

Minutes of National Heritage Planner's Forum

11th April 2008, Queenstown Lakes District Council.

Present: Emma Bishop (Selwyn District Council), Alina Wimmer (Waitakere City Council), Amanda Ohs (Christchurch City Council), Neil Carrie (Christchurch City Council), Richard Knott (Manakau City Council), Debbie Hogan (Dunedin City Council), Jane McLeod (Dunedin City Council), Ralph Henderson (Queenstown Lakes District Council), Cara Doyle (Queenstown Lakes District Council)

Apologies: Nicola Short and Sarah Pocklington (Auckland City Council), Aranne Donald (North Shore City Council).

Proceedings

Presentation 1: Queenstown Town Centre Guidelines – reflecting the old and the new.- Jackie Gillies, Conservation Architect

An analysis of Queenstown's town centre was the initial starting point for the guidelines to identify the context and attributes of the built fabric of the town centre. Queenstown is characterised by a grid network of very narrow streets and pedestrian links and section sizes reflect those of the original camp in the gold mining days.

A number of key local experts worked together to produce the guidelines including planners, architects, conservation architects and urban designers. The purpose of the guidelines is to provide guidance to ensure that new development positively contributes to the area by retaining and enhancing the character of the town. Notably the guidelines were strongly supported by the local Council.

The presentation highlighted the importance of retaining primary characteristics of buildings by providing range of hypothetical examples of buildings (unsympathetic to sympathetic) all of which comply with building regulations. Desirable characteristics were also highlighted on photographs of existing buildings.

There is currently some discussion on the possibility of the encouraging a varied roofscape in Queenstown. This could be achieved by permitting increased heights to part of the building offset by a lower building height on an equal proportion of the building. It is also envisaged that outdoor heating/refrigeration units would fit into the lower spaces. This is particularly important given the over head view of Queenstown from the skyline/gondola.

The guidelines also make recommendations on how to deal with large sites which normally result from an amalgamation of a number of sites. The Eichardts building on Marine Parade is the largest historic building in Queenstown and each stage of its construction is reflects the smaller section sizes of the original land. The guidelines recommend that new developments should not exceed this building size. This building also illustrates that if the primary matrix is appropriate in size and form that there is a much broader scope for secondary details.

Although the guidelines are a non statutory, advisory document they have considerable strength and are a recognised reference document used by local planners, urban designers, developers and architects.

There was some discussion on the methodology in demonstrating different approaches to building design and whether to use photos or drawings to highlight non sympathetic to sympathetic architectural solutions.

- The original guidelines for Wellington were rejected by Council for using examples of real buildings to highlight unsympathetic approaches to building design. These were later substituted by drawings which were not as effective.
- The ticks and crossed approach used by Dunedin's original guidelines was not recommended as they do not encourage the architect to think for themselves.
- The Christchurch approach was to provide three or four examples of unsympathetic and sympathetic designs and to ask the reader to make their own mind up. This allows the context of the surroundings to be considered.
- It was noted that the Queenstown Guidelines are a character analysis of the town centre which guides the reader through the design process resulting in design guidelines that are accessible to a wide range of people. A concerted effort was made to keep the guidelines short to encourage this accessibility.

Local consents planners reported that the guidelines are very useful and understandable and are a useful tool for up-skilling the general public and planners; however local architects felt that the guidelines were encouraging them to produce replica buildings with little scope for design. Developers were supportive of the guidelines because they reduce the need for redrafting concept drawings, significantly reducing their overall costs.

The Arrowtown Guidelines are much more comprehensive than the Queenstown Guidelines and cover the entire town which is broken into four separate areas: Core area of the town, the river area, early residential area and the new town area. The Arrowtown Design Guidelines have recently won a silver award from the NZ Institute of Landscape Architects. and are available on the QLDC website: www.qldc.govt.nz

QLDC are also developing Kingston Character Guidelines to protect the eclecticism of the area. This is a challenge due to the small batch size sections which are difficult to retain.

The conflict between urban designers and transport departments of local authorities was recognised. There is an ongoing debate for swales, no curbs V curbs, channels and footpaths. How do we deal with this?

- Herald Island, Waitakere was noted for its low impact designs which retained swales and required strict adherence to parking guidelines.
- Dialogue with roading engineers regarding Arrowtown has resulted in a return to traditional the swale and channel. Sometimes that which is obvious to urban designers and architects is not apparent to others. It is easier to open dialogue with other departments if all staff are in house than if the work is contracted.

The issue of on site parking requirements at heritage buildings was discussed.

