

Submission: **Resource Consent to demolish the existing Town Hall and Municipal Buildings.**

Application: **RM240135**

It is my view that the Masterton District Council needs to grant the resource consent application to demolish the existing Town Hall and Municipal Buildings to enable a building fit for purpose be constructed. The delay to progress this project over the last 9 years have burdened ratepayers with the accumulating costs to maintain the existing building, insurance, security and general ongoing costs at no return for money spent.

Discussions of various proposals have ranged during these past 9 years from strengthening the buildings, major renovations and earthquake proofing. Taking the Wellington Town Hall as an example, the costs blowout has been crippling. While the Town Hall remains standing it remains a major risk factor should an earthquake occur.

It is way passed the time for Council to take affirmative action and demolish the Town Hall and build a facility fit for purpose.

The Council needs to to take urgency and build a functional facility that we can all be proud of and be able to access and enjoy. This is long overdue and ratepayers deserve the leadership by Council in whom they can have confidence.

Peter Debney
04 February 2025

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Resource Consent Application to demolish the existing Masterton Town Hall and Municipal Buildings.

Application: RM240135

Hearing Submission:

My name is Peter Debney. I am a Masterton resident and ratepayer.

As it currently stands, the wider public perception of these buildings, abandoned since 2016, are seen as a monument to procrastination and delusions of grandeur by factions in the apparently previous divided Councils.

During these past 9 years the integrity of the collective decision making of previous Councils in relationship to any proposal to renovate or rebuild the Town Hall have been called into question, while thousands have been expended on so-called public consultations, ignoring the majority of ratepayers' views.

This included promoting grandiose schemes of their own, such as relocating the Town Hall and promoting vastly expanded facilities, to a northern location of the CBD and the proposed purchase of a block of commercial land. This, had it gone ahead, would have imposed outrageous rating demands on our community and would have indebted ratepayers for generations to come had it proceeded.

In addition, discussions of various proposals have ranged during these past 9 years from strengthening the buildings, major renovations, and, earthquake proofing.

Taking the Wellington Town Hall as an example, the costs blowout for Wellington ratepayers has been crippling.

As noted in the statement of evidence by David Paris, dated 28 March 2025, para 26, the Wellington Town Hall is an example of the risk of having to proceed with a renovation project that committed ratepayers to significantly greater funding to see it completed.

While the Masterton Town Hall and municipal buildings remain standing, they pose a major risk factor should an earthquake occur.

Ratepayers have been burdened with the accumulating costs to maintain the existing buildings, insurance, security, and general ongoing costs, at no return for money spent.

In progressing this proposal, requesting consent to demolish the existing Masterton Town Hall and municipal buildings, the current Masterton District Council have continued to consult widely to identify and incorporate in a proposed purpose built, fit for purpose facility that will incorporate modern, flexible and sociable spaces that would support a wide range of community, social, and cultural activities.

As noted in the MDC's submission, summarised in the statement of evidence of Stephen Geuze, dated 28 March 2025, para's 21 & 22, MDC is progressing with design solutions to extend Waiata House to provide for accommodating Civil Defence and MDC office-based staff, including those currently based in the rented facility on Queen Street.

Accepting that the Waiata House extensions are completed, this will provide MDC with the opportunity to specifically design a new stand-alone Town Hall to meet current and future generations' needs and aspirations within the financial restraints imposed on MDC in determining its funding allocations across all MDC services.

This would be supplemented by community investment as proposed by Bob Francis, as acknowledged in the MDC's submission.

This current proposal will importantly develop, in partnership with Rangitane o Wairarapa and Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, a new facility that would recognise and value their respective cultural connection to Whakaoriori, acknowledging and celebrating tikanga, endorsing and enhancing the qualities of our multi-cultural Masterton community for current and future generations to embrace.

The expert evidence produced have addressed a number of heritage, construction, and engineering issues that this Hearing will have to assess.

Nonetheless, my reading of the reports provided to me in preparation for this hearing, as stated in the conclusion of the statement of evidence of Daniel Butterick, dated 31 March 2025, the demolition of the existing Town Hall and municipal buildings, and the rebuild of a stand-alone fit for purpose Town Hall, does indeed, represent the lowest risk for ratepayers such as myself, in terms of cost and time overruns.

It is my considered opinion that the cost effectiveness of this proposal would also substantially contribute to the economic development of Masterton for the benefit of current and future generations.

Most importantly, it would be the most affordable of all the proposals for current and future ratepayers.

Ratepayers deserve the leadership by Council to urgently progress this proposal. A Council in whom ratepayers can have confidence to set personal conflicts to one side in planning for our community's future.

With this Hearing's endorsement, the Masterton District Council needs to take urgency and build a functional facility that we can all be proud of and be able to access and enjoy now and in the future. This is long overdue.

Peter Debney
15 April 2025