

Oral presentation from Wellington Heritage Professionals Hearings Stream 2, Friday 31 March, 1.30pm

1. Kia ora koutou, I'm Cherie Jacobson and I'm here today with Amanda Mulligan and Chessa Stevens who have written expert evidence.
2. We are representing a group of 9 Wellington-based heritage practitioners.
3. As noted in our submission and Hearing Stream 1, we bring decades of heritage experience and expertise (here in Wellington, nationally and internationally) as architects, archaeologists, consultants, local government heritage advisors and central government policy makers. Detailed information about our qualifications and experience can be found in our submission.
4. Our submission reflects the understanding we have of the issues that surround the protection and conservation of Wellington's historic heritage and character, and our 'on-the-ground' experience of seeing our heritage diminished or lost due to current and past District Plan provisions.
5. We are not submitting to make the plan more advantageous for us personally or professionally. We don't believe that the changes we are seeking will be any more advantageous to us than any other Wellington resident or business.
6. We are also not submitting from a position that heritage and character are more important than housing. We have submitted and are appearing today because we want to make sure that heritage and character are not unnecessarily lost when planning for the housing that Wellington needs.
7. We know that world-leading cities allow for intensification in the right places while also protecting valued character and heritage. Area-based protections for character and heritage are widely used in Australia, the UK, Canada and the US.
8. According to a 2020 report by the Heritage Council of Victoria in Australia, there are over 21,000 Heritage Overlays in Victoria, protecting more than 186,000 properties. Of these overlays, over 1,000 are precincts, or areas. The report concluded that Heritage Overlays are working well in Victoria¹.
9. As outlined in the report, the City of Yarra (an urban local authority in inner Melbourne) has focused its land-use policies on protecting valued heritage character, while accommodating growth and change in strategic redevelopment sites and precincts. In the City of Yarra more than 20,000 properties are covered by the heritage overlay, which equates to more than 60% of the city's total properties.
10. Our main concern in this hearing stream is that any reduction in the extent of character areas from the Operative District Plan is based on sound evidence.

¹ <https://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/research-projects/the-state-of-heritage-review-local-heritage/>

Housing supply and quality

11. We are concerned that some submitters are conflating the problem of housing supply with the problem of poor quality housing. It is also of concern to us that some submitters seem to believe that enabling demolition of character housing will lead to better quality housing.
12. New Zealand homes are considered to be poorly constructed and heated by OECD standards and experts estimate that around 40% of our houses are damp and mouldy. However, character or pre-1930s housing does not automatically equate to unhealthy housing. Houses of any age that are poorly constructed and/or poorly maintained are likely to be unhealthy. New Zealand's recent experience with leaky buildings has shown how newer, modern buildings can also perform poorly.
13. Older buildings are designed to breathe making them healthier residences when properly maintained, vented and insulated. Wellington's older houses are amenable to retrofitting and many houses in character areas have been successfully upgraded. Retrofitting housing with character and historic heritage values not only conserves these values, but has economic, social and environmental benefits.
14. Part of the solution to our climate change problem is retaining, reusing and retrofitting our existing building stock. The building sector is responsible for around 20% of New Zealand's energy-related greenhouse gas emissions and about 50% of New Zealand's waste is from construction and demolition. Plastic recycling is a normal part of our daily lives, but huge amounts of carbon are locked up in existing buildings.
15. Findings from a 2007 research project by the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development and a 2020 report from the New Zealand Green Buildings Council were aligned in concluding that upgrading New Zealand's existing housing stock had the greatest potential for making New Zealand's homes more sustainable, and that New Zealand will not meet its carbon targets without a deep improvement of existing homes.
16. The international evidence for the environmental benefits of retaining existing building stock is strong and includes reports by the US National Trust Preservation Green Lab and Historic England, and publications by economists such as Kate Raworth and Donovan Rypkema. They have shown that refurbishing buildings instead of demolishing them and building again from scratch typically generates more jobs, comparable energy consumption, and far less use of water and new materials.

Issues with the Boffa Miskell report

17. We note that some submitters are advocating for the extent of the character areas to reflect what was proposed in the Boffa Miskell Pre-1930 Character Area Review report.
18. Our view is that there is insufficient justification in that report for reducing the character areas from the extent of the Operative District Plan. In our view the

methodology in the report was flawed and that has led to some key areas of character value being excluded.

19. At this point, I will hand over to Amanda and Chessa to outline their evidence.