



Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance

Information Sheet 12

Alterations and additions to historic buildings

Principles

NZHPT endorses adapting historic places for maintaining continuity of use or new uses where it is necessary to ensure the place retains liveability and utility. Adaptation means modifying a place to suit it to a compatible use, involving the least possible loss of cultural heritage value.¹

Adaptation proposals may involve alterations and additions. It is important that any alterations and additions are carefully designed to:

- Retain surviving internal and external heritage fabric as far as possible and disturb, distort or obscure it as little as possible.
- Respect the design, form, scale, materials, workmanship, patina of age, colours, contents, location, curtilage and setting, including alterations that have heritage value.
- Avoid work that will compromise or obscure fabric of heritage value.
- Ensure any new work is of a scale and location that it does not dominate the heritage place and respects its setting.
- New work should be appropriately recorded.

Alterations and additions may include restoration and reconstruction work as defined by the ICOMOS NZ Charter.

It is good practice that a conservation plan, prepared by a heritage professional, should inform and guide alterations of historic buildings.

¹ ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value (1993)

Checklist for assessing appropriate internal alterations to buildings

- The work does not alter, obscure or remove significant heritage fabric and fixtures.
- Ceiling heights and surfaces and significant ceiling decoration are retained and conserved. For example, the work should not alter significant interior volumes by raising floor levels or creating partitions.
- The work retains and conserves significant interior finishes such as original or early wallpaper, paint, stencilling, marbling, wood graining, panelling, plastering and ceramic tile surfaces.
- Historic patterns of access and movement (i.e. entrances, hallways, stairways and passageways) are retained.
- Modern services, such as smoke detectors and sprinkler heads are installed using concealed methods.
- Engineering work is discreetly installed. For example, seismic bracing should not be visible through prominent windows.

Checklist for assessing appropriate external alterations to buildings

- The original form of the roof, significant roofing materials, significant chimneys, and other features such as original gutters and downpipes are retained.
- Important views of the building are retained, especially when new elements to the roof such as skylights, solar collectors, wind turbines or satellite dishes are introduced.
- Adverse visual effects resulting from the installation of dormer or attic windows in the roof are avoided. The size, design and position of additions should ensure that they respect the architectural style and scale of the building and do not dominate the roof.
- Any alterations to historic walls are undertaken in a material to match that of the original, with consideration given to colour, texture, composition, dimensions and detailing.
- New cladding material should closely match the original. For example, artificial cladding, such as vinyl or aluminium, is not normally appropriate for use on a historic building.
- Secondary elements of the exterior (such as windows and doors) should be repaired rather than replaced.
- The installation of new openings (such as windows and doors) to principal facades and elevations should be generally avoided. Any new window or door opening should be sympathetically designed but clearly distinguishable as a new alteration.
- Double glazing should be discouraged. Instead, secondary glazing should be adopted in a manner that should not obscure the original window or the design pattern of sash joinery or alter the depth of the window recess or create a reflective effect.
- Significant doors, original or early hardware (doorknobs, locks etc), and door surrounds (fanlights, pilasters, sidelights etc) should be retained and repaired appropriately.

- New security measures (e.g. doors and screens) should not detract from the features of a heritage place. Any new security door should be simple and unobtrusive.
- Seismic strengthening work should be concealed or incorporated into the existing fabric.

Checklist for assessing appropriate additions to buildings and structures

- New additions should be to the rear of the building or set back from significant elevations, including the roof elevation.
- Any addition to significant façade(s) of the original building, including the roof, should be avoided.
- New additions should be compatible (able to co-exist) in terms of materials, scale, size, proportions, mass, height, setback, texture, colour, plan configuration, surface configuration and other details to adjoining and/or surrounding significant buildings.
- New additions should be distinguishable from the original. New work should be harmonious and sympathetic with the significant features of the place. The contrast should not be obvious or visually obtrusive.
- Where the new work is proposed to be of a greater height than the original building consideration should be given to the effect of the work on views to the building. Sightlines should be provided with the application.
- New additions should be compatible to the original design and detailing. Successful examples usually involve new structures being smaller in scale with larger setback, built of similar materials but in a modern design.
- If the significant building has a form that is distinctive in its immediate locality, any new building at the place or within its setting should not imitate or mimic that form.
- New additions should maintain the rhythm, orientation and proportions of the original, especially where these contribute to the significance of the place.
- A large addition should be constructed in a way that clearly separates it from the original building. The two may be joined by means of a visually unobtrusive link.
- New addition should use existing openings to allow access between the old and the new. This will minimise adverse effects on significant fabric.
- The roof of any new addition should be compatible to the existing roof form or follow traditional forms.
- New additions should preserve existing significant views to and from the heritage place and its setting.
- New additions should avoid permanent damage to significant fabric.

Acknowledgements

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The NZHPT welcomes any feedback and comments on this information sheet.

Comments can be provided to information@historic.org.nz. (Attention: Sustainable Heritage Guidance)