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MEMO

TO:	HCC Planning Guidance Unit		
FROM:	Chris Dawson, Planning Project Manager		
DATE:	7 October 2019	JOB NO.	138900-16
SUBJECT:	Hamilton Municipal Pools		

This memo considers, from a planning perspective, the Structural assessment of the Municipal pools grandstand undertaken by WSP-Opus and dated 7 October 2019. It has been produced in response to the comments made by Richard Knott in his memo dated 3rd July 2019 suggesting that consideration be given to retaining the pools grandstand as part of the proposed interpretive plan. This memo refers to the WSP-Opus report (WSP report) dated 7 October 2019 and the connected memo from Archifact (Archifact memo) dated 7 October 2019.

Consideration of the retention of the grandstand as part of an interpretive plan for the site post removal of the pools needs to take into account;

- a) the condition of the grandstand as found,
- b) the extent of upgrade work required to bring the grandstand up to modern standards,
- c) the estimated costs to undertake this work,
- d) the impact such upgrade work would have on the heritage integrity fabric of the grandstand, and
- e) the appropriateness of retaining the grandstand in the context of the pools site, the adjacent Ferrybank Reserve, the River Plan, the Operative Hamilton City District Plan and other statutory documents.

1. WSP-Opus Structural assessment

The WSP report concludes that the structural resilience of the grandstand is of concern with the building scoring significantly below the minimum %NBS (New Building Standard) for structures of importance Level 2. The building is defined as earthquake prone in terms of the Building Act 2004 and can be classed as a high-risk structure¹. The WSP report also notes that the existing structure has been substantially altered with the addition of strap braces, timber braces to the main columns, floor boards and floor joists and external cladding².

¹ WSP Opus Structural Assessment – Grandstand at Municipal Pool, pg 7, 10 Conclusions and Recommendations

² WSP Opus Structural Assessment – Grandstand at Municipal Pool, pg 7, 9 Discussions

The WSP report states that: “the original structure is inadequate in both condition and strength and would require significant structural upgrade to function as a code compliant stand-alone grandstand structure.”³ Given that the WSP report also classes the foundation soils for the site as being ‘Class D’ (deep or soft soils)⁴ this raises questions about the strength of the foundations and geotechnical conditions underneath the grandstand and whether the foundations are adequate or would need to be upgraded along with the superstructure of the building itself.

The WSP report raised questions about the integrity of the heritage fabric that exists in the grandstand today and what heritage value would be left following a significant upgrade that would be required to bring the building up to code. The WSP report states that: “The only components considered to be original are some joists supporting the timber floor boards and wall framing in the sheltered change room area”⁵. The WSP report also states that: “the few structural components that are considered original are understood to be untreated native timber and some components are in poor condition and need replacement. Durability of the untreated timber would require regular monitoring and maintenance. We have not designed strengthening measures as part of this condition assessment, however, consider it likely that the effort and hence cost would be significant. The ratio of new components to original components would significantly increase.”⁶

2. Archifact heritage memo

The Archifact memo highlights the key conclusions of the WSP report and concludes that there are substantial problems in seeking to retain the grandstand. The significant reconstruction of the grandstand to bring it up to code combined with the lack of connectedness of the grandstand to the adjacent Ferrybank Reserve following removal of the pool infrastructure renders the idea of retention without merit.

3. Planning context

The Municipal pools are a Category B Heritage ranked item in the Operative Hamilton City District Plan⁷ and the demolition of a Category B Heritage ranked item is a Discretionary Activity. While the WSP report has provided important information about the poor state of the existing structure and the extent of works required to bring it up to code, the Archifact memo concludes that any such exercise would not only lessen the historic authenticity of the remaining structure but likely be contrary to the goal of integrating the cleared pool site with the adjacent Ferrybank reserve.

The WSP report concludes that very little of the existing grandstand structure is original and that the extent of costly strengthening work would render the original materials as an even smaller proportion of the building. This raises significant questions about the validity of undertaking such an upgrading exercise and the questionable interpretive heritage benefits that would result.

The retention of the grandstand would leave the remnant grandstand structure disengaged from its original context⁸ and difficult to safely connect to the Victoria Street frontage of the site. It

³ WSP-Opus Structural Assessment – Grandstand Municipal Pools, pg 8, Conclusions & Recommendations

⁴ WSP-Opus Structural Assessment – Grandstand Municipal Pools, pg2, 3.1 Site Geotechnical Information

⁵ WSP-Opus Structural Assessment – Grandstand Municipal Pools, pg iii, Executive Summary

⁶ WSP-Opus Structural Assessment – Grandstand Municipal Pools, pg 8, Conclusions & Recommendations

⁷ Built Heritage Feature 88 (Schedule 8A), Operative Hamilton City District Plan

⁸ Archifact memo, para 2.2

would also be challenging from a health and safety perspective to connect the river side of the grandstand structure into the reserve and residual pool site. The difference in height and topography between the grandstand and its surroundings means that the structure would effectively block views from Victoria Street down across the Ferrybank Reserve to the Waikato River. It would also significantly constrain the future use of the site and cut across the aspirations expressed in the Ferrybank Development Plan.

