

Tuesday, 16 April 2024

Hon. Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure & Minister for Housing
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Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

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Tēnā koe Hon. Chris Bishop,

An open letter - 320 The Terrace (Gordon Wilson Memorial Apartments)

The Architectural Centre (AC) is a volunteer organisation made up of professionals and non-professionals who seek to promote good design of the built environment. Incorporated in 1946, the Centre has a long and proud tradition of doing just this. We write to you today to provide, what we believe, to be a robust, contemporary rationale for the retention and refurbishment of 320 The Terrace, also known as the Gordon Wilson Memorial Apartments (GWMA). We acknowledge this is a critical time in the building's future with your pending decision on whether to retain its existing heritage listing. Your decision will impact its retention.

Rationale for retention of GWMA

- An immediate solution to assist the current unaffordable housing/ accommodation crises.
- An acknowledgement that recycling and reuse is the "NEW" new.
- The provision of a good standard of living after the building is refurbished and brought up to contemporary living standards.
- An informed acknowledgement that the building's structure has good bones and can be readily improved.
- That the building is adaptable and more than fit for modern day residential living.

Statements on rationale

Unaffordable housing

Today, housing - to purchase or rent - is expensive, sometimes prohibitively so:

In Wellington City the average house value was 6.5 times its average household income in 2023

In 2012, the house value to income multiple in Wellington City was 4.5 - Infometrics



the architectural centre inc.
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The current median rent in Te Aro, Wellington for a 3-bedroom house is \$870 (\$290 per room) - Tenancy Services

Available land suitable for residential development in central Wellington is rare. The Architectural Centre strongly believes the GWMA should be retained and refurbished for the considerable provision of 150 bedrooms relative to its small footprint (WCC).

Recycling/ reuse is the “NEW” new

Modernising existing buildings has many advantages:

- We believe, by virtue of its modular design and construction, a refurbished GWMA is adaptable enough to accommodate Victoria University of Wellington’s (VUW) redevelopment scheme.
- Concrete requires an enormous amount of carbon for its production. Demolishing an existing concrete building is environmentally negligent when the building is still sound. Retaining the building is consistent with sustainability principles.
- The AC’s proposed refurbishment of GWMA and the suggested new Terrace building incorporates mass-timber elements – which is carbon-negative and consistent with VUW’s sustainability goals.
- The GWMA layouts are adaptable enough to be retained as Maisonettes (2-bed units) or easily joined to become 4-5 bed units.

Standard of living

A refurbished GWMA provides:

- Views over Wellington City and the Harbour.
- All day sun.
- A close proximity to the City.
- As concrete (a thermal mass) is a primary construction material in GWMA, the buildings are passively cooled during the day and heated during the night.
- Excellent sound-proofing between units.

The thin slab form of the Gordon Wilson Flats means that the width of the building accommodates a single flat, allowing daylight to enter all of the primary spaces within each unit. - WCC

Structure

We understand the existing Building achieves at least 50% NBS. The Facade is earthquake prone and needs strengthening work. We are also aware of a previous engineered scheme that would bring the building up to 100% NBS

Fit for the modern day use

Please refer to attached 3D image render for a possible adapted reuse of GWMA and McLean Flats that the AC believes can deliver on the expectations and requirements of Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) and its students

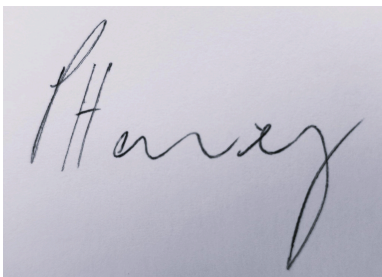
Description/ Virtues of C proposed design:

- New mass timber gateway building on the Terrace (possible offices/research).
- Landscaped courtyard and covered Plaza that retains existing trees.
- New campus portal on north side of GWMA.
- Renovated GWMA (possibly faculty and post-graduate housing).
- New cable car from the Mclean flats to the Kelburn Campus that would provide direct access for all. Pedestrian access to Campus is shown via zig zag (yellow)
- Minimal earthworks that reduce cost and disturbance to neighbours.
- A new energy efficient facade on the GWMA would exceed current standards and provide warm, safe and dry housing for years to come.
- A showcase for Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) commitment to sustainability.

In summary, this building can be modified for contemporary needs, facilitates a good standard of living, is efficient in form and compatible with passive design that is worth celebrating and recovering for the future residents of Wellington City.

Consequently, the Architectural Centre strongly asks that measures are taken to retain the Gordon Wilson Memorial Apartments.

Nāku iti noa nā



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