

Before an Independent Hearing  
Commissioner

In the Matter

Of the Resource Management  
Act 1991

And

In the Matter

By

Masterton District Council  
**Applicant**

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Statement of Evidence of Maseina Koneferenisi

Dated: 11 April 2025

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**HAZELTON**|LAW

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hearing

CONSTRUCTION | INSURANCE | RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Maseina Koneferenisi. I am the General Manager Infrastructure and Assets for Masterton District Council ('the Council').

### **Involvement in this matter**

2. I joined the Council in February 2024. My remit includes being the internal project sponsor of the Town Hall project.

### **Background and history of the site as used for town hall and municipal purposes**

3. The Masterton Town Hall is located at 64 Chapel Street, Masterton and is made up of three connected buildings: the Town Hall, the Municipal Building (previously home to the Council's offices) and the Civil Defence Building.
4. Until 2016, this building was occupied by Masterton District Council staff, including Council chambers.
5. A municipal building and town hall was built on the site in 1916. Earthquakes in 1942 caused significant damage to the buildings, which were not repaired until some 12 years later, in 1954. The repair work incorporated a new extension and general redesign of the buildings - providing the appearance it has today.
6. In 1984, the northernmost portion of the Municipal buildings was demolished and replaced with a two-storey addition known as the Civil Defence building.
7. In 2015, the buildings were rated at 40% NBS and then revised to 16% NBS in 2016, following a structural report undertaken by LGE Consulting Ltd.
8. This resulted in the buildings being closed and added to the Earthquake Prone Building Register. Initially, staff were spread across temporary accommodation in Masterton, before eventually moving into Waiata House, which was purchased by the Council in 2017 and sits adjacent to the Town Hall and Municipal Buildings, and offices on Queen Street.
9. The buildings have been closed to the public since this time. All functions are now delivered from the Waiata House and Queen Street Offices.

### **Significance of this location to Council for civic use**

10. There is a long history of civic use on this site.
11. In the mid to late 1890s, the Masterton Trust Lands Trust built a new Town Hall in Lincoln Road. The building was referred to as 'The Opera House' and is now the site of Waiata House.

12. This site and the site of the current Town Hall were donated to the Borough by the Masterton Trust Lands Trust in 1879 for a library and a building incorporating the library and municipal offices was constructed.
13. In 1916, the building was moved further south on the site and a replacement Municipal Buildings built, incorporating the Town Hall.
14. The site of the Town Hall sits within a 'council precinct' made up of 5 titles from Perry Street to Lincoln Road.
15. Following closure of the Town Hall building in 2016, council staff operated out of the Civil Defence building, floors in the Public Trust building and offices on Bannister Street.
16. The Council has also leased a building at 161 Queen Street. This building currently houses the Council's "front of house" and some other council staff.
17. In 2017, Masterton District Council purchased Waiata House, which is immediately adjacent to the Town Hall Site.
18. Following the completion of extensive rework on Waiata House in 2018 Council moved into Waiata House, relinquishing the temporary offices in the Public Trust building and Bannister St. The building now houses the majority of Council staff, except for those still located in Queen Street.
19. Work is currently underway to extend that building to incorporate the Council officers currently located at Queen Street, Council Chambers and Civil Defence functions.

#### **Fitness for purpose**

20. The Municipal Building has a floor area of 1,260m<sup>2</sup> across both levels. In 2019, the Council engaged Silverwood Architects to review how the building could be utilised in its existing state to house Council officers and functions.
21. It had already reached capacity before the Municipal Building was closed in 2016. This review identified a requirement for an additional 1,040m<sup>2</sup>, including circulation space that is required for a modern, collaborate workspace.
22. The existing municipal building office spaces are long, narrow, disconnected, disjointed and very much a product of the time that they were built. The Silverwood report identified that extending the building in its current state to accommodate all council facilities would only reproduce and worsen spatial inefficiencies of the building.
23. The existing Town Hall has a seating capacity of 606 and was used for events such as dances, conferences, displays, weddings and stage shows.



