



WHAKATANE BUILT HERITAGE STUDY

Summary Document for Consultation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Whakatane District Council is consulting on options for managing heritage aspects of central Whakatane's built environment. This is part of an integrated review of Whakatane's Town Centre, including the recently published Town Vision.

This document provides a brief summary of a recently completed Built Heritage Study and sets out options for managing that heritage. Community input is being sought in order to ensure that any proposals for managing Whakatane's built heritage are informed by community views. Recognising and providing for built heritage can contribute to a community's sense of place. At the same time, it must be recognised that protection of built heritage can have implications and costs for building owners and users.

If reading the Built Heritage Study sparks any further thoughts about the Town Vision, you are welcome to include those comments in your feedback. Feedback received from this consultation will be considered by the Whakatane District Council alongside the feedback received through the Town Vision consultation. This will happen in early 2008, after consultation on the Built Heritage Study closes.

The Whakatane Area Built Heritage Study has undertaken a comprehensive review of built heritage, to support the ongoing management of heritage resources from a base of understanding and knowledge. The study has involved broad research into the main historic themes which have shaped development in central Whakatane so that individual places can be understood in context. It has also involved gathering information about a wide range of buildings and structures, from a range of periods, in the central area. This preliminary research helped to identify important historic associations or values that needed to be investigated more fully.

There are aspects of central Whakatane's built environment which are typical of many New Zealand provincial centres and other elements that are unique. The key themes which have been significant to Whakatane's historic development include: pre-European settlement and cultural heritage, establishment, growth and development of the township, development of local and central government agencies and the extensive development of farming in the surrounding area.

These themes are associated with the places that are unique or distinctive aspects of Whakatane. There is little current recognition of heritage buildings and structures in the district plan or by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. No buildings within the study area are scheduled or registered.

Whakatane's central area is diverse and it is interesting because of this. Its built form demonstrates development from a range of periods, and provides evidence of important associations with people over time, and its historic pattern of development. Whakatane's surviving historic buildings and places are a primary asset of the central area and are a finite resource.

As a result of the study, options for statutory and non-statutory methods to enhance the ongoing management of the collective values of heritage resources and future development in central Whakatane are put forward.

The Whakatane Built Heritage Study report has two parts. Part One includes the thematic historic overview, a summary of cultural heritage values associated with the town centre as a whole and a review of management of heritage resources. It also proposes options for enhancing heritage management through statutory and non-statutory methods. Lastly the appendices contain supporting information.

Part Two contains an inventory of heritage places within the central study area which have been researched and assessed using heritage criteria from the Bay of Plenty Regional Policy Statement. This is supported by record forms for those places which have been researched in detail, as part of this Study and by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Partial record forms have been prepared for a large number of additional places to collate base information that was gathered during the study.

There is no doubt that the history of Whakatane is represented in part in its built heritage. The way this is managed in the future will affect the authenticity, character and urban qualities of the central area. There is an opportunity to develop a vision for Whakatane's built heritage that retains links with its past and sustains and enhances this for future generations while allowing for appropriate development and growth.

INTRODUCTION

The Whakatane Built Heritage Study is a joint initiative of Environment Bay of Plenty, Whakatane District Council and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT). These agencies have agreed that comprehensive information on the built heritage of central Whakatane is necessary for this resource to be recognised and managed appropriately in the future.

The built heritage of Whakatane is a resource of national and regional importance. A number of sites and structures are associated with distinctive phases of New Zealand's history. These primarily relate to the township's role as a service centre for the Whakatane urban area and wider rural district.

The study provides an overview of the key historic themes which have shaped development in Whakatane. This thematic approach enables consideration of the cultural heritage values of places in the centre within a broader context. It also helps to identify the full range of types of heritage that may be present.

Based on an understanding of these themes, the surviving buildings and structures and the pattern of historic development within the study area have been analysed. Current heritage listings have been assessed to see if there are any gaps, or significant aspects of the area's history which may have been overlooked. This thematic contextual approach is being used increasingly in New Zealand as a way of reviewing the identification and assessment of heritage, and is well established overseas.

