

# NEWSLETTER

No. 48. May 2024

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## EVENTS

**2pm 30 June 2024: Update on recent WCC heritage listings – talk with Felicity Wong, Joanna Newman & Angus Hodgson**

## WCC District Plan update – Heritage Listings - Felicity Wong

In the recent Wellington district plan fast-track process, controversy arose where owners of buildings that were proposed for heritage listing objected. Quite a few proposals had already not been accepted by the Independent Hearing Panel [IHP] (e.g. an old warehouse at 154 Victoria St; modernist houses designed by Toomath and Alington; and Anscombe's commercial building at 233 Willis St). Labour/Green Councillors voted to de-list a further 10 buildings, each of which had also been opposed by owners (but which had been earlier approved by the IHP).



Given the paucity of evidence to sustain such de-listings (five of the owners didn't present evidence at the hearing, including Victoria University in respect of Gordon Wilson Flats and the historic Robert Stout administration building), the Hon Chris Bishop subsequently reversed the Councillors de-listing decisions. HPW welcomed Mr Bishop's decision.

Apart from that controversy, however, a number of new listings were approved by the IHP, which had not been objected to by their owners. They are now new additions to the district plan.

*(Image: Former Primitive Methodist Church, Newtown. Now the Wellington Chinese Baptist Church.)*

All proposals were supported by professional heritage assessments and a considerable body of research and assessment. HPW commends Wellington City Council heritage and planning staff, and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga staff for its supporting evidence.

The successful new heritage listings comprise:

- three residential heritage areas in Mt Victoria (Elizabeth St; Moir St and Porritt Ave)
- several houses in Brougham St (no's 64, 70, 71, 87, 89, 91 & 111)
- a couple in Austin St (no's 89 & 140) & 64 Majoribanks St;
- some modernist houses (117 Campbell St; 60 Homewood Rd; 61 Hankey St; 17 Makara Rd; 210 Sutherland St; 49 Waiapu Rd; 7 Fortification Rd & 57 Trellisick Cres);
- several older houses (30 Ascot St; 1 Milne Tce; 259 Mansfield St; 110 Oriental Pde; 56 Pirie St; 1 Queen St; 17 Parkvale Rd & 294 Main Rd Tawa);
- several notable community buildings (Freyberg Pool; Thorndon Pool; Khandallah Town Hall; Makara School House; Mansfield St Gospel Hall; St Francis de Sales Church; Former Primitive Methodist Church; Hannah Playhouse; Johnsonville Masonic Hall & Berhampore Kindergarten);
- three large Oriental Bay apartment buildings (Broadwater; Wharenuui & Olympus);
- four large commercial buildings (PSIS; Wool House; Manchester Unity & The Meteorological Office); and
- VUW's Gordon Wilson Flats & Robert Stout Building.

That's an outstanding collection of modernist homes and large buildings, together with important and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga recognised colonial-era homes and community buildings. HPW congratulates owners for recognising the heritage value of their properties, and for their active roles as kaitiaki of those significant sites. We look forward to telling you more about them at our upcoming talk on 30 June.

*The two photos below show houses in Mt Victoria and on The Terrace that are no longer in protected 'character areas' so could be demolished without consent.*

## **WCC District Plan update – general issues – Felicity Wong**



As mentioned above, Minister Hon Chris Bishop signed off on the Wellington District Plan, as amended by city councillors (apart from the de-listing proposals).

In Wellington there are now three main zones for residential purposes:

1. the CBD zone with no height limits;
2. an adjacent growth zone within 15 minutes' walk of the edge of the CBD and train stops, where buildings of 6 or more storeys can be built without resource consent; &

3. All other suburban areas where 3 storeys can be built next to the footpath and on the property's boundary (with no "sideyard" allowing for maintenance).

The liberalisation of the zoning rules is the most radical change to city planning laws since the 1950s and undoubtedly delivers on political promises to developers to "cut red tape".

Let's take a step back. Zoning was originally introduced in Wellington to give comfort to the city's renters who were being encouraged to buy homes, but were hesitant about what would be built next door to their new biggest investment.