In my view the retention of the grandstand would raise significant health and safety concerns relating to its use. Council would be responsible for not only ensuring that the structure was fit for purpose and met all current codes but would have to manage its use. If the grandstand was open to the public 24 hours a day would it have to be lit and managed so as not become a focus for antisocial behavior. If the grandstand was to be closed to the public, it would have to be fenced and locked after hours which in itself would render it mis-aligned with the open and relaxed nature of the adjacent Ferrybank Reserve.

In my view, the retention of the grandstand would be contrary to a number of the relevant statutory documents. As discussed in the Resource Consent Application and Assessment of Environmental Effects November 2018 (AEE 2018)⁹, the relevant objectives and policy of the Riverside Reserve Operative Management Plan 2008 are objective 2.2.1 (a) To preserve and enhance the natural character and amenity of the riverside reserves and (d) To conserve all objects, trees and landforms of historic significance on riverside reserves. Policy (c) states that “views of the river from roads adjoining the riverbank will be preserved and enhanced where compatible with the objectives of this Management Plan.”

The Ferrybank Development Plan is a non-statutory document that creates a masterplan for the future development of the Ferrybank reserve. The pools site is identified as Site 15 within the City Terraces realm of the Development Plan and shows a destination playground located in this location.

The WSP report and the Archifact memo conclude that the pools are in a very poor state and that the condition of the grandstand is such that it could not be retained without significant invasive work with any residual structure having little historic authenticity. This raises questions about the value that such upgrade works would provide. In addition, the positioning of the grandstand is such that it would be without context, would not address the natural orientation of the riverside reserve and would constrain future uses of the site, particularly those identified in the Ferrybank Development Plan.

On this basis, it is my view that removal of the grandstand would be consistent with objective 2.2.1 (a), 2.2.1 (c) and policy (c) by enhancing the views of the Waikato River from Victoria Street and enhancing the amenity of the riverside reserve. The opening up of the views from Victoria Street will also have the effect of improving views to the Category A ranked band Rotunda¹⁰ which is currently partially screened by the pools complex. The removal of the grandstand would also facilitate the pools site being developed in a manner that complements the adjacent Ferrybank Reserve rather than constraining the use of the site and in doing so enable the Ferrybank Development Plan.

⁹ AEE 2018, section 9.3, pg 35

¹⁰ Operative District Plan, Appendix 8, Item H12, Band Rotunda

The Archifact memo states that: "I conclude that demolition of the existing municipal pools' grandstand would not be inappropriate and equally that retention would compromise both the pools' site and the use of the adjacent reserve."¹¹

It remains my view that while the removal of the pools and the grandstand will have adverse effects on heritage values, those values are capable of being mitigated and are no more than minor in effect. The pools and the grandstand are so structurally deficient that options for upgrading and reuse would be significant, costly and so visually invasive as to eliminate any residual heritage values on the site.

In my opinion the proposal to remove the pools and the grandstand will not be inappropriate in terms of Section 6 (f) of the Act and will ensure that the site can be used by future generations to enhance their social wellbeing.

4. Proposed condition of consent

As part of the application, I now propose the following suite of conditions to address interpretive information post removal of the pools and grandstand.

1. Within six (6) months of completion of demolition activities and site filling, recontouring, and regrassing, the consent holder shall erect signage, either freestanding or attached to an existing structure in the public realm, identifying the site and providing information as to the former use of the site, including its archaeological history. The signage shall be prepared in consultation with Te Ha O Te Whenua O Kirikiriroa.
2. The consent holder shall prepare a heritage interpretation concept which shall:
 - a) Reuse some of the original timber elements of the grandstand in signage support, park furniture or similar;
 - b) Relocate the winners podium located at the eastern end of the main pool as a park feature elsewhere within the pools site;
 - c) Paint a mural on the south facing wall of the Age Concern building. The mural shall depict images, scenes or events in the life of the municipal pools;
 - d) Provide information through signage, plaques or similar, detailing the important events over the operational life of the pools, and information on those individuals who were prominent in the life of the pools as either swimmers, divers, coaches, administrators or in other technical capacities.
3. The heritage interpretation concept design shall be submitted to the Hamilton City Council for certification that it achieves the purposes outlined in condition 2 (above) no later than six (6) months after completion of demolition activities and site filling, recontouring, and regrassing.

¹¹ Archifact memo, para 2.3

4. The consent holder shall complete the installation of the heritage interpretation concept within twelve (12) months of that concept being certified by Hamilton City Council under condition (3) above.

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