- Christchurch City Council includes a number of wavers relating to Heritage Buildings in the District Plan. This recognises that heritage buildings are protected but the space around them often contribute to the heritage of the site e.g. gardens etc. The area surrounding heritage buildings often requires protection and in such cases flexibility with parking requirements is recommended.
- The preservation of individual buildings has little value if it is in the wrong context. It is important to protect and preserve individual plot sizes to retain original character. The main problem is controlling the amalgamation of a number of sites. It is difficult to prevent owners from developing for their own purpose/intended use and controlling heights of buildings adjacent to heritage buildings but guidelines are useful in encouraging people to aim for good practice.

Presentation 2: Good Cop, Bad Cop? Balancing regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to heritage
– Ralph Henderson, Senior Policy Analyst, QLDC.

This presentation gave examples of the different heritage buildings in Queenstown and the statutory instruments used to protect them. Heritage orders, temporary protection plans – presentation available at www.qldc.govt.nz .

Presentation 3: Christchurch City Council – Heritage Grants Programme.
- Neil Carrie, Principal Heritage Advisor

This presentation summarised the workings of the Heritage Grants Programme in Christchurch since 1989.

- Available only to private owners of listed heritage buildings
- 600K budget per annum. Development contributions that have not been allocated can be directed at the creation of historic reserves.
- Heritage grant is an ongoing fund as opposed to a call for applications for grant once a year. This results in the scheme being accessible at all times.
- Governed by Councillor Committee dealing with grants and covenants
- Heritage conservation covenants are a condition of the grant
- Conservation plans are a key feature
- Operational guidelines are recommended even for smaller grant schemes as they:
 - Provide a measure of public benefits, inform the public who is getting grants on a 6 monthly basis presented to Council
 - Provide the basis for analysis of recipients and amounts granted annually.

Benefits:

- All matters outside the scope of the District Plan are considered.

- Funding for earthquake strengthening is available. Many owners would not contemplate this without grant aid. Consultants reports are used to determine the grant aid offered and consultants fees are covered by a separate source of funding.
- Addressing the concerns of Council regarding intensification and city renewal.

At QLDC grant funding is limited and applies only to expenditure relating to resource consents.

Waitakere's grant scheme also applies to museums as heritage is not as rich in this area. Maximum grant is 10K. Privately owned museums are eligible for a maximum of 4K towards overall maintenance of the building. Christchurch has a separate fund for operational costs and the heritage grant only applies to capital works.

Heritage grants were recognised as an important mechanism for drawing down other sources of funding e.g. lottery funding. The recognition from Council provides leverage for other contributors even if council involvement is only short term.

General Business:

What is involved in commissioning a thematic study, what is the end product and uses of a thematic study?

Christchurch City Council produced a thematic study in 2005 which gives an overview of the city's development and is now key to identifying and managing heritage in Christchurch. It helped Council to review the existing City Plan heritage listings to identify any thematic gaps or potential items that should be added to the heritage inventory. The study is available on CCC's website: www.ccc.govt.nz. The study employed a wide range of experts including historians, a landscape historian, architects, conservation architects, planners. The study was undertaken through a direct external commission valued at 80K. Any council considering a thematic study should plan for regular funding for projects arising from the study. Christchurch heritage week is informed by the thematic study.

The study is broken down into a number of themes based on the existing heritage list but also including some national themes from the Historic Places Trust. It also identified thematic gaps.

Dunedin approached Southern Heritage Trust to undertake a bibliography and background research from which themes can be drawn.

Selwyn District Council asked how heritage information is stored and made available to the public in an accessible way in other Councils?

A standardised approach should be taken to heritage assessments. It is important to GPS items so that they are correctly identified on District Plan maps. All new heritage items should be photographed and further information included on a 1 / 2 page 'Summary Sheet' with base documentation held on file.

Proposed Agenda Items for Heritage Forum:

- Covenants, types of constraints, temporary protection plans, conservation plans etc.
- Research and documentation of heritage items: How and where to start organising heritage files so that it is accessible to the public.
- Heritage education advocacy. Education is an inherent part of all heritage related activities but it has a particular emphasis during heritage week. Suggestions for improved education and public awareness included:
 - A weekly heritage feature in local papers, involving local historical society
 - Facilitating groups to include heritage information on Council's website.
 - Using council's communications department to highlight good news stories through press releases etc
- The issue of educating consents planners who deal with heritage.
- How to deal with movable heritage such as portable timber mills, bridges, water races etc and how far to go to protect this type of heritage?

Next Forum Date and Venue: Wellington, November 2008, Alexander T,
This forum provides an opportunity for local authority staff to exchange information. Key Historic Places Trust experts should be invited to make presentations to the group but continuous participation in the forum should be exclusive to Local Authority staff.

It was recommended that dates for Heritage Forum should be included in the LGNZ calendar.