HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Tairangahia a tua whakarere;
Tatakihia nga reanga o amuri ake nei
Honouring the past; Inspiring the future

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St John the Divine Church (Former), Otakeho, South Taranaki. CC Licence 3.0 Image courtesy of Kete New Plymouth. Copyright: Kete New Plymouth. Taken By: Ron Lambert. Date: 5/04/2010

11 March 2020

Dear Louise HP

Comments on Proposed removal of St John the Divine Church [former] at 4 Campbell Road and State highway 45 Otakeho

Thank you for sending Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga the resource consent for the proposed relocation of the St John the Devine church building from its original site at Otakeho to 3500 South Road Pihama in South Taranaki district.

St John the Divine Church [former] built in 1893 was entered on the Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero on 27th October 1995 as a category 2 historic place and retains this Listing. The heritage listing includes the main building, the gates and site. A place listing includes the exterior of the church and it's interior. It is located on Sec 51 Otakeho VILL SETT (RT TN18/95), Taranaki Land District. The former church was designed by well-known New Zealand architect Frederick De Jersey Clere who prominently designed churches in the Wellington region. Further information can be found at https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7272

Scheduling
The building is also scheduled as a heritage object in the South Taranaki District Plan, and in the Proposed South Taranaki District Plan, proposed 15 August 2015 as Item No. H53 in Schedule 1A: Buildings and Objects.

Application Proposal
The current owners of the historic site and church building, Mr Mark Stevenson and Mrs Trish Stevenson propose to relocate the St John the Divine Church [former] building built in 1893 from its original 1893 site at Otakeho to a farm 14 km north of the historic site to 3500 South Road RD 32 Pihama Lot 1 DP 17194BLK OEO SD onto private land.

In discussions the current owners are willing to undertake maintenance, repair or restoration, only on a new site. In preparing for this application community support has been included.

The old site would remain along with the historic church gate at the historic site. The relocation of the building is being sought by the owners as a means to enable ongoing care of the building near their own home. They are intending to allow members of the local community to continue to have some access to the church while undertaking to care for the historic church chattels owned by community families. The proposed new use is for the main building to remain a church for special functions while the associated vestry room is used for an exhibition of local history. This includes having the building available for ceremonies such as weddings and baptisms. The owners would like to open the church to the public at times i.e. during the Garden Festival; keep the church for religious ceremonies; and give continued use of

St John's to Otakeho Anglican families and will become caretakers of chattels that belong to these families. The vestry is to be used to display some local history that the owners father Ian Stevenson collected over the years.

In terms of proposed changes to the historic place the proposed work includes:

a. Relocation of the building from the original site to a new site within a farm 14km north.

The key works proposed that may affect heritage values are:

- Relocation and removal from original site
- Ground works [potential affects to pre 1900 site]
- Change of use [from former church to private facilities with some public use][1]
- Interior fittings and fixture – [ownership by others]

No external or internal alterations to the building are proposed. No changes to the buildings appearance are proposed. No additions or alterations are proposed to the exterior.
No earthworks are required to relocate the building from its historic site.

Heritage Values

In terms of heritage assessment there is no heritage consultant assessment as part of the application, which should include the setting and physical aspects of the site and building [externally and internally] to assess existing heritage values and fabric, and the effects of the proposal- both on the original site and on the new site.

From the Heritage New Zealand Listing in 1995 the following is noted:

1. St John the Divine Church [former] heritage status is derived from its historical associations. St John the Divine is a typical small nineteenth century rural church serving also as a memorial to those who died in the two world wars.
2. The place's aesthetic values: The design of St John the Divine presents a clear and competent expression of ecclesiologist principles.
3. The church architecture of Frederick de Jersey Clere is well known for its high quality. The design of St John the Divine is a well resolved essay in Norman/Early English Gothic revival, employing New Zealand vernacular techniques in its construction.
4. This building has served as a religious and social meeting place for the local community for over one hundred years, and has cultural values.
5. The place has spiritual values as generations of local Anglican families have used this church as a place of worship until 2018.
6. The history of St John the Divine is typical of an Anglican church in a small rural township.
7. The church displays a number of interpretive devices such as rolls of honour, memorial gates, a plaque and stained glass windows[2]. These help provide knowledge about the history of the Anglican Church in the local community.
8. St John the Divine has formed a close association with the community not only as a small rural church but also as a memorial to their war dead and a local politician.
9. St John's has the principal features of a quality Clere country church. The style is essentially Norman with the floor plan displaying the correct arrangement of baptistery/vestry, nave and chancel in that order with the chancel/apse at the east end. Other standard features are the roof, which is pitched at the ecclesiologic ally correct angle of 60 degrees, and the exterior which is clad in vertical board and batten. The design also features a porch to the south side of the building, a main entrance facing west, timber window frames with straight pointed heads and interior decoration such as three lancet windows in stained glass and high quality; wood carving.

