

30 March 2022

Stuart Wimbush

s7(2)(a)

Tēnā koe Stuart

Request for Information – Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) 1987

Thank you for your official information request dated 1 March 2022, in which you ask for information about the Hutt City Council's (the Council) decision-making relating to placement of heritage designations on buildings. You have specifically requested the following information:

- 1) ... provide the information, if any, with which the Council has assessed, or proposes to assess, the costs which heritage designation may impose on property owners, which will not similarly affect neighbours whose properties are not designated. In this regard I ask for the information that Council has considered, or expects to consider, in determining the extent to which designation is likely to increase the cost of activities such as maintenance, repairs and upgrades, as well as the cost or loss effects of restrictions on significant changes of use or changes in the appearance of designated buildings.
- 2) ... provide the information the Council uses to measure and compare the factors mentioned in Policy 21 of the Greater Wellington Regional Council Regional Policy Statement and to balance them against the losses and costs of designation to the owners of properties designated, for example delays and extra costs in getting approvals to repair and upgrade, and losses from the inability to demolish and replace the building with one having greater capacity and amenities.
- 3) ... provide the information the Council holds on the selection and appointment process for the "heritage specialists" commissioned to conduct the assessments, their qualifications, and the terms of their remit. Explicitly, did their remuneration depend on a positive finding of significant historic heritage value? On what basis did the initial down-selection of the entire city to the individual building level proceed? Please also provide financial information detailing the costs to date of this activity to ratepayers, and any material produced by the Council evaluating whether those costs are justified and provide value to the city compared to other activities the Council was unable to fund as a result.

Many of your points and background information have been addressed in Hutt City Council's response to the similar concerns raised by another Hutt Valley citizen in 2022. You can locate this on the Council's website [here](#).

More information about the district plan review is available on the Council's website [here](#). Information about heritage aspects of the district plan can be found [here](#), and Hutt City Council's Heritage Policy is available [here](#).

Our responses to your specific points are provided below.

Questions 1) and 2)

With regards to your general questions about costs of maintenance, repairs and upgrades for heritage buildings, I refer you to Hutt City Council's response referred to above, available on the Council's website. Accordingly your request for this information is refused under Section 17(d) of the LGOIMA, on the grounds that the information requested is already publicly available.

Assessment of cost versus benefit, lost opportunities and similar matters are not part of the selection or appraisal criteria for designation and so these have not been undertaken for proposed heritage properties identified in Lower Hutt. Accordingly, your request for this information is refused under section 17(g) of the LGOIMA, as the information does not exist and we have no reason for believing that the information is held by another agency.

Question 3)

Heritage specialists from WSP New Zealand and Ian Bowman, Architect and architectural conservator, has been commissioned to carry out the assessments. Their qualifications are available on their company websites, and their remuneration did not depend on a positive finding of significant historic heritage value.

An overview of the identification process for properties is available on the Council's website [here](#), in the Frequently Asked Questions section. I also refer you to the publicly available response to the earlier information request that is on the Council's website as the criteria for assessment are identified are in this. As this is already publicly available, Section 17(d) of the LGOIMA applies.

You have asked for the cost to date of this activity to ratepayers, and whether those costs are justified. All councils are required by law to review the contents of their district plans at least every 10 years. The current review being undertaken by the Hutt City Council, of which historic heritage is part, is routine in the Council's operations and costs have not been itemised. Your request for this information is refused under section 17(g) of the LGOIMA, as the information does not exist and we have no reason for believing that the information is held by another agency.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this letter may be published on the Council's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Susan Sales
Senior Advisor, Official Information and Privacy