

200-204 Manchester Street (Iconic Bar)
Hearing: Thursday 26 January 2012 at 9.30am

Summary

The building that was situated at 200-204 Manchester Street was a two storey unreinforced masonry semi-detached structure occupying the site on the south-east side of the intersection of Manchester and Gloucester Sts.

The building housed a business known as the Iconic Bar.

Structural strengthening of the building appears to have been carried out in 1993 by Holmes Consulting Group and in 2005 by Lewis & Barrow Ltd.

Following the September 2010 earthquake a rapid assessment took place on 5 September 2010 resulting in the building being green placarded. That green placard was confirmed by a rapid structural assessment carried out by Holmes Consulting Group on behalf of the owners of the building on 8 September.

A further Level 1 Council Rapid Assessment on 10 September 2010 noted cracking in a parapet. The building was again green placarded.

On 22 November 2010 a proposal and plans for the addition of a new structural 1st floor and strengthening of the roof by Lewis & Barrow was filed with the Council. This proposal was on the instructions of the, then Bar Manager, Darryl Fraser, who at that time was considering purchasing the business. However the Council has advised that some 8 days later, on 30 November 2010 their records show that the client requested a hold on this proposal and it appears to have subsequently been withdrawn.

On 26 December 2010 a Level 2 Rapid Assessment took place following the Boxing Day aftershock. This noted that the east gable wall was badly damaged. On the 2nd page of the assessment form it noted that the west wall was damaged especially at the apex. The building was red placarded.

A further Rapid Assessment - Level 1 on 27 December 2010 noted "stress fractures on plastered brick walls – upper areas mainly above where the roof trusses connect – parapets". The building was again red placarded.

That day the Council wrote to the owner enclosing a Building Act notice. That notice only referred to the east gable wall having been damaged.

In the days that followed Lewis & Barrow Ltd oversaw make-safe work to the building. In an email of 30 December 2010 Lewis & Barrow referred to the red stickering by the Council and the east gable wall parapet damage. It also recorded that further investigation had revealed damage to the gable end wall and remedial works had been undertaken.

The following day a CPEng certificate signed by Simon Gifford of Lewis & Barrow confirmed the structural integrity of the building. Accordingly this was accepted by the Council and the building allowed to re-open.

On 9 February 2011 a Council's Engineers Re-inspection of Damaged Buildings by Mark Ryburn noted: "recommend contacting the engineer for a confirmation of the works as lateral load capacity may not exist. Also get comments on the cracking (likely just in the paint)". The form he completed also noted that protection fencing was required to "cover parapet on Gloucester St". There was a note on Mr Ryburn's form which reads "Neville please view and make a decision".

On the morning of 22 February 2011 Neville Higgs (who was the Neville referred to in the note on the Engineers Re-inspection form referred to in the above paragraph), signed off a closure form for the file on the basis that a CPEng certificate had been received from Simon Gifford. It would appear that the concerns raised by Mr Ryburn in his Engineer's Re-inspection on 9 February 2011 were never addressed.

In the 22 February earthquake the building was substantially damaged including collapse of the north and west facades onto the street.

Jaime Gilbert was working as a barman at the Iconic Bar (he had only been in that job some 2 weeks). Also working as an assistant to the Manager was Jaime's sister, Amy Cooney. When the earthquake struck they both ran from the building but were hit by falling masonry blocks. Both were covered in rubble as they lay on the footpath outside the building. Rescuers uncovered Amy Cooney and then Jaime Gilbert. He was severely injured and was taken to Christchurch Hospital in a van and

CPR performed on him on route. However a short time after they arrived at the hospital he was pronounced dead.

Proposed Witnesses:

1. Amy Cooney
2. Peter Smith, Spencer Holmes Ltd, structural engineer
3. Christchurch City Council
4. Warren Lewis (and Christopher Gordon) Lewis & Barrow Ltd, structural engineers
5. Mark Ryburn, Opus Consultants Ltd, structural engineer
6. Neville Higgs, engineer
7. Gary Looker/Darryl Fraser – for owners.

Likely Issues:

1. Application of the Council's earthquake prone policy to the building.
2. Assessment of the building, following the September earthquake and Boxing Day aftershock.
3. Whether the proposed structural strengthening in the proposal and drawings of 22 November 2010 would have had any effect on the building being able to withstand the February earthquake.
4. Communication to the owners of the damage apparent from rapid assessments on 27 and 27 December 2010 via the Building Act notice.
5. Assessment of the make-safe work carried out between 27 December and 31 December 2010.
6. Lack of follow-up of the problems highlighted by Mark Ryburn in the Engineer's Re-inspection on 9 February 2011.