24. The LGE structural report identified in 2016 that the works required to improve the Town Hall are substantial and appear to be of a similar scope to constructing a new Hall structure.
25. It is for this reason that all options have considered demolishing the existing Town Hall and building new to provide a modern town hall space. Research undertaken through community consultation between 2017-2018 by Horwath HTL in April 2019 identified that most or all previous users of the Town Hall believed that it no longer met their needs or requirements.
26. Aside from structural issues, the building also has several issues that impair its usability as an auditorium, including poor acoustic design, lack of backroom/ changing facilities; and dated staging and lighting infrastructure.

### **Redevelopment of existing buildings**

27. The 1942 earthquake caused significant damage to the Municipal Building and Town Hall. The 1954 redevelopment included an extension and general redesign of the building.
28. As previously stated, the northernmost portion of the Municipal Building was demolished and replaced with a two-storey addition known as the Civil Defence building in 1984.
29. The Municipal Building has also had ongoing alterations, particularly to the ground floor. Internal sections of unreinforced masonry wall have been removed as required to accommodate refurbishments which have further undermined the structure of the building.
30. The inside of the Municipal Building was heavily modified during its last major refurbishment and much of the heritage detail in its décor and internal structure was removed.

### **Recent history**

31. In 2016, the Council planned to undertake work on the Municipal Building and, as part of this process, commissioned a new seismic report based on updated geological information for the Wairarapa region (LGE structural report)
32. In June 2016 Masterton's Town Hall and most of the rest of the Municipal Building was closed following this assessment which found that the building had an earthquake rating below the required standard and was no longer fit for purpose.
33. Upon receipt of the report the Council discharged its legislative responsibilities under the Building Act and Health and Safety requirements at that time. The Council fulfilled its responsibility by issuing an EPB notice, posting it on the building, and making the decision to vacate the premises for safety reasons.



34. The structural report indicated a range of 10-20% NBS for the lowest-rated elements of the building. and posed a life-safety risk to users. For this reason, the Council made the decision to vacate the building for safety reasons.
35. In accordance with Section 133 AL (3) of the Building Act, an Earthquake Prone Building notice was issued reflecting the lowest % NBS rating identified in the seismic assessment report. The EPB Notice was issued in August 2018.

#### **Considering options for site since then**

36. Attached to my statement as Appendix 1 is a table showing the timeline of events involving the Town Hall since 2016. I set this out in further detail below.
37. Following closure of the buildings in 2016, several options have been considered by Masterton District Council. This has involved extensive community engagement to seek direction and input from the community about their desires for a replacement Town Hall.
38. In 2017, Council asked the community for feedback on whether it should demolish the existing town hall and municipal buildings and build new, or to strengthen the buildings through the 2017/2018 Annual Plan consultation.
39. At this time, 65% of the 220 survey respondents indicated that they preferred to build a new facility over strengthening the existing building.
40. In 2018, three options were put forward as part of the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan:
  - (a) Build a new facility (59% support - cost \$15.5 Million)
  - (b) Strengthen the existing building (27% support - cost \$12-15 Million)
  - (c) Not to replace the town hall and demolish the buildings (14% support - cost \$850,000)
41. Following this, the Council resolved to proceed with building a new wharenuī/civic centre with further work to be undertaken regarding the potential design and the location. This was to include considering options on the current site. These options were developed in 2019 and are outlined below.
42. In August 2018, Masterton District Council released an ROI seeking a developer to develop the Town Hall and Municipal Building into a Civic Precinct, preferably including a Hotel, Events Centre and multi-purpose facility and optionally apartments.

