

'Braided Rivers' building canopy – consultation on the occupation of legal road in Cathedral Square

Consultation on the proposed occupation of legal road in Cathedral Square in front of the 'Braided Rivers' building on 9 Cathedral Square was undertaken from 18 February to 11 March 2019.

Thirty six responses were received during the consultation period. Submitters were asked to provide comments. Twenty eight (78%) indicated that they supported the proposed encroachment of the building onto legal road within Cathedral Square. Two others (5.5%) gave qualified support and six (16.5%) submitters did not support the proposal.

Many of those who provided comments in support referred to the architecturally significant design of the 'Braided Rivers' building proposed on 9 Cathedral Square and how it would be an asset to the centre of the city and to Christchurch. Specific comments included: "The proposed structure is very beautiful and would make a stunning contribution to the urban fabric." Another said: "I support it, it looks fantastic."

Most of the submitters who specifically referred to the encroachment of the canopy on legal road said the iconic glass and timber building designed by Shigeru Ban would encourage people back into the centre of Christchurch and have a positive impact on Cathedral Square.

The Chief Executive of Christchurch Airport Malcolm Johns added that Shigeru Ban had delivered a concept that is unique and special and inextricably linked to Canterbury. The vast open canopy would provide public access, shelter and shade, and provide a welcoming and hospitable view from Cathedral Square.

Six submitters did not support the canopy. The Christchurch Civic Trust and Historic Places Canterbury said the canopy should be either scaled back or reconsidered to reduce its impact on the unique cruciform shape of Cathedral Square - scheduled in the District Plan as a 'Highly Significant' heritage item and setting – and the three lime trees which were part of that setting. They said the proposal could set a precedent in the Square.

In the earlier resource consent process for 9 Cathedral Square, both the heritage consultant for the applicant and the Council's heritage advisor considered that the impact of the proposed building and its northern canopy on the heritage setting in the Square would be minor.

One of the conditions of resource consent is that the existing paving treatment in Cathedral Square will be reinstated under the northern canopy of the proposed building to maintain a consistent treatment and integration with adjacent edges of the public space. The only area of public space that would not be accessible to the public once the canopy is built would be the area occupied by the lower section of the seven supporting columns.

Seven submitters, including the Civic Trust and Historic Places Canterbury, referred to the need to protect the trees and/or manage their ongoing maintenance. One respondent commented: "Under no circumstances must the proposed canopy effect the growth and shape of the three lime trees."

The arborist has now assessed the three trees in relation to the proposed northern canopy and pillars. He has concluded that construction of the canopy and its dimensions would have a minor impact on the trees. His assessment can be viewed in the link below.