

13 March 2017

Mayor & Councillors  
Wellington City Council  
Wellington  
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Kia ora Mayor and Councillors

We are aware that Victoria University is intending to sell the Karori Teachers' College campus and that the WCC is currently involved in evaluating whether it considers the campus, or any part of it, as necessary for public use under the Public Works Act.

We consider that this campus is an important heritage site which has national, regional and local significance. The grounds for a heritage listing include:

1. the national significance of the architect (Bill Toomath),
2. the high quality of its design and execution (including: aesthetics, material detailing, sensitive scale and facade treatment, site composition and landscaping (e.g. Lopdell Gardens)),
3. its skill in how a series of large buildings can sit comfortably in a suburban context, being one of the best examples of how to do this in Australasia,
4. the high quality of its acoustics and engineering design,
5. its association with nationally-significant people, including Dame Doreen Blumhardt, a significant ceramicist, potter and art educator.
6. its social values related to its role as a teachers' training college and its appreciation by former teacher-trainees and the Karori community. It has significant cultural value for the many people who have worked and studied in it over the years,
7. its recognised and important place in the history and development of tertiary architecture in New Zealand,
8. its representative value as a New Brutalist campus, and
9. its rarity as a suburban campus comprehensively designed by a single architect.

We consequently ask the council two things:

1. to urgently list the campus as a heritage site. It is an embarrassment that this significant complex is not listed. We also note that this is an important site, not simply some important buildings on a bit of land. The site's landscape values are also of significance.
2. to comprehensively investigate the possibility of the campus' adaptive re-use as high-density residential complex with community facilities.



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We consider the site has considerable potential in this regard, and note that it is contemporary with the very successful Barbican in London which is a high density residential complex with community facilities. Housing has been stated to be a high priority of this council. This site offers the potential to demonstrate the reality of this stated priority.

In addition, the complex no doubt breaches current height restrictions, meaning that a complex of similar density with an equivalent high-quality site, including recreation spaces, would be impossible in a new development. We understand that the current site composition and massing is acceptable to the community, indicating high likelihood of community support for a sensitive adaptive re-use of the existing buildings.

We have heard that issues of code compliance have been raised to refute this possibility, but note the following in this regard:

- (a) it would be very easy to produce a worst case scenario that won't stack up. We ask for a genuine investigation which is motivated by a desire to provide additional housing for Wellington which retains this important heritage site - not an administrative exercise aiming for a convenient "it'll be too hard" answer.
- (b) it is not unheard of for compromise regarding change of use and code compliance in heritage buildings. We also note s 115 of the Building Act requires an "as near as reasonably practical" approach.
- (c) we understand that the building structure is very good (one source has told us that it is 100% of code), and VUW offered it to businesses affected by last year's quake reflecting this robustness.
- (d) where there is a will there is always a way.
- (e) we do not consider that, given the above, code compliance is a significant nor insurmountable issue.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

ka nui ngā mihi



Christine McCarthy  
President  
Architectural Centre

cc. Docomomo (NZ), Grant Robertson (MP for Wellington), Heritage NZ, Historic Places Wellington, Karori Association, New Zealand Institute of Architects (Wellington Branch), New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (Wellington Branch), Save Karori Campus Campaign, Serious About Heritage, Wellington Civic Trust.



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