Currently there is no built heritage in central Whakatane that is formally recognised as being of heritage value through protection in the district plan or registration by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. The study poses the question – what are the places that represent central Whakatane's unique historic development and character?

This integrated research approach enables progression beyond initial identification of heritage. Further research and assessment enables a better understanding of the relationship between places and people, the physical and historic context, the stories associated with the area, the value of continuity, and the collective contribution of groups of historic places which may be much greater than the value of each individually. It enables a clearer understanding of the unique, irreplaceable quality and character that the retention of heritage buildings and places provides.

A review of the current planning mechanisms for managing historic heritage resources in central Whakatane has been undertaken. Recommendations for potential options, both statutory and non-statutory, for the ongoing management and improved understanding of Whakatane's heritage are put forward.

Research has been undertaken on a number of significant places in Whakatane, to enable a more thorough assessment of significance, and to gather and record information for places of cultural heritage value.



View eastward along The Strand 1920. WMG Neg No P 682

BRIEF AND PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Key objectives for the study were:

- To identify the range of built heritage in central Whakatane.
- To complete an assessment of built heritage in the central Whakatane Study area.
- To provide recommendations for the protection and ongoing management of built heritage in the township.

Key project tasks included:

- Research and preparation of a contextual history for the study area to identify key themes in the historic development of Whakatane city centre.
- Review existing inventories and registers in light of identified themes.
- Identify potentially significant built heritage places.
- Prepare more detailed research to complete field survey record forms for particular historic places, including a summary of history and cultural heritage significance, and overview of condition.
- Review existing planning mechanisms for heritage protection and provide recommendations for future protection and management of built heritage resources in the study area.
- Assess the economic implications of identifying places as being of heritage value.
- Prepare a report summarising research and investigation undertaken.

THE STUDY AREA

The study area generally focuses on the central business area of Whakatane as defined in the District Plan and shown on the following map. This includes the commercial heart of the city. The area was broken into two parts, A and B.

Area A is located east of Pohaturoa at the intersection of Commerce St and The Strand. This is the earliest settled and developed part of the township and contains many of the township's traditional heritage buildings and sites. This area was subject of the Whakatane and District Historical Society's 2006 study entitled *Whakatane Township Historic Heritage Resource Study*. Area B is west of Pohaturoa and is generally land developed after draining of the estuary area from the 1950s forward.

Review of built heritage in the central area was addressed as a priority because of potential development pressure and the density of built fabric in the central area.



A map of Whakatane town showing the study area outlined in red

PART TWO of the study contains the individual record forms for buildings researched within areas A and B of the study area. Historical information has been gathered and an assessment of each place's relationship to the thematic framework is included. Individual places that are of particularly cultural heritage significance have been assessed against the Regional Policy Statement criteria.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Whakatane District Council has a statutory obligation under the Historic Places Act 1993 and the Resource Management Act 1991 to identify and provide for the protection of the town's heritage. Currently there are no heritage listed buildings within the study area. There is no guidance on how to protect or recognise built heritage values in the Proposed Whakatane District Plan and there are no incentives for a high standard of building maintenance and care.

Additionally, new legislation requirements under the Building Act 1991 such as the Earthquake-Prone, Dangerous and Insanitary Buildings Policy and other council initiatives, such as the Town Vision, may have an impact on heritage buildings.



General store east of Pohaturoa near The Strand, 1890. Whakatane Museum and Gallery (WMG) Neg P670

ISSUES FOR BUILT HERITAGE

Principal issues in relation to protecting built heritage in Whakatane include:

Economic use

Heritage buildings can be demolished or come under threat of being demolished as different uses for heritage buildings are seen as more economic. Demolition often results because a viable use has not been, or cannot be, identified, or because of the high cost of maintenance, restoration or adaptation.

Alterations

Unsympathetic alterations, additions, or detrimental uses can damage an item's heritage values. Modifications to an item's exterior and interior are often needed to make a heritage item usable (eg. air conditioning and conforming with fire, earthquake and access standards). Removing items from their original setting can change their context and diminish their historical validity. The loss of an item's setting can also reduce its heritage value.