After WWII, NZ followed UK Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee's approach to planning. The arrangement was that land stayed in private ownership, but the right to build new property or to change the use of existing property was 'nationalised'. A landowner was required to obtain consent to develop from the local authority (representing local communities). The rights of private owners were balanced with those of the community.

The approach was reflected in NZ's Town and Country Planning Acts of 1953 and 1977. The 1991 Resource Management Act was a bold attempt to sweep away that development compact and allow anything so long as it didn't significantly affect the "environment". The development freedom became restricted, however, by a broad interpretation of protecting the environment and extended to protecting amenity rights on neighbouring property.

Those neighbouring amenity rights have now been decisively swept away. There's no process in which neighbours can participate to ask for the amelioration of any negative



externalities of unsuitable development nearby. Wellington was fast to adopt 3-storey upzoning across the whole city and there's been no complaint about that.

The recent arguments in Wellington about maintaining "character areas" and heritage designations were failed attempts to continue long-standing protected areas in the oldest heritage suburbs. In those areas, until now, the balance was achieved by requiring

property developers to seek planning permission. The areas are now all zoned "at least 6-storey", with much smaller 'character areas'.

The strategic process of setting out the priorities for the Wellington District Plan began with a draft Spatial Plan in 2021. But as regards the city's protected areas, it never changed despite several thousand public submissions. A majority of Councillors never deviated from the arrangement to keep just 85ha of protected areas, and "release" more than 200 ha to private planning.

In 2018 the UK Government's independent study into the causes of slow construction rates ("Letwin Review") found that the main cause of lack of housing supply was not zoning, but "market absorption rate". That's the rate at which new builds could be sold in the local



market without reducing the existing market price. Leading Australian housing economist Cameron Murray has written about the causes of unaffordable housing in his new book *The Great Housing Hijack*. It's worth reading (... zoning isn't one of them).

[This is edited from an article Felicity wrote on Scoop. If you would like to read the full article here is the link: <https://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=160522> ]

\*

An excellent article appeared recently in [Architecture Now](#) on the "Carbon Elephant in the Room" using the Gordon Wilson Flats as an example. Written by heritage architect and educator Joanna Theodore, one of her points was the need for a new way of thinking about buildings instead of a "demolish and rebuild" attitude:

*"The linear model of take-make-use-dispose led us into the Climate Emergency; re-framing to a model based around care, repair and re-use has the potential to lead us out. Embracing such an approach is the Westminster Council, in London, which in March of this year, proposed a new policy of [Retrofit First](#). The policy will require developers to assess the whole-lifetime carbon emissions of buildings, considering the environmental impact of demolition, rebuild and the future existence of the development, thus re-framing how projects are approached in the future".*

## Welly awards – new heritage category winner

This year for the first time, Heritage featured in the Welly awards at the Embassy Theatre on Wednesday, March 27, 2024. These awards were started in the late 1980s by what is now 'The Post' to provide positive feedback for Wellingtonians who go above and beyond in fields such as Art, Community Service, Business, Education, Environment, Sport and Youth.



We were the sponsor of the heritage category. The winner was Liz Mellish.

The citation for Liz highlighted her long-term advocacy for Māori and Wellington heritage and storytelling, with a strong emphasis on pā sites and awa of Pōneke, ensuring stories are documented and passed on for generations to come.

As well as her role on the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Māori Heritage Council, Liz has held many local heritage leadership responsibilities, including Chair of Te Wharewaka ō Pōneke Charitable Trust, Chair of the Palmerston North Māori Reserve Trust, Deputy Chair of the Federation of Māori Authorities and a number of directorships.

(Photo of Liz and our chairperson Felicity Wong at the Embassy, 27 March.)

We included the five finalists for the Heritage category in our previous newsletter. You can find and read all our newsletters on our website here:

[www.historicplaceswellington.org/resources/newsletters](http://www.historicplaceswellington.org/resources/newsletters)

## Petone Wharf reprieve?

The Hutt City draft annual plan had committed \$6 million to demolish the Petone Wharf. Submissions to council and protests were held in support of saving it. It was recently announced that Hutt City council voted to allocate \$12m to repair or demolish it. *The Post* reported (May 18, 2024): "An independent report was needed to resolve it. Save the Petone Wharf spokesperson Roger Blakeley said it was good news and he was confident the wharf would now be saved."