[1] This focuses on the impact to the building fabric and not on change of site.

[2] In 2020 the rolls of honour, memorial gates, plaque, stained glass window and other interior items while are many still located on site, are not in the legal ownership of the current site and building owners.

10. The building is a good example of a timber country church designed by architect, Frederick de Jersey Clere. As a church in a small rural township it is held in high esteem by the local community.

While the church has closed and been sold with its land by the Wellington Diocesan Board of Trustees in 2019 this is unlikely to have affected known heritage values. De Jersey Clere churches retain their importance in New Zealand's architectural and religious realms. A high level of integrity of the 1893 building and interior with fittings is evident today.

Consultation
An open consultation process has taken place with Heritage New Zealand, which included discussion on heritage effects and archaeology, and a clear understanding that relocation was not supported with the previous owners and would unlikely to be supported now.

Consultation has also taken place between Nga Ruahine.
The written concerns expressed by some of the community have been noted, including on potential vandalism.

The documents provided is 19392 2001022 Otakeho Church AEE-Final – lodged dated January 2020. There is no Heritage Assessment provided by a Heritage Consultant as part of the application, and in regards RMA and district plan heritage criteria. There is no conservation plan.

Archaeology:
The original site would be considered a pre 1900 site and is protected under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Act. It would seem based on the drawings provided that ground disturbance is minimal. An authority to modify will NOT be required unless there is a change to the scope of works, based on the current documentation. If there are any issues during construction repairs please advice Heritage New Zealand archaeologist Kathryn Hurren. KHurren@heritage.org.nz

Discussion on proposal
A Site visit was completed by Laura Kellaway Conservation Architect Heritage New Zealand with the owners which including looking at the current place, the building [externally and internally], along with the new proposed site. In relation to the original Heritage New Zealand Listing it appears that many of the original exterior features survive externally and internally including fittings and fixtures.
Some damage was noted to the exterior foundations and corresponds with the comments of the applicant's builder. In the view of Heritage New Zealand the damage is not extensive and could easily be repaired on site, along with any maintenance externally. Generally the interior is in good repair apart from usual maintenance requirements.

The historic church gate remains on site and the church bell structure is noted as part of the church building. A large hedge rings part of the church site. There is no known cemetery.
The exterior and interior of the church retain heritage values and are consistent with that of a 1900s small rural church that has had little change since the construction of the main building and annex. It is considered, subject to full assessment, to hold high heritage values relative to integrity.

The town of Otakeho is marked by a small collection of historic buildings which include the listed church and its site. In terms of the local historical context the church along with a former school and several small buildings form the last surviving built heritage of the town of Otakeho. Only the church and site is listed.

St John the Divine Church (Former), Otakeho, South Taranaki. CC Licence 3.0 Image courtesy of Kete New Plymouth. Copyright: Kete New Plymouth. Date: 2/02/2014.

Conservation and relocation

The conservation principles and guide applied to this proposal is in terms of Relocation are in the Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Information Sheet 13 and ICOMOS New Zealand Charter 2010.
Relocation will generally have a serious adverse effect on the significance of a place. Buildings are part of an environmental context which includes sites and a wider townscape or landscape. Relocation removes buildings from these settings. Heritage New Zealand encourages the retention of significant heritage buildings and structures on their original sites and in their original settings. Relocation should be discouraged except in circumstances where:

- The existing site or setting is not of significant heritage value.
- Relocation is required to save the building as a last resort.
- Continuity of heritage value cannot otherwise occur.[1]

A 'last resort' should be understood to mean that there is a genuine physical threat to the place; not that it is inconvenient for the current owner to retain it. Where this latter argument is being proposed, discussions should focus around retaining the place and adaptively reusing it. A conservation plan, prepared by a heritage professional, should inform and guide any proposal that involves relocation.

Other matters which may also be relevant are considered:

o *Any genuine threats to the building that precludes retention in its current location should be considered and documented (e.g. severe erosion or landslip, inundation by dam construction etc.).* –None of the examples apply. Potential vandalism is noted on the application does not come to a guideline level at this time. Security is supported in funding for heritage buildings.

o *The proposed relocation should allow an understanding of the remaining significance of the building (e.g. ensuring the new site allows similar views from the street and setting or that a corner building is relocated to a new corner site).* – The new setting is set back into a residential farm and while may be viewed does not retain a similar setting to existing or connection to the town other surviving community buildings.

o *Future preservation of the building will be provided through a compatible use, improved physical condition, appropriate context or surroundings, and protection from vandalism and fire.* – The building is in fair condition, and repairs and maintenance can take place on the existing site. Security and fire protection could be provided on site with support for potential funding. The proposed use, on original site is compatible. However the historic place listing may not be retained. It would be unlikely that council heritage scheduling would be applied [subject to STDC assessment] on the new site with associated control, and therefore protection of heritage values long term would not provide a level of certainty as currently on the original site.