Restrictions on use

Protecting the town's built heritage is not about locking it up. The continued use of a heritage building is essential to its survival. The challenge is to protect the most valued heritage places in an evolving environment while meeting the needs of a changing community.

THE VALUE OF BUILT HERITAGE

Recognising built heritage is an integral component of a 'unique town' because it demonstrates how much the town values the diversity of its environment. It provides a sympathetic human scale and form to the urban environment, and enhances the well-being of its citizens. It can also make a significant contribution to the economy, through employment, tourism, and the provision of interesting and alternative working and entertainment spaces.

Whakatane's historic buildings are a precious and finite resource. Historic buildings are an integral part of the CBD's character and contribute to the town's identity. They provide a link with our past and enrich our environment. Recognising and acknowledging the important roles historic buildings play in the community is important in finding the best management options for Whakatane's built heritage.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

A range of options are available to improve the management of built heritage resources in Whakatane's town centre, in accordance with the findings of the study's research. A balance is needed between regulatory controls, incentives, public awareness and education. It is likely that a combination of the possible actions outlined in the study will be the most effective means of maintaining and celebrating the town's built heritage resource. The study gives five options:

1. Do nothing/retain heritage management framework as it currently exists.

This option places heritage resources at potential risk through uncontrolled development, and does not necessarily reflect community aspirations. Future redevelopment of sites that involve the removal of currently unrecognised heritage places could lead to community opposition, and unfairly or unwittingly place developers who quite reasonably comply with current District Plan provisions in an adversarial position in the community. It is preferable to clearly define and recognise heritage resources valued by the community to provide certainty and clear understanding.

Advantages

- Retaining the heritage management system as it exists includes maintaining current expectations and concepts of what has been considered to be of heritage value (primarily natural and archaeological heritage), and no additional control on development.

Disadvantages

- Having no heritage protection leads to the impression that there are no buildings that are of cultural heritage value, and these can therefore be modified in ways that impact negatively on the heritage values or lead to their demolition.
- This approach does not act on requirements under the RMA which has elevated protection of heritage to a matter of national importance.
- The existing District Plan framework provides limited statutory control over the protection and management of the town's heritage resource.
- Having no built heritage scheduled in the District Plan does not adequately reflect the range of built heritage values in the town centre. It is not consistent with the RMA, Regional Policy Statement or objectives and policies set out in the District Plan.

2. Use a range of non-regulatory methods to encourage heritage protection.

The main advantages of using non-statutory techniques are to encourage heritage protection, without adding additional layers of statutory control and associated compliance costs such as resource consents. Non-statutory techniques also raise awareness of heritage buildings and enhance the ways in which places are valued by the community. There are a range of non-statutory techniques to expand the community's understanding and value of the area's history. A broader range of heritage resources could be further promoted to build on current cultural tourism opportunities and initiatives. Options include:

- Development of heritage trail brochures for the central area;
- Guided walks for visitors;
- Developing a heritage website;
- Publishing a brief history of the township utilising information gathered as part of the Whakatane Built Heritage Study;
- Display of interpretive material such as copies of original architectural drawings within shops

and buildings;

- Production of education packs for schools;
- Providing interpretive material within the central area; and,
- Promote heritage events.

Incentives and methods to encourage building owners to conserve and maintain heritage buildings include:

- Waiving or reducing resource consent fees;
- Reducing development levies;
- Providing funding assistance for preparing conservation plans condition reports and colour schemes;
- Preparing guidelines for maintenance and adaptive reuse; and,
- Setting up a heritage award for restoration and adaptive reuse.

Advantages

- The use of non-statutory techniques is based on encouragement and incentives rather than additional controls.

Disadvantages

- The downside to the use of non-statutory techniques are that they provide no clear identification or certainty about what built heritage resources may be considered important by the community.
- They offer limited opportunity for the Council to review or comment on changes to places in relation to their heritage values and limited control of ongoing redevelopment.