## Ben Schrader (1964 – 2024)



It was with deep sadness that we learnt of the death on 19 April of Ben Schrader, a fine urban historian and writer who loved Wellington and contributed his wisdom and kindness to all. Ben was an advocate for built heritage all his working life. He served as a committee member for Historic Places Wellington from 2015 to his death, including the last few years as deputy chair.

Ben's first major publication was *We Call It Home: A History of New Zealand State Housing*, published in 2005, for which he was listed as a finalist in the history category of the Montana Book Awards. The following year he published *More than a landlord: a short history of Wellington Housing Trust*. Ben was

co-editor of the Economy and City theme of *Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, authoring many of the city entries.

In 2016, Ben published *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920*, the first comprehensive look at New Zealand's early urban history. It won the 2017 W. H. Oliver Prize and the 2017 New Zealand Heritage Non-fiction Book Award and was shortlisted for the General Non-fiction category of the New Zealand Book Awards the same year.

He then worked as a free-lance historian before being awarded a J D Stout Fellowship in 2022 to work on a book on the history of historic heritage. He gave expert evidence in hearings, public lectures and conference papers, contributed chapters to journals and publications, wrote think pieces for online media, mentored young historians and reviewed publications. Ben was also a strong advocate for and public commentator on public housing policy and community building.

A fuller obituary appears [here: https://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=159984](https://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=159984) .

This is a short think-piece Ben wrote a few years ago on why old buildings matter: <https://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=141592>

## Recent submissions

HPW has made some recent submissions, including on the [Fast Track Bill](#) and on WCC's [Long Term Plan](#). You can read them by clicking the links – or find them on our website's Advocacy Page: <https://historicplaceswellington.org/advocacy/> .

## Upcoming Events

### **2pm, Sunday 30 June 2024 – Recent Heritage Listings in Wellington.**

**Speakers:** Felicity Wong (our chairperson), Joanna Newman (convenor of the Mt Victoria Historical Society) and Angus Hodgson (an owner of a recently listed historic house) will give an update on recent heritage listings in the Wellington City Council District Plan.

**Venue:** St Peter's Garden Room behind St Peter's Church, Willis St. Entry from Ghuznee St.

**AGM** –our AGM will be on **Sunday 18 August at 2pm** in the St Peter's Garden Room. We will confirm a speaker and give more details in the next newsletter.

**Wellington Heritage Festival** will run from 26 October to 17 November this year. Although it is too early to know the programme, there are more events than last year. If you want to keep up to date, you can subscribe on their website to a newsletter:

<https://wellingtonheritagefestival.co.nz/>

## Past Events

**Saturday 23 March 2024, 2pm: Lower Hutt.** Committee member Vivienne Morrell led 25 members on a walk around the Civic Centre of Lower Hutt looking at the various Modernist buildings. We then went to nearby Vogel House where Tim Vogel gave us a very interesting tour followed by afternoon tea.



**Lower Hutt Civic Centre (listed historic area):** Dating to the 1950s the Lower Hutt Civic Centre area is a rare example of successful town planning using the garden city concept. The buildings were progressively opened between 1953 and 1959.

<https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/7520/Listing>

**Vogel House (listed historic area)** James and Jocelyn Vogel acquired it in 1932. The Vogels commissioned Christchurch architect Heathcote Helmore (1894-1965) to design a house in

1933. Helmore's design included elements of the then in vogue Colonial neo-Georgian style.



The Vogels gifted it to the nation and from 1966 to 1976 the property was leased for the Australian High Commissioner's residence. Prime Minister Robert Muldoon lived there from 1977 to 1984. David Lange chose not to live there and it was used for various charity functions. Various cabinet ministers then lived in it, but it has since gone back to the Vogel family.

<https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/7757/Listing>