



# EARTHQUAKE PRONE BUILDINGS POLICY

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FOR PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL  
OWNED PROPERTY



*George Street - Palmerston North City*



## INTRODUCTION

### Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016

Following the Christchurch earthquakes, new earthquake prone provisions were introduced into the Building Act 2004. The Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016 introduced major changes to the way earthquake-prone buildings are identified and managed under the Building Act. It uses knowledge learned from past earthquakes in New Zealand and overseas. The Amendment Act came into force on the 1 of July 2017.

The system is consistent across the country and focuses on the most vulnerable buildings in terms of people's safety. It categorises New Zealand into three seismic risk areas, with associated timeframes for identifying and acting to strengthen or remove earthquake prone buildings. Palmerston North is classified as a 'High Seismic Risk' area, meaning it has the shortest timeframes in the country to address earthquake prone buildings.

As well as being a landowner, Council is responsible for the administration of these earthquake prone building provisions of the Building Act 2004. It is therefore important the Council shows leadership in addressing earthquake prone buildings that it owns.

Much of Council's activity and decision making in this area will be directed by the requirements of the Building Act 2004, the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Palmerston North City District Plan, but there is some scope in the way in which Council seeks to comply with the legislation. This policy provides guidance on the way in which Council will meet its statutory obligations as a property owner.



## COUNCIL PROPERTY

The Council owns, maintains, and manages a range of property around the City. Council owned property has a range of purposes including:

- Meeting accommodation needs of Council activities.
- Providing for cultural events.
- Encouraging visitors and business to the city.
- Providing housing options for low and limited income residents.
- Maintaining strategic options available to the Council.

Critical properties owned by the Council include:

- Civic Administration Building
- The Conference and Function Centre
- Regent Theatre
- Te Manawa Science Centre, Museum and Art Gallery
- The Central Library
- Globe Theatre
- Caccia Birch
- Square Edge

As at May 2019, the following Council owned buildings were identified as earthquake prone:

- Civic Administration Building – Council Chamber and Central Core
- Te Manawa Science Centre, Museum and Art Gallery
- The Central Library
- Square Edge – Front building and rear workshop
- Crematorium
- Keith Street Power Station

There may be other Council owned buildings that are yet to be identified as earthquake prone.



## THE CHALLENGE WITH EARTHQUAKE PRONE BUILDINGS

Usually with earthquake prone building strengthening projects there is a trade-off between costs and the percentage of new building standard (NBS) that is achieved as a result of the strengthening works. There is also an expectation that buildings with high occupancy or buildings that provide an important public function should have a higher percentage of NBS.

Many buildings that are earthquake prone are also scheduled heritage buildings in the District Plan. This creates a strong policy tension because alterations and additions completed as part of strengthening works need to be sympathetic to the heritage values of the building and demolition of heritage buildings is discouraged within the District Plan. The protection of historic heritage is also a matter of national importance in the RMA 1991.

It is important Council shows leadership in how it addresses this policy tension as many landowners in the city are facing similar issues and the Council is responsible for administering both the Building Act 2004 and RMA 1991.

Heritage buildings have an important role in preserving the character and history of the City and can offer unique economic development opportunities that assist with city centre revitalisation.

# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Council's strategic direction includes a series of statements and actions regarding earthquake prone buildings, particularly as they relate to heritage.

While a lot of this direction relates to privately owned buildings, the Council needs to be conscious of the outcomes it is seeking from the private sector with respect to earthquake prone buildings and heritage when making decisions regarding its own assets.

## City Development Strategy 2018

The City Development Strategy provides the following direction:

*The city centre needs to be seen as an attractive place to invest to provide an incentive to strengthen and retain important heritage buildings. The risks and costs of strengthening the privately owned earthquake-prone heritage buildings concentrated in the city centre is a major heritage issue. Because Palmerston North is in the high-risk earthquake zone, it has the tightest timeframes for earthquake-prone buildings to be strengthened or demolished. Unlike other buildings, heritage buildings cannot be demolished if a landowner considers the cost of strengthening is not economically viable.*

*Done well, earthquake strengthening work offers a unique opportunity to modernise and repurpose heritage buildings and help revitalise the city centre.*

## Creative and Liveable City Strategy 2018

The Creative and Liveable City Strategy provides the following direction:

*The city needs a plan for making the city centre a vibrant place that locals are proud of and that leaves a lasting positive impression on visitors. Council has consistently considered a lack of vibrancy in the city centre as a major strategic risk, with the Regional Growth Study identifying the need for the city to act as the heart of the region. Challenges include fewer pedestrians, earthquake-prone buildings, and the impact of the Plaza mall, internet shopping, and large-format retailing, on traditional pedestrian-based retail areas.*

Heritage Management Plan 2018 and Culture & Heritage Plan 2018

The Heritage Management Plan and Culture and Heritage Plan 2018 promote the value of heritage buildings and seek the retention of earthquake prone heritage buildings. Key actions include:

- Support third party owners of scheduled heritage features via provision of the Natural and Cultural Heritage Incentive fund for maintenance and conservation of heritage buildings and sites, and notable tree works.
- Proactively work with owners and investors of earthquake-prone buildings through the upgrade process.
- Promote the success stories where heritage buildings have been upgraded and share information about building upgrades.
- Develop a dedicated earthquake-prone heritage building support plan, including the provision of a fund to support seismic strengthening of heritage buildings, and character building facades and parapets in the central city.
- Front-foot redevelopment of earthquake-prone heritage buildings by reviewing and updating heritage and structural information.
- Investigate opportunities for sharing information and best practice guidelines.
- Investigate whether strategic partners wish to invest in City Centre via re-use of heritage buildings.
- Heritage forms part of the multi-disciplinary approach to working on Council projects.
- Investigate opportunities to develop and add value to Council heritage buildings and sites.
- Experiment with ways to express cultural heritage in city development.
- Include heritage conservation principles in Council Asset Management decisions.