43. Four responses were received (purchase of, or partnership with Council). Only one contained a partnership development/redevelopment proposal. It was later agreed that further work was required to understand the requirements of the civic centre.
44. In June 2019, the following options were put to Council for consideration by the Civic Centre Steering Group:
- (a) Option 1 - do nothing option (i.e. leave as the status quo)
  - (b) **Option 2 - complete demolition of all buildings on the site**
  - (c) Option 3: complete demolition with the retention of the façade (structural support for the façade)
  - (d) Option 4 - demolition of the existing Auditorium (hall) and only seismically upgrade the Municipal Building and Civil Defence building (Hall beyond strengthening and must be demolished)
  - (e) **Option 5 - New events centre (demolition of all existing buildings and façade)**
  - (f) Option 6 New Events Centre with façade retained
  - (g) **Option 7 - New Events centre, façade and seismically upgrade the Municipal Building and Civil Defence Building.**
45. Council agreed to consult with the public on options 2, 5 and 7 (in bold above).
46. In November 2019, the Council resolved to carry out a phased engagement/consultation approach to test previous assumptions regarding community preferences and to ensure that any decision made by Council regarding the Civic Centre was the most appropriate decision.
47. In the summer of 2019/2020, over 1050 people responded to a survey on what a Civic Facility should contain. The facilities chosen as most important were:
- (a) Space for concerts
  - (b) Meeting room facilities
  - (c) Arts/cultural exhibition space
  - (d) A library
48. In February 2020, council revised the options for engagement through the Annual Plan 2020-2021 to be the following:
- (a) Preferred - Demolish the Town Hall only and retain the façade, municipal buildings and Civil Defence Building. Explore the



design, costs and location of a new multi-purpose facility that may include a library.

- (b) Alternative - demolish existing buildings and façade. Build a new multi-purpose facility encompassing space for events and a new library at the most appropriate location for such a facility.
49. 278 submitters indicated their preference, with 48.6% selecting the preferred option and 51.4% selecting the alternative (some submitters indicated that they did not support either of the options).
50. In May 2020, the Council agreed that a multi-purpose community facility, incorporating a Town Hall, be built in Masterton, approved proceeding with the development and design plans with costings, including fitout, for a new multipurpose facility with an option for a library either on the existing site or on another suitable location and investigate the potential use of the municipal building and civil defence building with relevant costings.
51. In December 2020, the Council agreed to what a new Civic facility would include and where in Masterton it would be located (north end of town rather than the existing location). The facility was to include:
- (a) 27m x 27m flexi-form (black box theatre)
  - (b) Library and archives
  - (c) Information hub (Council services; i-site; Destination Wairarapa; box office)
  - (d) Suitable kitchen facilities to support the event space
  - (e) Meeting rooms
  - (f) Pre-function come exhibition space
52. In May 2021, as part of the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan consultation the community was asked when the Civic Facility should be built and how it should be funded. 191 submissions were received.
53. 46% of those submissions preferred either building straight away or with a minimum of \$4 million external funding, 53% (103) selected the 'neither option'.
54. Of the 103 responders who said that they did not prefer either option, 58 provided further commentary, with 17% indicating support for a facility, either new or other, 48% neutral to the Civic Facility, and 34% against building any Civic Facility.
55. In June 2021, the Council confirmed the development of a new Civic Facility through the adoption of the Long-Term Plan 2021-31 (LTP). The budget provision allowed for the development was \$30.8 million plus contingency.



56. At this time, Council resolved that subject to the successful negotiation of purchase of the preferred site for the new Civic Facility, staff were to investigate future options, such as sale or lease, for the Municipal Building, which was to include an option to retain the Façade.
57. In 2021-2022, the Civic Facility project was focussed on purchasing land in the northern part of Masterton following a Council decision in August 2021. Negotiations ended in an unsuccessful bid in March 2022.
58. Between March - May 2022, Council considered alternative sites on Council owned land, including land on and around the Trust House Recreation Centre. This caused significant public pushback.
59. On 23 May 2022, Council was advised that the estimated cost of the project as scoped in 2021 had escalated to \$57.14 million, with a recommended contingency of \$14.2 million.
60. This was a result of more detailed work being undertaken to understand the scope of work which was then costed. Council considered that this was unaffordable, and the project was put on hold. It was acknowledged that significant or material changes to the scope of the project would be required to proceed and delivered to within the initial council approved budget.
61. Council utilised the 2023/24 Annual Plan consultation process to once again, seek feedback from the community to inform the development of options for a reduced scope Civic Facility, noting that preferred option/s would then be analysed, costed and consulted on as part of the 2024-34 LTP process. This included decisions about the future of the library.
62. During this consultation an average of 178-180 submitters responded to each question related to the Library and Civic Facility. The feedback received signalled a change in direction from what was scoped and included in the 2021-31 LTP. Feedback indicated our community would like Council to explore:
  - (a) Developing a Civic Facility with a reduced scope (excluding at least the library) on the existing Town Hall site.
  - (b) Expanding the existing Library on its current site.
63. In 2023, a Project Advisory Group was established to oversee the development of options for consultation through the long-term plan. The Project Advisory Group was made up of Elected Members, Iwi representatives, community stakeholders and subject matter experts.
64. An architect was engaged in October 2023 to provide a bulk and massing study for options to develop the Town Hall site. During this process, the architect proposed an alternative option for the treatment of the Town Hall and Municipal Building. This alternative solution would likely be more cost effective, while providing a better outcome (extension of

