

7.10 Key Issue: Aigantighe Art Gallery Redevelopment - What's the best option?

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Recommendation

That the Timaru District Council proceeds with Option 1 (construct a new facility on the current Wai iti Road site) for the redevelopment of the Aigantighe Art Gallery as outlined in the Long Term Plan 2021-31 Public Consultation Document.

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the community feedback received on options for the redevelopment of the Aigantighe Art Gallery (adjoining 19978/1995 extension buildings).
- 2 The report provides analysis of the views raised by submitters on the given options, and other feedback received to support Council decision-making on the proposed project and budget for the Aigantighe Art Gallery redevelopment work programme for 2021-31.

Assessment of Significance

- 3 At the 15 February Council meeting, it was determined by Council that the Aigantighe Art Gallery redevelopment project was of high significance.
- 4 In accordance with this assessment, Council's proposed response to this project was included as a key issue within the LTP consultation document. This has ensured extensive community-wide engagement has been undertaken as part of the LTP process. It is now for Council to consider the community views on the proposed options for the redevelopment of the 1978/1995 extensions of the Aigantighe Art Gallery, and make a final decision.

Background

- 5 Aigantighe Heritage House was built by the Grant family in 1905 and donated to the people of Timaru in 1955 (opened to the public in 1956 as a public art gallery). This included the surrounding land. An Art Gallery was established in the Heritage House Gallery with further extensions built to house the growing collection, expanding exhibition schedule, and to meet community needs in 1978 and 1995.
- 6 Following the Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016 an initial seismic assessment (ISA) of the Heritage House Gallery found the building structure was 10% of New Building Standards (NBS) and earthquake prone.
- 7 In March 2017 due to the outcomes of the seismic assessment the Timaru District Council decided to close the Heritage House Gallery to ensure public and staff safety.

- 8 In October 2020 the Community Services Committee resolved to proceed with the Heritage House Gallery Project as agreed in the 2018-28 Long Term Plan, subject to meeting the subsidy funding milestones defined in the feasibility study completed by the Giblin Group.
- 9 The Heritage House Gallery project has commenced, with preliminary plans completed and a resource consent issued. The project is scheduled to be completed by late 2022.
- 10 In 2020, a wide range of issues with the 1978 and 1995 Gallery extensions were identified and discussed with Council. These included, but are not limited to, storage capacity and aging infrastructure.
- 11 In 2020, the Giblin Group was engaged to complete a feasibility study to assess the overall suitability of the current facility to deliver operations, the feasible options to improve service delivery and to address the issues facing the 1978 and 1978 Gallery extensions.
- 12 The feasibility study undertaken by the Giblin Group identified three feasible options for the redevelopment of the 1978/1995 gallery extensions utilising the Treasury options framework.
- 13 In October 2020, the Community Services Committee resolved the Council consults through the Long Term Plan 2021-2031 on the following options for the 1978/1995 extensions:
- 13.1 Earthquake strengthen and restore House - maintain extension as is and develop an offsite storage facility
 - 13.2 Earthquake strengthen and restore House with a partial refurbishment of the extension to address public amenities and workspaces and develop offsite storage facility
 - 13.3 Earthquake strengthen and restore House – full redevelopment of the extension to include spaces for education creativity and more exhibition space. Consider developing offsite storage facility.
- 14 In February 2021, the Council resolved on a full redevelopment of the 1978/1995 extensions as the preferred option. Council also requested a fourth option to be added to the Consultation Document - A new build as part of the new cultural centre and retaining the original Heritage House Gallery.
- 15 The LTP 2021-31 Consultation Document outlined the four options, with Option 1: Construct identified as the preferred option. These options and analysis of the feedback received are discussed below.
- 16 *Option 1: Construct.*
- This option would mean Council will construct a new facility on the current Wai-iti Road site. This option will align with the strengthening of the Heritage House Gallery. It includes:
- Constructing a fit for purpose facility including storage onsite
 - Demolition of the 1978/1995 extension
 - Constructing a modern, purpose built Art Gallery on existing Wai-iti Road site.
 - Maintaining links with the Historic House Gallery and sculpture garden
 - All current storage issues resolved and no need for offsite storage
 - Art collection protected and temperature humidity controlled
 - Greater ability to improve our services for our community with educational space.

As the preferred option, the draft LTP budget includes \$9.9 million of additional new funding, funded by debt. It also includes \$2.9 million additional operating costs from 2023/24 to 2030/31, funded from rates. Council would also seek funding assistance through grants and donations for this option. Any funding assistance received will reduce the amount Council needs to borrow for this project.