*Cuba Street - Palmerston North City*



## INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2018

The Infrastructure Strategy provides the following direction:

### **Increasing resilience of infrastructure**

One of the outcomes of the Christchurch earthquakes is an increasing focus on understanding and improving the resilience of local authority infrastructure, particularly those assets that are critical to delivering core services.

### **Te Manawa**

Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science and History are located in a series of aged Council buildings which are not fit-for purpose and contain some earthquake prone buildings. Te-Manawa has developed an ambitious concept plan for a complete redevelopment which could cost up to \$58 million (\$69 million with inflation).

The classification of the Central Library as an earthquake prone building was confirmed after the approval of the Infrastructure Strategy 2018.

## **Palmerston North City District Plan: Section 17 - Cultural and Natural Heritage**

Section 17 of the District Plan provides the following direction:

The City's cultural and natural heritage is a limited resource with distinct values. Council recognizes the importance of ensuring that these qualities continue to be retained and reinforced. The identification and conservation of these identifiable elements of the City's cultural and natural heritage therefore is a primary means by which their distinct values can be safeguarded from either disturbance, unsympathetic use or development, or outright destruction.

Safeguarding historic heritage is a role for everyone in the City – including iwi, land and building owners, community groups, and citizens. The Council strongly supports the active protection and/or conservation, and adaptive reuse of places of cultural and natural heritage value within the City.

To ensure our heritage is safeguarded, the Council will:

- continue to identify buildings, objects and sites of cultural and natural heritage value;
- promote the sustainable adaptive use of buildings of cultural and natural heritage value;
- impose restrictions on the demolition, alteration or disturbance of those deemed to be of significance;
- ensure that adaptation or alteration does not detract from the cultural and natural heritage value of the building or object.





## POLICY OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

The objective of the policy is to provide guidance on identifying and remediating Council owned earthquake prone buildings, so that:

1. Council takes a proactive approach to assessing the earthquake prone status of its property portfolio.
2. There is a clear differentiation between Council's regulatory function with respect to earthquake prone buildings and its asset management function as a property owner.
3. Plans and budgets are in place to address Council owned buildings that have been identified as earthquake prone.
4. Council complies with the earthquake prone buildings requirements of the Building Act 2004.
5. Council is proactive and shows leadership in the way in which it complies with the earthquake prone buildings requirements of the Building Act 2004.
6. Where Council undertakes strengthening of an earthquake prone building it seeks to maximise the percentage of NBS achieved taking into account:
  - (a) Occupancy level.
  - (b) Function.
  - (c) Business continuity.
  - (d) Cost.
  - (e) Heritage values.
  - (f) Priority routes.
7. Council considers the impact of the decision it makes regarding earthquake prone buildings on the way in which the private sector is expected to respond.
8. Council gives effect to the City Development Strategy, Creative and Liveable Strategy, Heritage Management Plan and Culture and Heritage Plan.
9. Council gives effect to the objectives and policies of the Cultural and Natural Heritage section of the District Plan.

# GUIDELINES

## Identification of Earthquake Prone Buildings

1. It is the primary responsibility of the Customer Unit within Council to identify potentially earthquake prone buildings, including Council owned buildings.
2. Despite policy guideline 1, the Infrastructure Unit within Council will take a proactive approach to identifying the earthquake prone status of Council owned buildings.
3. A peer review of any engineering assessment will be undertaken where the conclusion of any assessment results in the need for significant Council expenditure to address the earthquake prone status of a building.

## Asset Planning & Funding

4. The Infrastructure Strategy and relevant Asset Management Plans shall include a specific section on identifying and addressing Council owned earthquake prone buildings to inform funding decisions made via the Long Term Plan.

## Building Act 2004

5. The Council will take a proactive approach to addressing buildings it owns that are identified as earthquake prone and prioritise investment based on the following criteria:
  - (a) Occupancy level.
  - (b) Function.
  - (c) Business continuity.
  - (d) Cost.
  - (e) Heritage values.
  - (f) Priority buildings.

## Percentage of New Building Standard (NBS)

6. Where a Council owned building is identified as earthquake prone, there is no minimum percentage of NBS required for occupancy of the building. Occupancy of Council owned buildings will be informed by the requirements of the Building Act 2004.
7. Where strengthening of a Council owned building classified as earthquake prone is undertaken, there is no minimum percentage of NBS required to be achieved, other than the minimum requirements detailed in the Building Act 2004.
8. Where strengthening of a Council owned building classified as earthquake prone is undertaken, the Council will seek to maximise the percentage of NBS achieved taking into account the objectives of this policy and criteria in policy 5 above.

## Heritage Values, District Plan and RMA

9. The Council will give effect to the objectives and policies of the Cultural and Natural Heritage Section of the District Plan when addressing earthquake prone buildings that are also scheduled heritage buildings in the District Plan.
10. The Council will take a multi-disciplinary approach to the strengthening of earthquake prone heritage buildings, including appropriate input from the following disciplines:
  - (a) structural engineering.
  - (b) heritage architecture.
  - (c) urban design.
  - (d) planning.

# ADMINISTRATION

The policy will be administered by the Infrastructure Unit who are responsible for the asset management of Council owned property. The Strategy and Planning and Customer Unit will provide support without compromising their functions under the Building Act 2004 and Resource Management Act 1991.

# REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed after five years, or earlier if requested by the Council.



*Caccia Birch House - Palmerston North City*



**Te Kaunihera o Papaioea | Palmerston North City Council**

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