Waiata House to accommodate council staff, chambers and civil defence.

65. In December 2023, Council agreed to include this option for consultation.
66. In April 2024, the Council consulted with the community through the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan. This included the following options:
  - (a) Preferred option: Demolish the town hall and municipal building, build new Town Hall/performance space on existing site. Extend Waiata House to meet the Municipal building's function (including public meeting chambers and the regional civil defence facilities).
  - (b) Alternative Option 1: Demolish Town Hall, build a new Town Hall/performance space on the existing site, refurbish the Municipal buildings (retaining the existing footprint). Retain Waiata House as the refurbished Municipal Buildings will not be big enough to accommodate all Council functions including Council Chambers, Civil Defence and customer services.
  - (c) Alternative Option 2: Demolish the Town Hall and Municipal Buildings (including façade), retain Waiata House and Queen Street premises.
67. A total of 722 submitters responded to the questions related to the Town Hall. Of these, 51% (368) supported Alternative option 2, 46% (332) supported Council's preferred option, and 3% (22) supported Alternative Option 1.
68. In June 2024 Council resolved to:
  - (a) Retain and expand the existing Waiata House, to accommodate Civil Defence, customer services, a Council Chamber, public meeting rooms and a lab as an estimate cost, of \$8.7 million (including 33% contingency).
  - (b) Demolish the Town Hall and Municipal Buildings and build a new Town Hall on the current Town Hall site including a multi-purpose space for performances or functions, as outlined in the preferred option but DO NOT retain the Municipal Building façade, with a budget of no more than \$25 million (including contingency) and to include this in years 1 to 4 of the LTP.
  - (c) Direct officers to proceed with the detailed design for the new Town Hall and Municipal Buildings
  - (d) Direct officers to proceed with a fixed price tender process for the build for no more than the remaining budget.



## **Local fundraising**

69. To ensure best value for money for ratepayers, staff are assisting local fundraiser, Bob Francis, in setting up a charitable trust with the primary purpose of fundraising for the new facility, with the aim of reducing the cost burden on local ratepayers and improving the quality of the final development through supporting a quality fitout. Bob is a well-known and highly regarded ex-Mayor of Masterton. He is also a submitter to this application.
70. Bob and the team he has assembled are determined to help support our growing district and region achieve a positive future for locals and visitors by creating a fully flexible space we can all be proud of - an asset for all of us.

## **Recognition of heritage loss**

71. Masterton District Council acknowledges the historic heritage value of the building and its contribution to the streetscape and community.
72. However, the cost of maintaining and repairing the building and/or the façade (and protecting those historic heritage values) are significant, at real risk of escalation, and given that the building is no longer fit for purpose, those costs simply cannot be justified.

## **Risk of scope and cost escalation**

73. As part of the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan, Council resolved to build a new multi-purpose space for performances and functions, at a budget of no more than \$25 million (including contingency) to be included in years 1 to 4 of the LTP, excluding any external funds raised.
74. Scope and cost escalations must be managed within this budget ceiling. Based on the RPS cost report, the Dunning Thornton Structural Options Report and informal evidence within the construction sector, the Council is confident that the risk of this is much lower with a demolition and new build than in retrofitting an existing building (including façade).

## **Building safety**

75. The deadline for complying with the earthquake prone notice has been extended.
76. The Building (Earthquake prone Building Deadlines and Other Matters) Amendment Act was passed on 26 November 2024, this provides an extension to the remediation deadlines for earthquake-prone buildings by 4 years for those buildings whose deadlines had not lapsed before 2 April 2024.
77. For the Town Hall/Municipal Buildings this means that the buildings will need to be either remediated (strengthened) or demolished by 26



February 2030. The work required to bring the building up to the necessary standard remains the same.

