

2GP Heritage Protection Submission

In my opinion, there is currently insufficient protection for Dunedin's heritage buildings and streetscapes. While there has been valuable discussion regarding heritage, precincts, street scape and character contributing buildings, the rules still do not provide adequate safeguards for our heritage. More concrete action and clearer policies are necessary to ensure these irreplaceable assets are preserved.

Key Concerns and Suggestions:

1. **Targeted Protection Based on Significance:** Not every building requires protection, but buildings with historical, architectural, or cultural significance should be prioritised. Protection measures should be focused on structures that contribute meaningfully to the history, character and streetscape of a given precinct. Clear criteria for identifying these buildings, based on their contribution to the area's heritage, should be developed and implemented.
2. **Compatibility of New Developments:** When considering the redevelopment or replacement of a heritage building, it is essential that the proposed new structure fits within the existing streetscape. There should be clear guidelines for how new buildings will complement or enhance the surrounding area. Additionally, greater emphasis should be placed on what can be retained from heritage buildings during new development, as many features—such as facades, original materials, or architectural details—can enhance the final design outcome.
3. **Retention and Adaptive Reuse of Heritage Buildings:** Developers purchasing heritage properties should understand that these buildings are not simply assets to be demolished or altered at will. Instead, developers should explore opportunities to retain or adapt these structures within their projects. Preservation of heritage buildings contributes to the city's character and helps maintain the collective memory of Dunedin's history.
4. **Reconsidering Real Estate Practices:** Heritage sites should not be marketed solely as development opportunities. Instead, real estate agents and developers should be encouraged to view these sites as opportunities for revitalization and adaptive reuse. Marketing strategies should emphasise the historical and cultural value of these buildings, not just their potential for demolition.
5. **Addressing Demolition by Neglect:** One key issue that requires immediate attention is "demolition by neglect." Buildings that are left to deteriorate intentionally until they become unsafe should be prevented from being demolished simply because they are in poor condition. Stronger enforcement of maintenance requirements and incentives for owners to preserve heritage buildings would help prevent this destructive practice.
6. **Support for Heritage Building Owners:** The complexities of maintaining a heritage building can be overwhelming for owners. There should be more support, not more restrictions, to help owners manage their properties. Practical solutions such as providing expert advice,

financial incentives (e.g., grants or tax relief), and simplified processes for renovations would help heritage building owners retain and restore their properties.

7. **Avoiding Demolition of Valuable Heritage Buildings:** Demolition consents should not be granted for heritage buildings that clearly hold value to the city's history and character. Instead, alternative solutions—such as adaptive reuse or partial retention—should be explored. Additionally, empty sites where heritage buildings once stood should be developed with buildings that respect the city's architectural history, rather than being turned into parking lots or left vacant.
8. **Reframing the Concept of 'Uneconomic' Heritage:** The argument that heritage buildings are "uneconomic" should not automatically justify demolition. Often, these buildings have untapped potential for adaptive reuse, and the right owner can bring new life to these structures. A "think tank" or city-led initiative could be established to explore practical, creative solutions for preserving these buildings and finding new uses for them. These discussions could generate innovative approaches to retaining heritage in the face of financial challenges.
9. **Preserving Heritage Beyond the City Centre:** It's crucial to acknowledge that heritage preservation should not be limited to the city centre. Suburban areas also contain valuable historical buildings that reflect the city's growth and development. Preserving these structures is key to maintaining Dunedin's identity and sense of place.

Conclusion:

While I support the development of new buildings, it is essential that these developments enhance, rather than detract from, the city's heritage. We have already lost much of Dunedin's beautiful heritage and we continue to lose more each year. Effective heritage protection policies and a more comprehensive approach to preserving our built environment will ensure that Dunedin's rich history and character are maintained for future generations. It is vital that we protect the buildings that make Dunedin unique and contribute to its identity as a city that values its past.

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