

Revamp for historic club

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By LOIS WATSON

The historic Canterbury Club will be repositioned and a 12-storey office and apartment block built on its land under a multimillion-dollar property deal announced yesterday.

On Friday, the Canterbury Club and investment company Latitude Group lodged resource consent applications in relation to the club's site on the corner of Worcester Boulevard and Cambridge Terrace.

Under their plans, the clubhouse, which is 133 years old, will be repositioned and restored, a historic squash court removed and a new 12-storey office and apartment block built on the land.

"Our building will contain the first A-grade office space to be built in this city for more than 20 years, as well as retail and residential and parking space," said Latitude Group director Ken Wimsett.

The Latitude Group bought 1398sq m of the Canterbury Club's land for \$4 million at the end of last year and since then has been working with the club on development plans.

Canterbury Club president Rick Hill said the clubhouse was in dire need of conservation and repair. Its guttering was full of holes, the roof was patched, many of the windows leaked and the building was rotting in places.

Under the deal reached with the Latitude Group the original building would be restored and a new building added to house a cafe, bar and fitness centre.

The new building was being designed by well-known Christchurch architect Alun Wilkie, who was an expert in working with historically sensitive projects.

"This building is a key part of our plan to revitalise the Canterbury Club itself. Our membership numbers have been falling but these new amenities will help retain and attract new members ensuring the club continues for another century," Hill said.

Two extensions to the original clubhouse would be demolished as would the neighbouring squash court. The squash court has a Category 4 Historic Places rating.

"The extensions need to be removed so that the clubhouse can be restored to its original glory while the squash court needs to be removed to complete the sale of some of the Canterbury Club's land," Hill said.

Architectural historian and heritage adviser Jenny May said she was pleased the Canterbury Club had come up with a plan to conserve and restore its original clubhouse,

May, who has been contracted by the Canterbury Club to assist with the development, said the fact the proposed plan enabled the club to continue using the building was especially significant.

"We have very few buildings in Christchurch that are still used for their original purpose. Even some of our churches are no longer places of worship," she said.

"The building was purpose-built for the Canterbury Club, which has used it continuously for 133 years and it is vital in terms of Christchurch's social history that they remain here."

Some of the extensions being removed in the development were unsympathetic to the original building, detracting from its heritage values.

The Canterbury Club was established in 1872 by a group of mainly professionals and businessmen.

The clubhouse was designed by Frederick Strouts and completed in 1874. It was initially for men only but now has 600 members, including women.

Its membership has always included some of Canterbury's most well-known people and the club has hosted top celebrities. It is believed Captain Robert Falcon Scott ate his last meal at the Canterbury Club before departing on his journey across the Antarctic ice cap.