78. The Amendment Act also introduces a one-off power to further extend remediation deadlines by up to 2 years, if required. This power must be used by 2 April 2028.

### **Resolution to demolish**

79. Council resolved to demolish the existing Town Hall, Municipal and Civil Defence buildings (including façade) as part of the 2024-2034 Long Term plan in order to build a new multi-purpose space for performances and functions, with the Council Chamber and civil defence functions to move to the Waiata House extension.
80. The resource consent application that is the subject of this hearing was subsequently prepared and the Council sought to publicly notify the application because of known interest in the building and its future use.

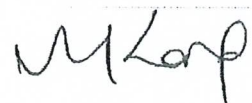
### **Current plans for redevelopment for the site if consent is granted**

81. The 2024-2034 Long Term Plan resolved to demolish the existing Town Hall and Municipal Buildings, including the façade and build a new multi-purpose Town Hall on the current site, with a total budget of no more the \$25 million (excluding any external fundraising to support the project) and to incorporate elements of the old Town Hall including salvaging materials during the demolition phase that can be re-used in the new build.
82. It is expected that demolition of the site will take approximately 6 months to complete.
83. Council will work with key stakeholders, including Iwi, user groups and subject matter experts to develop concepts and detailed plans for the new town hall and will engage with the community in relation to options for a new build once it has been determined the new build can be completed within councils capped budget.
84. The Long-Term Plan set out funding for years 1 to 4 of the Long-Term Plan with a view to having demolition and construction of a new facility completed within this timeframe.
85. The Council's current directive is to demolish the existing building and build a new town hall/civic facility as part of the 2024-2034 Long-Term Plan.
86. If resource consent is not granted for demolition, the Council will need to agree the next steps, noting the pending statutory deadline for dealing with earthquake prone buildings.
87. This will likely require further consultation with the community about what to do with the site.

## Comment on conditions

88. I have read and considered the resource consent conditions recommended by Ms Clark in the section 42A report. I am not a Planner but would like to highlight some practical concerns that the Council has in relation to proposed conditions 3 and 4.
89. Conditions 3 and 4 state:
- 3. That any demolition authorised by this consent shall not commence on site until a set of development plans for a replacement building on the site have been agreed to by Council.*
- 4. That the replacement building, as referred to in condition 3 above, shall commence within 2 years after the demolition of the building.*
90. The Council understands the intent of these conditions, which is to mitigate effects and ensure that redevelopment of the site occurs promptly following demolition. However, the Council cannot accept these conditions as appropriate for the reasons below.
91. The Local Government Act 2002 provides the operating environment Masterton District Council is required to work within. This includes the democratic process of decision making by elected members in relation to expenditure of public money, rates impact etc.
92. Related to this, the direction and decisions (resolutions) made by the council of the day set the parameters/confines work must be carried out within. In this case, the Town Hall project, including any construction of a new civic building must not exceed ratepayer funding of \$25 million.
93. If following demolition, it is established the new build cannot be undertaken within the financial cap placed on the Council by elected members, then the Council may be unable to comply with this condition.
94. I am also concerned that these conditions may encourage the next stage of redevelopment to be rushed to comply with the timeframes set out in these consent conditions. This could result in a less-than-optimal build outcome. The Council's preference would be to demolish, then produce a concept design of the empty precinct in the event a new build does not occur.