17 Option 2: Maintain.

This option would mean Council will maintain current buildings and develop offsite storage. This option will resolve our storage issues, but our other challenges with the current building will largely remain. It includes:

- Short term solution given the current condition of the current buildings
- Some remedial work on roof and strengthening will still be required
- Public toilets remain under code
- Lack of temperature and humidity control
- Offsite storage range of options:
 - Purpose built facility \$2.5-\$3 million
 - Offsite lease \$850-950K including fit out and storage
 - Retro fit an existing council building \$800-900K.

The cost of this option is \$850k – \$3.3million of additional new funding, debt funded and \$1.6 million operating cost from 2023/24-2030/31. Council would also seek funding assistance through grants and donations for this option. Any funding assistance received will reduce the amount Council needs to borrow for this project.

18 Option 3: Partial Refurbishment

This option would mean Council will provide a limited upgrade to the public amenities and workspaces. It will resolve the current storage issues, however, it will not address the limited exhibition space in the current buildings. It includes:

- Upgraded public toilets to bring them up to code
- Refreshed workspaces
- Upgraded ventilation system
- Undertaking strengthening work
- No upgrade or extension to the exhibition space
- Offsite storage range of options:
 - Purpose built facility \$2.5-\$3M
 - Offsite lease \$850-\$950K including fit out and storage
 - Retro fit an existing council building \$800-900K.

The cost of this option is \$1.8-\$2.2 million for refurbishment plus \$850k-\$3million for offsite storage, debt funded and \$2.4 million operating cost from 2023/24-2030/31, funded from rates. Council would seek funding assistance through grants and donations for this option.

19 Option 4: New Gallery

This option would mean Council will construct a new Art Gallery on a site near the theatre Royal/Heritage Hub, including spaces for education, creativity, collection storage and exhibition spaces. It includes:

- A new purpose built Art Gallery closer to the Cultural and Heritage hub at the south of Stafford Street
- The Historic House Gallery will continue to be earthquake strengthened and will remain open as a public art gallery
- There will be no need for a separate offsite storage facility.

The estimated cost of this option is \$11.2-\$14.7 million additional new funding, debt funded and \$4.4 million additional operating costs from 2023/24-2030/31 funded from rates. Council would also seek funding assistance through grants and donations for this option. Any funding assistance received will reduce the amount Council needs to borrow for this project.

Discussion

20 The Council sought specific feedback from the community on their views on what was the best option for redeveloping the Aigantighe Art Gallery through the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan Public Consultation Document.

21 371 submitters provided feedback indicating which option they preferred on the Aigantighe Art Gallery Redevelopment key issue, with the majority proportion seeking ongoing development on the existing site.¹⁰

- Option 1: Construct (Council’s preferred option) – 143 (39%)¹¹
- Option 2: Maintain – 80 (22%)
- Option 3: Partial Refurbishment – 69 (19%)
- Option 4: New Gallery – 79 (21%)

22 The Aigantighe project received some feedback at various community engagement events with most stakeholders supporting the Council’s preferred option – construct a new facility on the current site.

23 An informal straw poll on the options occurred at the Aigantighe Art Gallery at the LTP Engagement event on 25 April 2021. This had the following results:

	Option 1: Construct	Option 2: Maintain	Option 3: Partial Refurb	Option 4: New Gallery
Aigantighe Art Gallery (25.4.21)	124	12	6	12

24 Other straw polls conducted relating to the Aigantighe key issue had similar results but lesser participation, as follows:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Strathallan Corner (20.4.21)	10	0	0	0
Geraldine Farmers Market (24.4.21)	16	3	0	5

¹⁰ A further 6 submitters provided feedback but did not select a preferred option.

¹¹ Percentage calculated based on the 371 submissions received where an option was selected by the submitter.

- 25 Qualitative analysis of the feedback and comments received showed a clear majority support for the Aigantighe remaining on the existing site in Wai iti Road, Timaru. Of the options that supported this, the majority favoured Option 1 to construct a new facility, following demolition of the existing extensions. Opinion was split on the other two options of maintaining the existing extensions and a partial refurbishment of the existing extensions. The final option to build a new art gallery in close proximity to the Heritage Hub site received some support.
- 26 Support for Option 1: Construct (*Council's Preferred Option*) focused around the following key themes:

26.1 Preserving the Heritage and history of the site

Submitters considered the existing site should remain the location of the Art Gallery, given the gifting of the site by the Grant family, its historical significance and the attractiveness of the current site. Comments included:

"Keep historic values alive"

"preserve the art history and honours that the property was gifted"

"existing building is a lovely site not far from the Bay and has parking available close to the gallery"

"Aigantighe is situated on a beautiful site and the gallery is something Timaru should be proud of"

"the retention of the Grant home is an important point of difference for a public art gallery and offers a different viewing experience."

