



Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance

Information Sheet 15

Demolition of historic buildings

Principles

Demolition of a heritage place destroys its significance and removes the opportunity for future generations to understand the place and its values. Demolition can sometimes be a short-term 'convenient solution' that is subsequently regretted.

Demolition is also inconsistent with sustainable management of resources in that it removes the stored energy in the building and creates solid fill, contributing to waste disposal issues that may already be problematic.

The NZHPT encourages the retention of significant heritage buildings including significant external fittings, artwork, interiors, curtilage and associated heritage objects.

The NZHPT is opposed to the demolition or removal of historic buildings, except where the place is beyond repair. There are certain, very rare circumstances where demolition of a portion of a historic place might be permitted, but only where it is imperative for the survival and reuse of the greater portion of the site.

All buildings of heritage significance should be protected from demolition and alternatives to demolition should be encouraged including new and compatible uses, repair and maintenance works, maintenance plans, and appropriate alterations and changes.

Demolition proposals should be informed by expert professional evidence, especially an engineering report prepared by a specialist heritage engineering professional and an economic feasibility and options report.

With regard to the demolition of any pre-1900 building, the archaeological authority process under the Historic Places Act 1993 may be relevant.

Any building or structure that will be demolished should be fully recorded and documented both prior to, and during the demolition process.

Checklist for assessing demolition proposals

- Demolition of historic buildings should not be allowed unless in very rare circumstances, in relation to the following matters:
 - With regard to a large or complex site, the proposed demolition will not compromise the integrity and the significance of the place, streetscape, area or landscape.
 - Demolition may be acceptable when a building or structure is considered to be 'beyond repair'. It may be structurally unsafe, may have been damaged by natural event, or may have been irreversibly damaged by fire. This matter often requires evidence from a professional engineering assessment.
 - Demolition should be informed by the concept of greater or total conservation benefit with respect to a large complex group of structures and buildings. It may be that the demolition of minor parts of a building may be justified to achieve the conservation of most significant places on the entire site. All other avenues should be explored before this option is considered (e.g. funding sources) and all decisions must be informed by a conservation plan.
 - All alternatives to demolition should be explored including new and compatible uses, repair and maintenance works, maintenance plans, and appropriate alterations and changes.

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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)