

Report

Date : 21 March 2019
To : Mayor and Councillors
Tararua District Council
From : Peter Wimsett
Manager Strategy & District Development
Subject : **Future of the Dannevirke Carnegie Building**
Item No : **13.5**

1. Reason for the Report

To determine the future of the Carnegie Building, Allardice Street, Dannevirke

2. Background

The Building Act 2004 contains the earthquake-prone building provisions. The Carnegie building is predominantly Unreinforced Masonry (URM) and was assessed as earthquake prone in 2013 by structural engineers, Beca NZ, with a rating of 8% New Building Standards (NBS). The usual timeframes for high risk areas such as Dannevirke are 15 years for strengthening, unless the building is a priority building, in which case the strengthening is half that timeframe.

Section 133AE of the Building Act 2004 contains the definition of priority buildings, and includes two broad categories:

- those that are prescribed in the Building Act 2004 – these include certain hospital, emergency and education buildings, and
- those that are described in the Building Act 2004 and determined with community input – this category includes parts of URM buildings that could fall in an earthquake onto certain thoroughfares with sufficient vehicular or pedestrian traffic to warrant prioritisation, and buildings that could collapse and impede transport routes of strategic importance.

Buildings that exceed 34% of NBS are no longer considered Earthquake Prone, although they are still considered high risk for failure in an earthquake. Whilst this building was being used for youth services, the strengthening work is required within 7.5 years of receiving notice from Council.

Particular risks from the Carnegie building include:

- Unreinforced masonry that is failing or has failed in places.
- Being used with capacity for 20 or more people to be inside using the facility on a regular basis.
- Its location is immediately next to a pedestrian footpath, skate bowl, road and right-of-way and the height of the building would likely reach those areas in a collapse

3. Discussion

The building was vacated as a library in 1980 as it was no longer fit for purpose as a library. It has had various tenants since then including Tararua Community Youth Services, Crime Prevention community unit, a toy library and use for band practice. There is another small brick annex building at the rear and the original band room has since been demolished due to it also being earthquake prone. A new band room has been built on the site section and a small skate bowl.

The building design does not suit most modern uses, being internally very tall, with tall windows and is difficult to heat and retain energy. Strengthening to 34% NBS is estimated by Beca to be over \$440,000 if done this year and contractors were available. This \$440,000+ cost does not mean it is then earthquake proof, it just means that the building should be safe for evacuation in the design for an earthquake. As evident in Christchurch and Wellington, once the building has been damaged, it is generally more cost effective to demolish and start afresh, than repair.

The building interior has not had a major upgrade in many decades and would need re-fitting. The i-SITE upgrade in 2016 was of a similar floor space and gives a reference to the potential costs involved in a refit. Depending on the intended future use, then a full refit is also likely to cost a further \$400,000 to \$600,000.

Consequently, if strengthening and fit out was to be done, Council would require a budget of at least \$1.0 million. At this level of cost a new building or buildings could be constructed with far better community outcomes.

As a public building requiring significant investment, its future purpose needs to be clear. Council already has a town hall, sports centre and Council administration building.

4. Options

There are three main options:

1. Retain and strengthen
2. Sell or gift
3. Demolish

Retain and do nothing is only a short term option until the mandatory requirement to upgrade or demolish is triggered. A private sale or gifting to a charitable or non-government agency will not remove the obligation for the building to be upgraded. However, the latter may provide a better avenue for fundraising than Council can access.

5. Consideration of Options

Retain and Strengthen

Council has advised the public and publicly consulted that it does not wish to invest in strengthening the Carnegie building. However, if Council has a specific purpose for the site then it could undertake the following steps:

The steps in the option to retain and strengthen the building are to complete:

1. Conservation Plan including maintenance programme, Feasibility Study, Seismic Strengthening Report
2. Detailed Engineering Design for purpose of procurement through tender
3. Application for funding to:
 - i. Internal Affairs – Lotteries Commission Grant
 - ii. Other funding agencies

It would then need to budget and to potentially re-consult on the purpose, design and cost, which would trigger an amendment to the Long Term Plan.

Sell or Gift

The Carnegie building is a Category 2 heritage building but there have been only low levels of interest to retain the building for the high cost of investment.

