

194 Hereford Street

Hearing: Wednesday 25 January 2012 at 9.30am

Summary

The building that was situated at 194 Hereford Street was a two storey unreinforced masonry building situated on the corner of Hereford and Liverpool Street. It was likely to have been built in the 1930's, the original construction built with lime based mortar. The building housed a café, Joe's Garage.

The building was strengthened and rebuilt internally in 2005/2006 with the external walls and associated foundations being the only original structural elements retained. The external walls were a combination of double, triple and cavity brick construction. The north and west façades had reinforced concrete bond beams over the window and door openings at ground and first floor. The ground floor had a new reinforced concrete slab.

Previously the external walls had been laterally strengthened in the east west direction using steel portal frames which also supported the new floors and roof. The existing parapets had been tied back to the new roof with steel channels anchored into the back of them. The perimeter walls had been tied into the timber floor diaphragms at first and second floor.

Following the September 2010 earthquake, a Level 1 Rapid Assessment recorded damage as being minor/none. The building was green placarded.

As the building had been green placarded there was no further inspection/assessment by the Council including after the Boxing Day aftershock.

After the September earthquake the owners of the building arranged for an inspection of the building by O'Loughlin Taylor Spence Ltd, the structural engineers who had designed the structural strengthening in 2005/06. They inspected the building and advised on required remedial work.

In the 22 February 2011 earthquake the building suffered significant structural damage including collapse of the unreinforced masonry parapets on the north, west and south elevations; collapse of the north façade at first floor levels including two thirds of a reinforced concrete roof level bond beam and collapse of the east parapet and fire wall at first floor level.

Gregory Tobin worked as a chef at Joe's Garage. He was in the kitchen at the time of the earthquake and was last seen by a work colleague, Lewis Watson, running out the front door onto Hereford Street where he was hit by falling masonry from above.

Mr Tobin was not visible to Mr Watson once the dust had settled. Following the earthquake, USAR searched the rubble outside 194 Hereford Street and located Mr Tobin who was deceased.

Proposed Witnesses:

1. Peter Smith, Spencer Holmes Ltd, structural engineer
2. Christchurch City Council
3. O'Loughlin Taylor Spence Ltd, structural engineers
4. James Whelan, owner's representative
5. Alastair Miles, project manager
6. Lewis Watson, occupant of the building at the time of the February earthquake.

Likely Issues:

1. Application of the Council's earthquake prone policy to the building.
2. Inspection of the building following the September earthquake
3. Extent of the remedial work carried out after the September earthquake
4. The efficacy of the structural strengthening carried out in 2005/06