

IN THE MATTER OF The Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF an application for resource consent for
the redevelopment of the former
Hamilton Hotel building at 170 Victoria
Street, Hamilton CBD

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ROBIN BYRON ON BEHALF OF HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA**

07 OCTOBER 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Robin Elizabeth Byron. I am employed as a Senior Conservation Architect with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga in its Northern Regional Office which is based in Auckland. I have been in this capacity with Heritage New Zealand for the past over 14 years.
- 1.2 I am a registered architect with the Architectural Institute of British Columbia, Canada, and am an affiliate member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. I have been involved in professional architectural practice in Canada (Toronto and Vancouver), England (Cambridge) and New Zealand (Auckland), and since coming to New Zealand 27 years ago have also taught architecture for a number of years at the University of Auckland's School of Architecture. I continue to contribute to conservation courses both at the University of Auckland School of Architecture and Planning, and to the built conservation course at Unitec.
- 1.3 I completed formal studies in architectural conservation from the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at the University of York, and at the International Laboratory for Architecture and Urban Design in Urbino, Italy (the focus of which was working in historic environments).
- 1.4 I am a Board member of International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) New Zealand and Chair of its Education and Professional Development Committee.
- 1.5 With regard to this application I have met with the applicant's consultants on a couple of occasions to discuss the proposal, and have good familiarity with the site having undertaken a comprehensive site visit on 12 July 2019. I also attended and responded to a presentation of the project to the Hamilton Urban Design Panel of which I am a member.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1 I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2014 and I agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express, and that this evidence is within my area of expertise.

3. OUTLINE OF EVIDENCE

- 3.1 My evidence addresses the submission of Heritage New Zealand in respect of the application for Resource Consent for the redevelopment of the former Hamilton Hotel building at 170 Victoria Street, Hamilton.

4. SIGNIFICANCE

- 4.1 The Hamilton Hotel is listed with Heritage New Zealand as a Category 2 historic place in recognition of its historical and cultural significance.
- 4.2 The listing covers of the whole of the hotel site, so all elements and features on the site are included. While Heritage New Zealand regards all structures and features on the site as part of the listing, there are varying levels of significance associated with them individually. I would regard the main hotel building as of higher significance than the later ancillary structures located behind it for instance. On the other hand however, there is value in the way all the components -

structures, features and gardens - collectively relate to each other and contribute to an understanding of the ongoing, evolved history of the place.

5. PROPOSAL

GENERAL

- 5.1 A new Hamilton Regional Theatre has the potential to become a vital and significant institution for the city and the wider region, especially with the closure of the Founder's Theatre, and as a catalyst for the revitalization of a significant historic area in Victoria Street in the heart of the city.
- 5.2 In my view, a positive feature of the proposal is that the historic Hamilton Hotel is incorporated into the project to effectively become the main countenance for the theatre complex to the street and urban context. In view of this, it is supremely important that the heritage of the place, its tangible and intangible values, are treated respectfully, meaningfully, and to the high standard proposed for the new build component.
- 5.3 To this end Heritage New Zealand has met on a number of occasions with the applicant to discuss our built heritage interests in the project. While much of the specific resolution of the heritage intentions is not yet detailed, I am generally satisfied that from a built heritage perspective, that the proposed conditions of consent, with ongoing Heritage New Zealand involvement to discuss and agree the finalized details concerning several heritage matters, addresses and assuages the concerns raised in the Heritage New Zealand submission.

