

SPACELOGIC

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MEMORANDUM

TO ANDREW CROSKERY, WAREHAM CAMERON
FROM CHRIS ALCOCK
CC
DATE 17 NOVEMBER 2015
RE 320 THE TERRACE, WELLINGTON
ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATE USES

We understand that it has been proposed that 320 The Terrace, Wellington (Gordon Wilson Building) could be adapted for academic use and you have requested that we comment on the feasibility of each of these, which we now provide.

You have asked us to assess the suitability of the building for the following functions:

1. Staff offices
2. Teaching space
3. Research clusters
4. Tutorial and study space

The basis of this assessment is:

- the original building plans supplied by you;
- the report by Beca Limited entitled *Building Structure Condition and Seismic Assessment* dated 28 May 2015;
- our familiarity with the Kelburn campus having provided expert campus and strategic planning advice to the University since 2010; and
- our expertise in space planning and strategy for tertiary education for universities including the University of Otago and Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand and in Australia for RMIT University, Macquarie University, the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney, Queensland University of Technology, the University of Adelaide and the University of Western Australia.

The assessment we have applied to this assessment is the building's suitability for the proposed functions relative to its internal configuration. We have not addressed the condition of the building nor economic issues.

The viability of an adaptive reuse of the existing building rests on two key issues: the internal configuration of the building and its circulation systems. The former dictates the ability of core activities to be accommodated, the latter relates to issues of occupant safety, wayfinding and organisational and functional cohesion.

A fundamental consideration is the highly compartmentalised nature of the building. Designed to accommodate residential flats, it is made up of 36 sq.m. spaces, each separated and in many cases bisected by concrete shear walls. Hence any adaptive re-use of necessity must fit within this basic 36 sq.m. module. This assumes that the existing building circulation is not changed (see below).

This module is not consistent with basic planning parameters for any of the proposed alternate uses:

- > Staff offices require a module of 12 sq.m. To achieve this within the existing building module would require the removal of the existing bathroom to create three staff spaces, noting that the one of these would have no natural light nor ventilation.
- > For teaching, the minimum size of a seminar room is 60 sq.m. and in current times where flexibility of internal configuration is required, 90 sq.m. is preferable. This would require removal of either 50% or 66% of the existing internal concrete walls, respectively.
- > For research, assuming that this category is addressing technical / scientific research (desktop research being covered by the office assessment above), there would need to be significant vertical services ducts

added to the outside of the building for specialist drainage and ventilation, together with specialist vertical transportation.

- > For tutorial and study space, open flexible spaces would be required, requiring removal of at least 50% of the internal concrete shear walls.

Hence all the proposed uses with the exception of staff offices would require substantive modification to the structure of the building. However academic staff offices cannot be disconnected from departmental research and teaching space, and the building is too remote in both distance and level from the main campus above. It should be stressed that for this reason the academic value of this site to the University is in its western end, where the level change is moderate, not its eastern end where the current building is located, where the level change is extreme.

On the question of building circulation, all of the proposed adaptive re-uses would require a significantly greater quantum of access than is current provided which was designed to service individual residential units. Leaving aside issues of fire safety and code compliance, the existing stair system would be unable to cope with the traffic generated by any form of timetabled student activity. This, and disabled access issues would require entirely new horizontal and vertical circulation systems for the building.

A related consideration is one of “connectedness”. A fundamental consideration in contemporary university planning is the need to foster interaction and collaboration, which is achieved through a high degree of transparency of functions and circulation systems that support interaction and spaces for staff and students to interact. Even with the opening up of the current shear walls (assuming that such a thing is possible), the compartmentalised nature of the building and the circulation it currently offers would not achieve any of these objectives.

In summary, in its current configuration the building is capable only of supporting staff offices, and these would be disconnected from the occupiers’ relevant department. Modifying the building for the other nominated uses would require the structure of the building to be substantially modified, and/or the construction of significant adjunct facilities and even then the outcomes would be highly unsatisfactory. Accordingly, in our opinion for these reasons an adaptive reuse proposal cannot be supported.