Dated this day of 11 April 2025



Maseina Koneferenisi  
Masterton District Council



## Appendix 1: Timeline of events since 2016

Year	Date	Key Event	Details
2016		Building Closed	Masterton Town Hall and Municipal Buildings closed following structural assessment
2017	March	2017/2018 Annual Plan consultation	<p>Asked the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolish the town hall and municipal buildings</li> <li>- Build new</li> <li>- Strengthen building</li> </ul>
2018	March	2018-2028 Long Term Plan Consultation	<p>Asked the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build a new facility</li> <li>- Strengthen the existing</li> <li>- Not to replace the town hall and demolish the buildings</li> </ul>
2018	May	LTP deliberations	Council agreed to recommendation to build a new Civic Centre
2018	August	ROI	ROI released seeking a developer to develop the existing buildings into a Civic Precinct, preferably including a hotel, events centre, and multi-purpose facility. Only one response contained a partnership redevelopment proposal. This was not progressed.
2019	July	Options considered	<p>Civic Centre steering group put forward 7 options for consideration. It was agreed that 3 options would be taken forward for community consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete demolition of all buildings on the site</li> <li>- New events centre (demolition of all existing buildings and façade)</li> <li>- New Events centre, façade and seismically upgrade the</li> </ul>



Year	Date	Key Event	Details
			municipal buildings and civil defence building.
2019	November	Phased engagement	Council resolved to carry out phased engagement/ consultation approach to test previous assumptions and preferences
2019/2020	Summer	Survey	Civic Facility survey on what the Civic facility should contain.
2020	February	Annual Plan Engagement revised options	Options for engagement through the Annual Plan 2020-2021 revised to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolish the town hall only, retain the façade, municipal buildings and civil defence building. Explore the design, costs and location of a new multi-purpose facility that may include a library.</li> <li>- Alternative – demolish existing building buildings and façade. Build a new multi-purpose facility encompassing space for events and a new library at the most appropriate location for such a facility.</li> </ul>
2020	May	Council decision	Multi-purpose community facility, incorporating a Town Hall, be built in Masterton with an option for a library either on the existing site or on another suitable location. Council staff to investigate the potential use of the municipal buildings and civil defence building with relevant costings.
2020	December	Civic Facility scope and location	Council agreed to what a new civic facility would include and that it

Year	Date	Key Event	Details
			was to be located at the north end of town.
2021	May	2021-2031 Long Term Plan consultation	Community asked when the Civic Facility should be built and how it should be funded.
2021	June	2021-2031 Long Term Plan	Long Term Plan adopted including funding for the development of a new Civic Facility.
2021-2022		Land purchase	Focus on land purchase in the northern part of Masterton for the site of the new Civic Facility. This was unsuccessful.
2022	March-May	Alternative sites	Council considered alternative sites on Council Owned Land including land on and around the Trust House Recreation Centre.
2022	May	Cost escalation	Council advised that cost of the project as scoped would be \$57.14 million with a recommended contingency of \$14.2 million. Council considered this was unaffordable and the project was put on hold.
2022	March-May	Annual Plan consultation	Feedback sought from the community to inform development of options for a reduced scope Civic Facility.
2022	October	Project Advisory Group	Project Advisory Group established, made up of Iwi representatives, Elected Members, community stakeholders and subject matter experts oversee option development.
2022	October	Bulk and massing	An architect was engaged to a bulk and massing study for options to develop the Town Hall site. An

Year	Date	Key Event	Details
			alternative solution to extend Waiata House to deliver the functions of the original Municipal and Civil Defence Buildings was proposed.
2024	April	2024-2034 Long Term Plan Consultation	<p>Consultation with the community, including the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preferred option: Demolish the town hall and municipal building, build new Town Hall/performance space on existing site. Extend Waiata House to meet the Municipal building's function (including public meeting chambers and the regional civil defence facilities).</li> <li>- Alternative Option 1: Demolish Town Hall, build a new Town Hall/performance space on the existing site, refurbish the Municipal buildings (retaining the existing footprint). Retain Waiata House as the refurbished Municipal Buildings will not be big enough to accommodate all Council functions including Council Chambers, Civil Defence and customer services.</li> <li>- Alternative Option 2: Demolish the Town Hall and Municipal Buildings (including façade), retain Waiata House and Queen Street premises.</li> </ul>



Year	Date	Key Event	Details
2024	June	Decision	<p>Council resolved to demolish the Town Hall and Municipal buildings and build a new Town Hall on the current site including a multi-purpose space for performances or functions but NOT to retain the Municipal Building Façade with a budget of no more than \$25 Million (including contingency) in years 1-4 of the LTP.</p> <p>Council functions including council chamber and civil defence to be delivered through an extension to Waiaata House.</p>