3. Scheduling significant buildings

The District Plan currently contains no scheduled heritage buildings or structures in the study area. Research carried out as part of the Built Heritage Study has identified a number of places within the town centre that could be considered for scheduling, which are (see map on page four):

- Commercial Hotel – both 1939 building and 1917 building;
- Whakatane Hotel;
- Cinema Five Complex;
- Loan and Mercantile Building;
- Shelter by Pohaturoa Rock;
- Stewart Motors 16 George St;
- Plunket Building 35 Quay Street;
- Former National Bank Building 62 The Strand;
- 84 The Strand;
- Bridgers Building 88-92 The Strand;
- 108-110 The Strand; and,
- The Grand Theatre 124-128 The Strand.

The District Plan is one mechanism of protecting cultural heritage which may be adversely affected by subdivision and land use activities. Scheduling means that the effects of applications have to be taken into account when considering development and applying for resource consents.

Currently the District Plan only contains one category of scheduling. It may be worthwhile to

consider a two tier scheduling (Category A and B) as adopted by many Councils and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. This would achieve a consistent approach to managing heritage resources. Destruction, alterations and additions could carry a different activity status for the different categories. It is also useful to provide an explanation in the schedule of the reasons the item has been scheduled or the values associated with it.

Advantages

- Strengthening existing District Plan sections which relate to built heritage would help to more clearly guide the approach to alterations and additions, maintenance and conservation.
- Scheduling would provide certainty and understanding about places that are valued by the community. It would be based on the thematic overview to reflect a range of themes in the development of Whakatane.
- The inclusion of further individual places on the schedule in the Proposed Whakatane District plan:
 - recognises the building's heritage value,
 - allows appropriate review and control over development to ensure it is sympathetic to the character of particular places,
 - and provides information and knowledge about heritage places.

Disadvantages

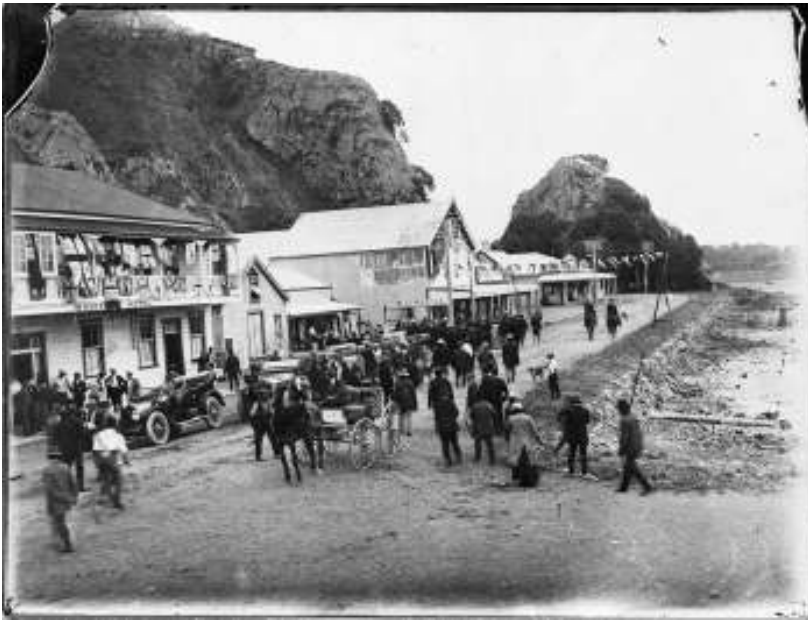
- Scheduling individual places or buildings does not adequately acknowledge the overall/collective heritage character of some parts of the CBD and intact groups of buildings and places within it.
- Building owners may be disadvantaged by any additional control, or potential compliance costs such as resource consent applications for exterior alterations.
- Individual scheduling will have an impact on the potential development of sites, based on the current allowable height limits within the town centre.
- Individual scheduling does not always properly recognise the unique local, everyday character of a place or overall heritage character of the town centre.

4. Create Heritage Character Overlay Zones

The study has identified an area of Whakatane's town centre that was developed in the post war period, and within this, an area set aside for government administration and commercial office purposes (see map on page four). These buildings include the Post Office, BNZ Bank, Power Board Building, Police Station, and Presbyterian Mission Building. The buildings have collective heritage value that contribute to streetscape character and historic context but otherwise are not sufficiently important to warrant scheduling.

