

# SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

20 SEPTEMBER 2017

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## AGENDA ITEM C3

### RELOCATION OF GREYTOWN LITTLE THEATRE

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#### **Purpose of Report**

To inform Councillors of a proposal to relocate the Greytown Little Theatre to a Council site in West Street.

#### **Recommendations**

Officers recommend that the Council:

1. *Receives the Relocation of Greytown Little Theatre Report.*
2. *Approves in principle the proposal to locate a new Little Theatre building on Council land in West Street.*
3. *Authorises officers to continue to work with Greytown Little Theatre on the development of a more detailed proposal.*

## **1. Executive Summary**

The committee of Greytown Little Theatre is investigating alternatives for a new building to replace their existing one. One option under consideration is to build new premises on council land at the south end of West St. This paper seeks approval in principle from council for the Theatre using this land for this purpose, and for officers to continue working with the committee on further developing the idea.

## **2. Background**

Greytown Little Theatre is presently located in their own building at 68 Main Street. The building is classified as earthquake-prone, and the committee is exploring alternatives which may include selling the property and rebuilding elsewhere.

One of the proposed alternatives is to build a new building on council land at the south end of West St. The council owns two adjacent properties, both with fee simple titles, behind the Arbour Reserve. Part of one these properties is held under a licence to occupy by the Railway Heritage Trust of New Zealand for the Greytown goods shed. The remainder of the land is unused.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1 Greytown Little Theatre proposal

The Little Theatre proposal will be presented by the group to the council during the public participation portion of the September meeting. The Theatre committee would lease or licence a portion of the land under a long-term commercial arrangement, and construct their new theatre on it. The building would be sited to the north of the goods shed, and towards the eastern end of the site. The area between the front of the building and the road would be developed as an open space, thus preserving the view of the goods shed from West St and providing an open-air space which could be used by both the theatre and the Railway Heritage Trust. Car parking would be developed on the south side of the goods shed, and would serve as parking for both the theatre and the goods shed.



## **3.2 Considerations for council**

### **3.2.1. Land status**

Both properties are held as fee simple titles. They are not reserve land, although the block to the east (Arbor Reserve) is. A merger of the two properties onto a single title may be a consideration as the proposal is developed, as it may simplify consent. The southern property has a District Plan designation that it is to be used for railway purposes, although this is historic and can be uplifted if required. The southern property is also on the Selected Land Use Register (SLUR) with a verified history of hazardous industry or activity. Until 1953 it was used for the storage and transfer of railway goods. After that it was used by the Catchment Board and then Greater Wellington Regional Council as a depot to store field equipment for river engineering projects, weed and pest control operations, and general labouring. Equipment included chemicals, petrol, oil, metal beams and spray gear. The zoning for both properties is residential, however there is only one adjacent residential property, on the northern boundary.

### **3.2.2. Other tenants/land users**

The only tenant on the land is the Railway Heritage Society of New Zealand, which holds the areas marked below. The blue area is the original leased land which accompanied the sale of the goods shed to the society. The pink area is a subsequent licence to occupy to the Society to enable them to lay some railway track and restore the original loading platform.



The adjacent land is used informally for car parking by members of the Society. The land adjoins Arbor Reserve, and the northern section has some minor use as a pedestrian short-cut between the south end of West St and Main St. The Railway Heritage Society has been informed of the proposal and committee members are happy to work with the Little Theatre going forward. The presence of a theatre building on the adjacent site would bring some benefits to the Society, particularly in respect of the

additional security that would potentially come from a building with both daytime and evening occupancy.

### **3.2.3. Other potential uses of the property**

Officers have no plans for the property beyond keeping it maintained in a tidy manner, nor are they aware of any other interest in it beyond that of the Rail Heritage Society. At the time of the sale of the goods shed to the Society, the residue of the land was effectively land-banked. Although zoned residential, the land on the south side is adjacent to industry, including Hillcrest Honey. Other industrial activities across the road would contribute to making the property difficult to sell as residential, as would the contaminated land. The best use which could be made of the land would be for activities of benefit to the community and visitors, and complementary to the Goods Shed and Arbor Reserve.

### **3.2.4. Council policy**

Council policy *E601 Leasing of Property Policy* allows for a licence to occupy to be entered into for council land on which an occupier's building or facility is located. A licence to occupy for a building on council land is expected to recognise the value of the building to both the occupier and the community. Wherever possible, public tenders are invited for leases and licences, but exceptions are allowed where this is not practical or appropriate. Councillors will need to consider whether a tender should be invited for the land, with the intention of flushing out potential higher value uses for the property. Councillors may decide that the Little Theatre proposal is the highest and best use which could be anticipated for the land, and that the potential community benefit from it outweighs the costs of the tender process and the likelihood of achieving a better use.

## **4. Conclusion**

The potential use of part of this property for the Greytown Little Theatre to build a new theatre on would be a good use of land which otherwise may continue to lay unproductive. The Greytown Little Theatre has been active in the community since 1921, and both the organisation and the proposed new building would be of continuing benefit to the community. Officers recommend that Council agrees in principle to the proposal and authorises officers to continue working with the Little Theatre on developing a more detailed proposal for final approval.

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