference to the other, as regards the demolition consent.
14. In the Heritage Inventory, CTA disagrees with several of the assessments of various features, and feels that more significance should be accorded to particularly the largely intact interior. This report overall assess significance as moderate, whereas the Archaeological Assessment rates its significance as high.

15. CTA also disagrees with assessments in the Heritage Impact Statement by Dave Pearson, and certainly argues that the effects on heritage values are more than minor.
16. We find that these assessments do not give enough significance to the social and aesthetic categories, and would argue that the overall significance is high, rather than moderate.
17. The Archaeological Assessment rates the building higher in several categories, ie, social, architectural and aesthetic. This report states "The Sunday school building has high significance, which reflects its scheduling, along with the Church, in the Auckland Unitary Plan as a Category B Significant Historic Heritage Place" (page 18).
18. There is a considerable discrepancy in the assessment of the building's condition in the various reports:
 - The Structural Assessment states the building is in "a poor state of repair".
 - The Heritage Impact Statement says "...generally considered to be in only a fair condition." (page 5)
 - The Archaeological Assessment states "the building has survived in a largely intact form with minimal modification of the original portion of the structure and retains significant amounts of original internal fittings....The St James Sunday School has high condition values". (page 17)
19. CTA considers that these varying statements about the condition of the Church Hall raise questions as to the applicant's assertion that it is "beyond repair and should be demolished". There are examples elsewhere in Auckland that demonstrate successful upgrading and potential reuse.
20. CTA also suggests that its supposed construction of unreinforced concrete is not a reason for demolition, as there are many examples of building of similar construction that have been successfully earthquake strengthened. There are also various methods of achieving earthquake strengthening that are not overly intrusive, and would not severely compromise heritage values, as stated by Campbell Brown Planning.
21. The Church Hall is a very early example of concrete construction and consideration of the building from an archaeological perspective may provide useful insight in relation to its construction method.
22. The Campbell Brown report repeatedly emphasises that the building is considered "dangerous", as labelled by the Auckland Council, and therefore should be demolished.
23. If Auckland Council considered the building a risk to the public it would order the building to be demolished, but has not done so. While it does not want the public to enter it in its present condition, this is not a reason for demolition.
24. Overall, the CTA feels that these various reports are written with demolition as the only outcome, and have not adequately examined reasonable proposals for retention and alternative uses. There is inadequate evidence tabled by the applicant that demonstrates the applicant's consideration of alternatives to demolition.

25. CTA asks that consent for demolition for this very significant scheduled Category B building be declined.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak in support of our submission at a public hearing.

04 April 2017

Signature:



Helen Geary
Board Member, Civic Trust Auckland