"The Historic House and gardens provide a unique and beautiful site forvisual arts and crafts"

"Option 1 will retain the Gallery's strong linkage with the Sculpture Garden which is an integral part of the entire site and the identity of the Gallery."

26.2 Most cost effective and logical option

Submitters also considered the existing site was the most cost effective and logical option. Comments included:

"It makes sense to construct on the current site"

"It doesn't make sense that Timaru has two sites that need staffing"

"it does not make sense to separate the collection and add difficulty [and] cost in terms of storing/transporting artworks etc. and create a disjointed art hub"

"It makes sense for the Art Gallery to stay in one place"

"it's seems much more economically viable to refurbish the current one"

"it's not cost effective to run two sites"

26.3 Destination

Submitters considered the current site could become a destination or be further enhanced as a destination:

"the construction of a purpose-built Art Gallery on the existing site will meet the future needs of our community and will become an iconic destination in the region."

"Make it a destination to draw people in"

"the historic house is a lovely drawcard"

"Timaru has fallen behind towns such as Ashburton and Oamaru in providing modern, essential facilities to care for and display its public art collection."

- 27 Comments relating to Option 1 also considered the risk to art works from operating at two sites, and potential issues that might be faced elsewhere, such as parking. There were also several requests to include a café in the redevelopment. Comments stated it was critical to address existing gallery issues as part of the upgrade, including future-proofing onsite storage, enhanced education facilities and adequate space to publicly display more of the art collection, as highlighted below:

"making sure what we build will have enough room for extension/storage in the future 10/20 years"

"Remedying storage is critical as highest priority for redevelopment"

"The lack of storage space has also been a matter of concern for many years and the cramped areas in which the Gallery team have been expected to work in a highly professional and ethical manner in preserving art for future generations is not acceptable in today's business environment."

"it needs to include a café to make people stop and linger and enjoy the space."

"When developing the site consider ways that the facilities can be used in multiple ways (e.g. education rooms, community meetings or offices)"

- 28 Comments on Option 2: Maintain, supported the existing location and the preservation of important heritage, but not an extensive upgrade. Comments were focused around the following themes:

28.1 Current facility is adequate

"Maintain building. Retrofit an existing building for storage"

"No need for a bigger and more costly gallery for a town this size"

28.2 Keep the spend down and/or spend on other priorities

"enough being spent on the Theatre Royal Heritage Centre"

"Heritage buildings in public ownership are important. A second one is Geraldine cinema, which deserves to feature in the 10 year plan"

"I am not convinced that a high percentage of Timaru people want millions spent on an art gallery."

28.3 Not Council's core business

"Not an essential service until Council has attended to essential infrastructure services"

"Can't we just maintain current assets instead of spending money on non-necessity assets"

- 29 Comments on Option 3: Partial Refurbishment, also supported the existing location, the preservation of heritage, but a more modest upgrade that addressed existing problems, was less costly but enhanced the existing heritage. Comments were focused around the following themes:

29.1 Address current issues with the facility

"Location is ideal – access. We need to ensure the collection is stored in appropriate conditions"

29.2 Enhance the heritage

"The Aigantighe gallery is historically significant to our town. Although many struggle to pronounce the name, it should be partially refurbished."

"The original house is a gem – the type of gallery that few people have experienced. The garden surrounds are quite unique and we must preserve the old character home in a way that can be shared by visitors and locals alike."

"Aigantighe is a treasure and I feel we should polish the gem we have."

30 The final option involved relocation of the Aigantighe to a site in close proximity to Theatre Royal/Heritage Hub and the construction of a new facility. Comments were focused around the following themes:

30.1 Drawcard and promotional tool aligned with the City Hub, add to city vibrancy/critical mass

"Locate near theatre to create arts hub - shared parking, near cafe's etc. Helps CBD also"

30.2 Repurpose the existing Heritage House, but expansion should be elsewhere

"Earthquake strengthen and re-purpose the original building. As the modern wing requires upgrading, a new gallery should form part of the new heritage facility near the Theatre Royal."