Heritage New Zealand notes:

- Carnegie library as important and representing only a few surviving buildings of its type in New Zealand.
- It would be very supportive of seismic strengthening and also any applications to Lotteries Board for a conservation plan and maintenance plan [with costings], a feasibility study and further seismic reporting/design.
- The Fountain Theatre in Dannevirke has recently received a Heritage New Zealand grant. This is available now for Category 2 places that are privately owned.

Surviving examples:

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/41604/carnegie-libraries-in-new-zealand>

Notes the destruction of six, as at 2014 – more could have been destroyed since then

[https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/carnegie-free-libraries - historical background.](https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/carnegie-free-libraries-historical-background)

They suggest that the best avenue for the long term adaptive reuse of the building is maybe for Council to look at strengthening and adapting with assistance of the Lotteries Board for a public based use. In terms of adaptive reuse this should be looked at as an option and if a proposed community facility may meet Lotteries Board funding under a different category.

The works on the surviving Carnegie Libraries could be further investigated- the latest being the Thames Library. This is an award winning place.

<http://www.thetreasury.org.nz/>

Because charitable organisations are able to access greater funding sources than Council, this might be the only practical avenue for the high cost associated with retention. However, the Dannevirke Carnegie Building Trust wound itself up in 2016, meaning another entity would have to approach Council with an appropriate purpose. In gifting the building Council decisions would have to be made on the land and section and area being transferred. The Council would write-off the associated values but may also be expected to fund operational costs if the entity is not self-funding.

Demolition

The demolition of a Category 2 building would require consent under the District Plan. The Council has fully consulted on the options for the building and this would be presented as part of the application for consent.

The cost of demolition is estimated to cost \$40,000 to \$60,000 depending on whether asbestos is found. It is also possible to retain a part of the façade as a memorial to the building and its history, as Auckland has done in Ponsonby where part of the front façade now features in a public park as a permanent link to the past. This further option has not been costed but could be in the order of \$10,000 to \$20,000 depending on the condition of the 'saved portion' of structure.



The current value of the building is \$60,000 and would be written off. The land value of \$45,000 (1 September 2017) could then be sold or the site re-used, having regard for the band room building and skate park.

The location is close to town and will be attractive for reuse. Council is looking for new sites to build Pensioner Flats. This site could provide attractive close-to-town options for the elderly.

6. Conclusion

Council having considered the options, costs and earlier consultation now can determine their next steps to addressing the long term needs of the Carnegie building.

7. Recommendation

This report was left to lie on the table while the community facilities portfolio holders considered and worked through options to find alternative premises for Tararua Community Youth Services (so they could vacate the Carnegie building).

Now that Tararua Community Youth Services have vacated the building its future needs to be determined. Council is mindful it is likely to incur significant expenditure to strengthen the building, and would need to determine what potential use the building may have and modify it for that purpose.

Council should advise the public it intends to demolish the Carnegie building in the 2019 calendar year based on the estimated \$1m cost to strengthen and renovate it in accordance with the Building Act 2004, and provide the opportunity for feedback on the public's preferred use of the associated land. If the building is demolished it may be possible to retain part of the façade as a memorial to the building and its history, and this option should be included as part of the discussion with the community.

To enable this to occur it is proposed to provide a further four weeks for public feedback on this intention which aligns with the adopted Long Term Plan, and also to consider the possibility of arranging a community meeting to discuss Council's intentions during this period. A final decision could then be made at the 29 May 2019 Council meeting.

8. Recommendation

That the report from the Manager Strategy and District Development dated 21 March 2019 concerning the future of the Dannevirke Carnegie building (as circulated) be received, thereby uplifting this item of business from the table for discussion at this meeting, and

That as aligned with the adopted Long Term Plan Council advise the public it intends to demolish the Carnegie building in the 2019 calendar year based on the estimated one million dollar cost to strengthen and renovate it in accordance with the Building Act 2004, and its preference is to replace this building with Council pensioner housing situated on the site, and

That a period of four weeks is made available for feedback from the community regarding their preferred options for use of this land and Council's proposed intention, and

That the discussion with the community include the option to retain part of the façade as a memorial to the building and its history, and

That a final decision be made at the 29 May 2019 Council meeting whether to confirm its proposed intention in determining the future of this building.