An Alert Inventory could be created flagging the significant modern buildings. This option would mean specific heritage character areas or overlay zones are applied to the distinct surviving groups of heritage buildings in the study area. Guidelines could be developed to encourage the retention of the architectural values associated with particular designs. Alternatively a diagram showing the location of significant buildings could be included in the District Plan with accompanying guidelines relating to how the values of these buildings could be recognised.

The aim of overlay zones would not be to "freeze" the built environment, but to ensure that the particular character of the area as a whole is understood, and that future change can be managed to protect the distinctive character of the centre. This approach has been successfully applied in a number of other town centres. It is a way of acknowledging the collective values of groups of places and the contribution they make to the overall character of a place. It encourages retention and ongoing use and can ensure that new development responds to and enhances the character of the surrounding environment.



A visit by Sir William Herries to Whakatane in 1913. The view is taken looking along The Strand to Pohaturoa, with the Whakatane hotel on the left. ATL 4247 ac 1

Advantages

- It could ensure the particular character of groups of heritage buildings are more closely considered in any redevelopment, and retention of these places would be more strongly encouraged.
- The collective contribution of these groups of places would be recognised.

Disadvantages

- The layer would add an additional layer of control for building owners.
- Building owners may be disadvantaged by any additional control, or potential compliance costs such as resource consent applications for exterior alterations.

5. Combination of statutory and non-statutory techniques and incentives

Using a combination of statutory and non-statutory techniques is the most likely option. A balance needs to be struck between regulatory controls, incentives, public awareness and education. Both methods complement each other and a combination would be the most effective means of maintaining and celebrating the township's built heritage resource.

NEXT STEPS

Now that we are aware of the significance of individual buildings and groups of buildings to the built heritage of the Whakatane Town Centre, we need to make decisions regarding the future management of this resource. We need to decide on the most appropriate management regime (as per the numbered sections 1 to 5 above) for the CBD and we need to do this collectively. We also need to be aware of other Council initiatives, such as the Town Vision project, as they may impact (positively and negatively) on the built heritage of the CBD.

If reading the Built Heritage Study sparks any further thoughts about the Town Vision, you are welcome to include those comments in your feedback. Feedback on the Town Vision received from this consultation will be considered by the Whakatane District Council alongside the feedback received through the Town Vision consultation process. This will happen in early 2008, after consultation on the Built Heritage Study closes.

The Council will consider your submissions on the Built Heritage Study in early 2008, and will make decisions about what steps (if any) to take as a result of the information provided by the Study and by your feedback on options.

Please do take the time to review the management options and consider what you think we should do, and contact us with your feedback.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

DISPLAY STAND

There will be a display stand in the Whakatane District Council foyer over the December-January holiday season. This display will provide information on the built heritage study and the available options.

PUBLIC OPEN DAY

There will be a Public open day on the 24th January in the Esplanade Mall, the Strand, Whakatane. This open day will be a chance for building owners and the public to come down and talk to Matthews and Matthews Architects who undertook the study.

WHAKATANE DISTRICT COUNCIL WEBSITE

Information on the Built Heritage Study and Options for Management can be found on the Whakatane District Council website:

www.whakatane.govt.nz

CONTACT THE WHAKATANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

If you have any questions or would like a full copy of the Final Report from the Built Heritage Study, please do not hesitate to contact Sharn Meekel on (07) 306 0500, ext 7469 or email sharm@whakatane.govt.nz.

FEEDBACK

Your Feedback on the management options is sought by

5pm, 1 February, 2008.

Feedback must be made in writing and forwarded to the Whakatane District Council. This can either be done by:

FAX

FAX Number: 07 307 0718

EMAIL

submissions@whakatane.govt.nz

or

HAND DELIVERY

To either of the Council Offices:

Civic Centre
Commerce Street
WHAKATANE

POST

Chief Executive
Whakatane District Council
Private Bag 1002
WHAKATANE 3158

Murupara Service Centre
Civic Square
MURUPARA

A feedback form is located on the next page.