30.3 Current site not fit for purpose

"The current site is simply not fit for purpose and the costs associated with getting it to the level it needs to be seem to be endless. How much have we paid consultants so far? Let's do away with sentiment and get practical. An Art Gallery in a Stafford Street South makes the most sense."

"The current art gallery is certainly a beautiful building but it doesn't really seem adequate"

"This will make a much better hub in the inner city. A purpose build building is a better long term option"

Options and Preferred Option

31 Of the options consulted on through the 2021-31 Long Term Plan Consultation Document, there is strong community support for the Council's preferred option of constructing a new facility on the current site. This is supported by the finding of the feasibility study, which found this option

32 Option One: Construct (Council's Preferred Option) includes space for storage onsite, education and creativity spaces, a more fit for purpose exhibition space and access for people of all abilities, with back of house needs met for staff. This option will meet the identified needs of the Galley, visitors, staff, and collection care - securing the needs of our community.

33 Option Two: Maintain is seen as a short term solution. The current aging infrastructure of the 1978 extension and current plant life - such as air conditioning HVAC systems, temperature and humidity controls and switchboards will need significant investment in the near future.

Offsite storage options with staff over two properties has potential risk for collection care: in both security and physical damage.

- 34 Option Three: Partially refurbish, but find offsite storage would partly meet some identified needs of the Aigantighe Art Gallery. This will address the issues of storage and some current back of house restrictions, but will only meet the immediate needs identified. Offsite storage options with staff over two properties has potential risk to collection care: in both security and physical damage.
- 35 Option Four: New Gallery in CBD near the Theatre Royal / Heritage Hub, with the Heritage House Gallery seismic strengthened and restored. This could be problematic and full costing and specifics to obtain a site on Stafford Street have not been completed with the potential for budget creep. Spreading out cultural facilities across Timaru will strengthen cultural tourism and encourage our visitors to stay and explore our spaces more.
- 36 In the October 2020, the feasibility study completed by Giblin Group found the option to rebuild a new art gallery in the CBD not feasible for the following reasons:
- Stakeholders have previously (through the last LTP 2018-28 and Annual Plan) stated they wanted the Gallery to remain on its current site.
 - The cost of purchasing a site could be prohibitive and could escalate project costs.
 - Trust deed restricts repurposing the current site.
 - Due to the Heritage House Gallery's heritage status, Heritage New Zealand is an affected party and may oppose repurposing the current site.
- 37 The Aigantighe Art Gallery will have an occasional presence in the Heritage Hub's touring exhibition space when appropriate and a new gallery in close proximity could be considered a duplication of services.
- 38 Evaluating the community views and the available options, Option One: Construct on the current site, is considered the preferred option to meet the future needs of the Gallery and the community.

Consultation

- 39 The Gallery has undertaken extensive consultation throughout the lifecycle of the Heritage House Gallery Project, including through 2018-2028 Long Term Plan. Consultation also occurred through the feasibility study process, a range of stakeholders were engaged, including the Civic Trust, South Canterbury Art Society, Friends of the Aigantighe Art Gallery, South Canterbury Museum, Council representatives in the Project Governance Group, and members of the Grant family.
- 40 Additionally, comprehensive consultation has been undertaken through the Long Term Plan 2021-2031 process and the Council has received a significant response from the community on the proposed options to help inform Council's decision making process.

Relevant Legislation, Council Policy and Plans

Financial and Funding Implications

- 41 The costings for the proposed options for the redevelopment of the Aigantighe Art Gallery were outlined in the 2021-31 LTP consultation document.

- 42 If the Council was to proceed with the preferred option, of constructing a new facility on the current site, a budget of \$9.9 million has been allocated in the draft 2021-31 LTP budget.
- 43 The cost of the project would be debt funded. The Council would seek funding assistance through grants and donations to fund the preferred option. Any funding assistance received will reduce the amount Council needs to borrow for this project.
- 44 If the preferred option was to commence directly following the completion of the Heritage House Gallery Project, there could be some cost savings in consultancy and service fees.

Other Considerations

- 45 The Aigantighe Art Gallery is integral to the community's identity, and the issues with the aging facility need to be addressed to enable the Gallery to meet growing community and visitor needs; to engage, stimulate and inspire the community; and to ensure the sustainable and future success of the Aigantighe Art Gallery.
- 46 Redevelopment of the Aigantighe Art Gallery will have intergenerational value and enable the Gallery to preserve the collection for future generations; increase educational services and provide outreach opportunities throughout the District: and strengthen cultural tourism and assist in the economic development of the District.

Attachments

Nil