

265-271 Manchester Street (also 173 Gloucester Street)

Hearing: Tuesday 28 February 2012 at 9.30am

Summary

The building that was situated at 265-271 Manchester Street was a two storey unreinforced masonry structure on the corner of Manchester and Gloucester Streets. It was attached to similar buildings on both street frontages.

Although some seismic work had been done on the building in the past (removal of parapets, adding a concrete bond beam, tying the roof and floor to the walls and adding a concrete frame to a wall opening on the ground floor) the building would still have been considered to be earthquake prone in terms of the Council's earthquake prone policy.

Following the September 2010 earthquake a Level 1 Rapid Assessment on 5 September 2010 recorded no noticeable damage to the building and assigned it a green placard.

A Level 2 Rapid Assessment was completed by Opus, Structural Engineers on behalf of the owners or loss adjustors on 14 September 2010. Although various cracks were observed the assessment assigned the building a green placard.

Maxim Projects Ltd, contractors, were engaged to carry out repairs identified by Opus as necessary. A further assessment of the building was carried out by Maxim on 20 September 2010 to ensure the safety of Maxim staff when completing the work. This assessment was consistent with the Opus assessment.

There does not appear to have been any inspection of the building following the Boxing Day aftershock.

In the 22 February 2011 earthquake the building sustained significant structural damage including the collapse of the upper floor façade on Manchester Street and the collapse of a large section of the reinforced concrete bond beam/parapet on the upper level of that façade.

When the February earthquake struck, Christopher Smith was in his vehicle parked outside 269 Manchester Street. The vehicle was severely damaged by falling rubble from the building.

Police inquiries established that Mr Smith was rescued by the NZ Fire Service from inside the vehicle and taken across the road to the Orion Building, 218 Manchester Street. Despite medical treatment and CPR, Mr Smith died as a result of his injuries.

Proposed Witnesses:

1. Peter Smith, Spencer Holmes Ltd, structural engineer
2. Stephen McCarthy, Christchurch City Council
3. Mrs B Claxton, owner
4. Puvi Mohanaraj, structural engineer, Opus International Consultants (by video link)
5. Robert Spooner, loss adjustor, Anthony Runacres & Associates Limited (written statement only)
6. Graeme Hamilton, Maxim Projects Ltd

Likely Issues:

1. Application of the Council's earthquake prone policy to the building.
2. Assessment of the building following the September 2010 earthquake