



July 3, 2008

Wellington City Council,  
P.O. Box 2199  
Wellington 6011

Attention: City Planning Team

## Submission on Proposals for Change and Character Protection

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This submission is made on behalf of an organisation, Mt Victoria Historical Society Inc.

It is an incorporated society with the aims of researching and sharing the history of the suburb of Mt Victoria and promoting interest in, and preservation of, its unique heritage.

We would like the opportunity to speak to our submission.

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Mt Victoria Historical Society supports the creation of Areas of Character Protection and the fact that Mt Victoria should be one of these Areas.

Mt Victoria Historical Society is pleased to see that Wellington City Council will accord Mt Victoria the status of an Area of Special Character Protection. We believe that this status is justified due to the important collection of heritage buildings and structures that tell a myriad of stories about the settlement and development of this unique and special inner-city suburb. The remaining built heritage is not only important to Wellington's sense of place but is also a significant tourist draw card, being close to the city and highly visible.

Particular issues of concern that we would like to see addressed under new rules to ensure character protection in Mt Victoria include:

- **Assessment of heritage values**

We believe that a comprehensive study, such as those recently carried out for Mt Cook, Berhampore and Newtown, should be undertaken for Mt Victoria. Such a study should include an archaeological assessment identifying pre-1900 structures and features.

- **Pre-1930's building demolition**

The rules protecting pre-1930's buildings in Mt Victoria are not strong enough and the 'Demolition Protocol' currently operating in the suburb is not effective. Greater protection is required for such buildings and a more robust and open process for assessment of such buildings, involving formal communication with organisations other than the Mt Victoria Residents Association – such as the Mt Victoria Historical Society – is required.

- **Infill housing**

Under the Character Protection provisions, it is not proposed to forbid further infill housing in areas such as Mt Victoria, rather to place greater controls on quality under Plan Change 56. Some of the changes proposed appear on the surface to be good. Experience has shown, however, that the Council often allows its own District Plan rules to be overridden, so unless there is a commitment to following them we have little faith that they will make a difference.

For example, in 2007 a resource consent was granted to construct a two-storeyed dwelling in place of an old sleepout at 13 Porritt Avenue, in spite of the fact that this made the property a multi-unit development and that provisions for multi-unit developments were not being met.

Protection of open spaces, in an historic area such as Mt Victoria, should include preservation of more-than century-old rear and side yards.

- **Restrictions on unsympathetic additions**

In the past, additional stories have been added, for instance, to high-quality art deco apartment buildings. There are a number of buildings in Mt Victoria designed by well-known art deco architects, including Edward Anscombe, and it is important that these be protected. The scale and proportions of these buildings are essential to their heritage and no more examples of these significant buildings should be destroyed. We would mention in particular:

- 9 Hawker Street (by Anscombe)
- 82 Marjoribanks Street, Belvedere
- 17 Brougham Street, Owd Trafford
- 53 Austin Street
- 123 Brougham Street
- 11 Dufferin Street
- 2 Hawker Street
- Central Fire Station

Unfortunately the following buildings have already had their heritage and architectural value diminished by unsightly additions:

- New City Hotel, Kent Terrace/Marjoribanks Street

- 24-26 Elizabeth Street
- 11 Hawker street

If consents are sought to change the additions, we would like to see that the additions be removed.

Another common practice in Mt Victoria is to insert garages into the front of original houses. This practice destroys both streetscape and heritage values and should not be allowed.

- **Value of “streetscape” over heritage values**

Streetscape is very important, but it is often about a complex set of relationships in the surrounding area and not confined simply to the alignment of one house with its next door neighbours.

Current council policy is to measure effects on streetscape over heritage values. This appears to involve imposing a planner’s subjective judgment of what a ‘good’ streetscape might be over the ‘original’ streetscape. We do not believe that this is a valid basis for decision on approving demolition or infill.

- **Insufficient monitoring and control over building**

There have been a number of cases over the years in Mt Victoria where unscrupulous developers or property owners have knowingly breached resource consents and successfully sought retrospective approval for illegal work. (The most recent was at 78 Ellice Street in 2007). These have resulted in works which have had a major impact on the character of the neighbourhood.

We seek greater monitoring by WCC of resource consent approvals and works, and action against property owners carrying out unapproved work, rather than granting retrospective approvals. We ask that WCC enforce District Plan rules and building consent conditions, to the extent that owners should be required to remove structures which breach conditions.

- **Greater protection for built heritage through heritage inventory**

Mt Victoria Historical Society would like to see more buildings, historic features and intact streetscapes in Mt Victoria added to the District Plan heritage inventory to ensure their protection. The Society is very happy to assist WCC in preparing cases for this.

- **Commercial zone within Mt Victoria**

Character protection of Mt Victoria should extend to areas zoned commercial. Inappropriate development of these properties has an enormous impact on the residential character and the overall heritage values. Buildings such as the former Chinese laundry at 5 Majoribanks Street, the New City Hotel and 25 Kent Terrace (Strawberry Fare) are important to preserve. In

addition, however, a number of residential buildings remain in areas zoned commercial and, while use may be partially commercial (as is Ambience at 14 Elizabeth Street) these should also be preserved for their heritage values.

Character protection should include consideration of such things as height limits of buildings at the base of Mt Victoria. In the past, additions breaching District Plan rules to buildings such as the Bay Plaza Hotel have had to be expensively (and unsuccessfully) fought by residents. Not only do such developments destroy the amenity of those living behind them, they also destroy the unique views of Mt Victoria seen from all over Wellington and used in most tourist promotions of the city.

- **Protection of other heritage features**

Mt Victoria Historical Society would like to see other heritage features in Mt Victoria, such as small lanes, the remains of the old Kilbirnie Road over Mt Victoria, the sewer vent and stables at the rear of houses (e.g. at 21 Queen Street) protected. Original rear and side yards on properties should also be protected.

- **Town Belt**

A great deal of Mt Victoria's unique character comes from the Town Belt which abuts it. A considerable amount of this has already been surrendered to exclusive activities such as the Victoria Bowling Club and schools. No more of the Town Belt should be surrendered and premises such as the old Bandoliers club rooms should be removed rather than turned over to another exclusive user. Under the Town Belt deed, as much as under any District Plan character protection rules, this should be considered a requirement.

Greater consideration should also be given to protection of the media strip down Kent and Cambridge Terrace, which is part of the Town Belt.

- **Basin Reserve**

The Basin Reserve, including its gates and surroundings, is a registered historic area under the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Any diminishing of its heritage values through proposed developments, including concrete motorway fly-overs, would have a significant impact on Mt Victoria and would be opposed by the Historical Society.

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