6. SPECIFIC BUILT HERITAGE CONCERNS

LOSS OF HERITAGE AND MITIGATION

- 6.1 The site comprises a large area with many built and garden features. As noted at 4.2, I believe that there are heritage values associated with the features collectively and in the way they contribute to an understanding of the overall history of the place. Individual ancillary structures and elements on their own may not have high significance, but in my view the wholesale loss of them at the rear of the site, combined with a significant proportion of the hotel itself, does constitute more than minor effects. In this regard I agree with the Reporting Planner and Mr. Pearson that the effects are more than minor, rather than with Mr. Wild's assertion that the loss of the rear features and part of the hotel are of minor effect only.
- 6.2 I also agree with the conclusion of the Reporting Planner and Mr. Pearson that the mitigation offered through the amended Resource Consent conditions pertaining to built heritage matters, while not making this loss minor, does make this loss acceptable. I note that Mr. Wild accepts the amended suite of conditions proposed by Mr. Pearson (para 8.15 of Mr. Wild's evidence) and included in the report's proposed conditions.
- 6.3 I consider that the losses in respect of built heritage are made acceptable when considered in light of the wider Hamilton City Council's Operative District Plan's Historic Heritage Objectives and Policies. The Hamilton Hotel is currently in a relatively rundown state. The regeneration of the hotel and its integration into the wider theatre complex will be of very positive benefit to the historic hotel, assisting in its appropriate (again as a hotel) and better functional use, its

relevance, and to people's enjoyment of the place. The upgrade (including seismic strengthening) and conservation works pledged to the hotel will help ensure its survival and protect the values associated with it. Essential heritage qualities of the place will be retained and the contribution of the hotel to the historic urban setting at the commercial centre of the city will be enhanced.

6.4 As stated in 5.3, Heritage New Zealand's submission agreed the approach with regard to the intent and considerations around built heritage, but expressed a concern about the paucity of specific detail in respect of its treatment. Through the comprehensive suite of consent conditions proposed, there is now certainty in my view around a process to develop, review and agree the detail. The requirement for the preparation of the Restoration Plan in particular will give Heritage New Zealand the ability to contribute to the discussing and agreeing the final resolution of the built heritage treatments.

6.5 I also fully endorse the preparation a Conservation Plan as part of those conditions as it will assist in guiding decisions related to conservation matters in the shorter term of this project and for the longer term future conservation of the place.

HERITAGE PROTECTION PLAN

6.6 The Heritage New Zealand's submission raised concerns around the staging of works and ensuring protection for the heritage hotel during construction on site. While these concerns are largely alleviated by the requirement for a Heritage Construction Management Plan, cross-reference to vibration monitoring (Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan conditions 71-76) and a clause included related to specifically dedicated vibration monitoring on the historic hotel itself ought to be included in this document.

QUEENS SUITE

6.7 The Queens Suite has significance as it represents a tangible connection with the Royal Visit in 1954. Any possible thought of advocating for its retention is hampered by the roughly central position it occupies to the rear of the hotel and within the width of the site. I accept this, and support the commitment to commemorating this history with physical fabric retention and re-use of surviving fixtures and fittings.

6.8 I support the approach stated in Mr. Pugh's evidence (8.8) that the Queen's suite have a dedicated room where the original fixtures and features would be located (rather than potentially dispersed), and as noted in the Heritage New Zealand submission, would like to see included the original suite's colour scheme and re-use of the original curtains (still extant as part of the suite appointments). While it would not aim to replicate the suite, it would be a dedicated room where the original affects could be consolidated and appreciated altogether. There should also be visual/written interpretation provided which can be viewed by the public/users of the building. Such an approach I think can be regarded as mitigation for its loss.

INTERPRETATION

6.9 The condition (no. 131) concerning 'Interpretation' I fully support. The site has a very rich, layered and diverse history, and it will be of great public benefit to have a visual and written record of the development of the site (and environs) and building over time. While interpretative

signage may be a component part of this, to avoid being a tacked-on feature at the end of the construction works, the methods and design of the interpretation needs during the developed during the design process as an integral part of the planned design.

7. SUMMARY

- 7.1 From a built heritage perspective I am satisfied that there has been a willingness and commitment by the applicant's consultants to engage with Heritage New Zealand towards achieving an agreeable heritage outcome for the Hamilton Hotel. There would be no benefit to the project to not aim for a sensitive treatment of the heritage building, given the theatre's integral relationship with it.
- 7.2 I am confident that the conditions that would form part of a consent will assist in ensuring that in the course of the hotel's rejuvenation the heritage values of the hotel are respected and maintained.

Robin Byron
07 October 2019