

Thorndon Community Meeting – Earthquake Recovery/Resilience

23 March 2017, 2pm

Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office (WREMO)

Hosts: Ken Bailey, WCC

Jacqui Hastie, WCC

Both hosts are part of the Wellington City Council's (WCC) Recovery/Resilience Team (RE: 14 November 2016 earthquake). This meeting was specifically concerning buildings in Thorndon/Pipitea.

The meeting had at least 30 individuals present from Thorndon/Pipitea that would be impacted by the decommissioning /demolition of buildings in the area. Businesses, churches, schools, resident representatives etc were present.

Overview of Thorndon – post Kaikoura quake

Ken Bailey from WCC gave an overview of what was happening in the Thorndon area post earthquake. Putting aside the well known demolition of 61 Molesworth St there are a number of other building affected adversely by the quake. Some are well known e.g. Defence House on the corner of Aitken and Mulgrave Streets.

There are 10 to 12 other buildings that are at present unknown to the general public which are being looked at by structural engineers. It is yet to be decided whether these buildings are condemned to be demolished or rectified by approved remedial work.

Those that are more publically cited have been condemned to demolition for financial as well as safety reasons. In some cases it is more financially viable to pull buildings down that try to fix them.

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has made several million dollars available to the WCC to assist with the Unreinforced Masonry Buildings (UMB) project. The most well known of these are Cuba St Wellington and Jackson St Petone.

What has caused the considerable and focused damage in Thorndon?

The experts state that they believe it to be a combination of:

- Soft soils
- Liquefaction (deep down)
- The type and size of the seismic movement particularly experienced in buildings 4 to 16 levels high
- Precast concrete

The apartments opposite Revera House (the name Revera House has been removed from the building at 48 Murphy St but will be used for the purposes of this article) is having water tightness work being completed according to the WCC, not earthquake remedial work.

48 Murphy St (Revera House)

Mark Crosswell was invited to explain what was going to happen to the building standing between the Cook Island's Consulate and Old St Pauls.

Built in 1989 of pre-cast concrete beams and columns, with sheets of pre-cast concrete on the outside as cladding he confirmed the building will be 'decommissioned'. This is a process which is staged and is **not** the same as the demolition of 61 Molesworth St.



Mark made it very clear that the building had not been condemned. There was no severe damage to the building or soil below ground level. The building will be taken down to ground level. The building does not have to be demolished but the owners have decided to do so as it is cheaper to do this than try and rectify the external cladding and elongation of the steel beams in the building due to the prolonged swaying during the earthquake known as 'frequency damage'. There is no asbestos in the building.

Building Consent papers are being submitted to the WCC within the next few weeks but next week, 27 March 2017 onwards work will begin to take out windows etc. A walkway has been placed at the front of the building and part of Old St Pauls has been roped off to stop anyone going close to the work being undertaken. Further cover will be placed up the building as the work of decommissioning the building gets fully underway.

It is estimated that the decommissioning will take 6 months. Work will be completed between the hours of 7.30am and 6pm. It was not confirmed if this was 5 or 7 days a week. All materials taken away from the site will be recycled.

Gantry crane (s) will be placed in the Cook Islands car park to begin with to start deconstruction. There will be trucks moving debris away from the site on a regular basis. Once a week or once every 2 weeks there will be a truck loaded with up to 90 tons of debris and driven away from the site. This is the largest of the trucks to be used.

The issue of traffic was raised. Thorndon is the 'gateway' in and out of the city. There are schools, and crèche having children disembark and embark to and from cars and buses in the immediate area. Workers going to nearby businesses and government entities as well as residents moving in the area. There are tour buses for Old St Pauls, traffic exiting the motorway down Mulgrave St and already congested streets from work in Molesworth St and the lane (Little Pipitea St) between the New World Supermarket and the Indian High Commission building site being guarded by construction workers when heavy truck and machinery is on the move.

It was stated in no uncertain terms that the WCC needs to look seriously at traffic management in the area. Pipitea St is a very narrow street with a distinctive kink in it and a crossing right on that point. Large trucks will find it impossible to move at peak times and will have issues with the narrowness of the street due to 5-minute parking on both sides of the road. When asked which route would be taken for the trucks to remove debris from the site Mark Crosswell stated 'down Pipitea St'. This would then mean logically into Muturoa St and then Davis St and on to Thorndon Quay. Again, a very narrow corner on that of Muturoa and Davis Streets due to parked cars.

Also emphasised was the fact that there are emergency services at the end of Hobson St, both ambulance and fire services that cannot be blocked or hindered by banked up traffic.

It was suggested that the work on Revera House and the Defence building should be staggered. Two buildings in the same street/vicinity at the same time, with the already exacerbated traffic problems could cause all sorts of negative impacts for the community – for Thorndon and the city. Mulgrave St is an important feeder route into the city. It feeds traffic from the urban motorway as well as from Wadestown, Wilton etc. There was no reply to this matter.

It was confirmed by Mark Crosswell that there was insurance cover (which would be held by the decommissioning company) in case of 'consequential damage'. When pressed by the questioner, who gave the example of debris falling on Old St Pauls and concerned that this insurance WOULD be in place and there would not be issues arising in a clear-cut matter of damage or intrusion a firm affirmation seemed less forthcoming.

Heritage NZ has been notified of the work and this raised an inquiry concerning dust and debris coating other properties in the vicinity and what protection they would have. There was no answer to this matter.

There was no representative present from Defence House or its agents AMP Capital. The representative for Defence House was identified and will be contacted for comment and further information to assist informing those who work and live in Thorndon/Pipitea.