

BEFORE THE PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF an application by the Anglican Diocese of Wellington for the refurbishment, strengthening and extension to the heritage-listed building known as All Saints Church, 338 Church Street, Palmerston North

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF NIGEL DIXON

[1] My full name is Nigel Peter Dixon. I have lived in Palmerston North for 35 years, raising a family and participating in community life. I moved here to teach at PNBHS and have been involved in church leadership in the city for 22 years. I also run a business doing leadership coaching and team building.

[2] I am the current vicar of All Saints, Archdeacon for Parish Health and Church Planting, Director of City to City NZ.

[3] My qualifications are BA (economics), Diploma of teaching (both Canterbury University), DCS (Regent College, Vancouver)

[4] The All Saints journey to the consent process has been a long one. It began in between 1982-91 when Bishop Brian Carroll was vicar. An exploration of the new entranceway began. In 1999 Dunning Thornton was engaged to begin exploring strengthening and enhancing the building when the church became aware that the church building was an earthquake risk. In 2001, however, the hall at the rear of the church was burnt down, and the attention shifted to replacing it. While some work was done it was the Christchurch earthquake that brought things to a head – a subsequent engineering assessment revealed that the Tower was 3% of code, and at Easter, 2013, the sanctuary ceased to be used by the church.

[5] This began a process of discerning whether to strengthen the building or seek to demolish it. Eventually, a 100% agreement was reached in 2015 to strengthen and enhance, based around the design of Matt Soong. Matt's design created excitement and hope that we would be creating a welcoming and creative space to interface with the city centre, that would integrate the front and rear of the building into a community hub and a worship centre. Acceptance of this occurred at the end of 2015.

[6] The dialogue with Heritage NZ has been significant over this time. And the original design was significantly adjusted to meet their concerns, its flamboyance reduced, and its interruption of the iconic view from The Square tweaked. After these responses, we had hoped that there would be increasing support as we sought to not only rescue a deteriorating heritage building but were seeking for far more people to feel the invitation to experience this heritage through the openness and softening of the exterior that enabled those who pass to 'see in'.

[7] We accept that our design does impact on the exterior cladding of the church. About 3% of the cladding is involved, enabling a 'front door' and a social space to be created that enables hospitality and placemaking to occur. The austere and excluding exterior is profoundly softened by the proposed changes. We feel the cost, from a heritage perspective, is more than justifiable, especially with the near-zero impact on the integrity of the inside of the church, due to the method of strengthening. A few comments on our realities:

[8] The nature of the decision is set out below:

- (a) The church has a unanimous agreement on this design, we have agreed not to strengthen the building 'as is', this was not seen as an option by the congregation due to the inherent issues of the original construction (lack of a welcome space, access to toilets, to the rest of the building).
- (b) The church is unable to spend such a large sum of money for purely heritage reasons. We are required by the diocese, who owns the building, to show that such spending will enhance community building and the mission of the church.
- (c) Motion 11, which impacts the whole Anglican Church of New Zealand, requires us to justify missionally any significant changes to a building. It requires us to be socially responsible with the use of money and buildings – we are to seriously consider the return on the investment, the communal/spiritual value that is added.
- (d) We are, therefore, unable to make a decision that merely protects heritage. We are a church, with an obligation to create spaces that build community, serve the needs of a city, are faithful to the Christian mission, and foster the worship and discipleship of future generations.

[9] The design of the frontage is because:

- (a) We take seriously that we are an integral part of the city centre. We have a calling to interface and serve this City and have a long history

of doing so. Our current reality is being at the end of a long driveway and dissociated from the life of the street. Having a reception and social space at the front of the building would seem to be essential to contribute to city life.

- (b) We feel the need, given the unwelcoming exterior of the building, to be seen. The heritage value, for us, lies in finding a way to make available the spiritual and communal offerings of the building to our city/community. To see the external cladding of the building as the primary heritage value seems reductionist and disrespectful to our whakapapa.
- (c) The placemaking vision of the City, walkways and art, a context that creates belonging, is something we believe in. To fail to respond to this social responsibility and make our place hospitable and integrated with the life of the City is deeply questionable.
- (d) In the modernist era, the buildings that were constructed encouraged the marginalising and privatizing of faith. There was little attempt to create buildings that were human and relationship fostering. It led to a Sunday focus. Our belief is that we must rectify this aberration. At a fundamental level, a 'church' is a place of hospitality – where we meet God and each other, creating a sense of 'home'. A building must work to foster a life together, seven days a week.
- (e) A light-filled, aesthetically sensitive, organic 'garden' space is an appropriate metaphor for the enhancement. This design is driven by our theology. It is required by our cultural analysis of the needs of the City.

[10] Concerning community requirements:

- (a) We are a community that has worshipped in this location since 1875. This is no small thing. The buildings here are the product of generations who have loved this church and served it faithfully. People have met God here, prayed their prayers, received

forgiveness, shared the Eucharist, served the City, and shared in a mission for the kingdom of God to come to our City. Most of all, we are a church (not a building preservation society).

- (b) We are a crucial part of the narrative of this City. Baptisms, weddings and funerals have taken place here. Tragedies have been mourned here, and victories celebrated. So many events and community-enhancing memories have taken place in this building.
- (c) The church continues to contribute to the festival life of Palmerston North. At Easter and Christmas, there are shared initiatives with Square Edge and other churches. Historically the site has hosted so many music events, classical and contemporary, that have come to the City. It is our hope that the much more could happen with the new frontage.
- (d) The improvements we commend to you would enable All Saints church to be a community-building hub, positively contributing to the cultural life of the City. We would offer an integrated and unique facility for events and conferences.
- (e) The many layers of New Zealand's history that the church stewards could be made much more accessible for celebration and education. We believe this design would enable us to have much more available and enjoyed building than ever before.

[11] I consider that the way the Hoffman kiln has been allowed to be removed from the City's cultural experience, for heritage protection reasons, is tragic. No one gets to enter or experience this wonderful building, and many offered development options were resisted because of concerns over heritage impact – and now few in the City know it is even there, let alone have walked through it.

[12] We do not want our community's place of meeting reduced to a museum, protected for architectural values, unvalued as a place of worship and community. We believe, as those who have loved and nurtured this location for nearly 150 years, our views matter deeply. Buildings are for people, and I believe

those who built All Saints would be thrilled that so many years later, we are building on the legacy they gifted to us.



Nigel Dixon