The proposed new interior use on current site would be considered appropriate, but this does not address the main proposed significant change to the Listed place which is relocation, which is not considered a conservation principle.

Conservation- Repairs and Maintenance, Development and Change of use.

The proposed repair work may, subject to further detail, involve stabilisation, preservation and conservation, but is not considered under repair and maintenance guidelines due to the proposed relocation. Repair work is considered minor as noted on the condition report. Both ongoing **maintenance and repair** can be completed on the original site.
Relocation is not seen as a means of enabling repair and maintenance of historic heritage in this case.

Assessing proposed **Development on Historic Heritage Values** should include:

- Respect for physical material -The degree to which interventions involve the least possible loss of heritage significance and the least loss of material of heritage value, including those arising from irreversible or cumulative effects.
- Understanding significance - Whether the values of the place are clearly understood before decisions are taken that may result in change. Decision making, where change is being contemplated, should take into account all relevant values, cultural knowledge and disciplines. Understanding significance should be assisted by methods such as the preparation of heritage assessments and conservation plans.
- Respect for contents, curtilage and setting - The extent to which interventions respect the contents and surroundings associated with the place. The setting will be lost.

Adaptation in heritage terms relates to use [not relocation] and means ' modifying a place to suit it to a compatible use, involving the least possible loss of cultural heritage value'.[1] While the proposed interior use on a new site is proposed adaptation is not applicable in heritage terms.
The current proposal does not involve the least possible loss of heritage significance – relocation and loss from historic site is intended to be irreversible with this application.

Options of adaptation on its original site have not been included as options in the application.

The proposed relocation will make significant changes to historic heritage, the historic site and context of this listed place. While it is noted that the new owners do have association with the building its relocation removes the heritage values of historic setting and context, and the historic markers of the church in the old settlement. Additionally while community members have given agreement to the owners to allow retention of the historic fittings and fixtures within the church building, these items are not owned by the owners and there is no assurance of ongoing council protection mechanisms of the building in the long term.

Summary

St John the Devine church is the only Heritage New Zealand historic place at Otakeho.

Without precluding potential reservations from the council (or other parties), Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga does not support the proposed relocation of the building from its original site and considers the effects to the historic place, which is a wider concept that just building, to be more than minor. The former church as a Category 2 historic place appears to retain a high degree of authencity and integrity externally and internally, including the original site, and as a historic marker of the town of Otakeho.

The initial assessment, based on the current documents provided are that the relocation of the historic church to another site with a new change of use falls outside the scope of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga best practice guidelines in terms of retaining historic setting and heritage values.

Relocation of a structure or feature of cultural heritage value, where its removal is required to enable its use on a different site, is not a desirable outcome and is not a conservation process in this case.
The on-going association of a structure or feature of cultural heritage value with its location, site, curtilage, and setting is essential to its authenticity and integrity. Heritage New Zealand does not at this time consider there are exceptional circumstances, or the site is in imminent danger, and that all other means of retaining the structure in its current location have been exhausted.

- the existing site and setting appears to retain its significant heritage value; [3]
- relocation is not seen by Heritage New Zealand as a last resort for the building, and
- The continuity of heritage value could occur on site [as with many other church buildings that remain on their historic sites]. No options have been presented for on- site reuse.

Repairs can be undertaken to the church on its existing site and noted as minor. In addition funding options are potentially available to undertake this work.

Retention of historic elements that form the interior of this building is supported and potential limited change to the interiors but on original site.
Adaptation [in regards alterations and additions] is supported on the original site subject to options being provided. The adaptation proposed by relocation is unlikely to meet the criteria of the least possible loss of cultural heritage value.

A possible covenant is under discussion between the owners and Heritage New Zealand but this is separate from the consenting process and is not seen as a form of mitigation by Heritage New Zealand for potentially lost heritage values.

In discussion with council Heritage New Zealand has recommended that a Heritage Assessment Report is completed on the proposal as heritage values and effects have not been assessed by a professional Heritage Consultant.
If the relocation was to proceed additional recommendations would be:

- A Heritage Assessment by a Heritage Consultant prior to consent decision making
- Recording of the site and buildings on site
- A maintenance plan for long term care and a methodology for the project that included conservation based method for removal and reinstatement of heritage fabric.
- Protection of the church building exterior and interior with fittings and fixtures remains important and the level of integrity.
- On-going protection of the historic gate on original site is important.

Thank you for consulting Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

Yours sincerely

L. J. Kellaway.

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Cc: Kathryn Hurren Heritage New Zealand Central Region

[3] Subject to Heritage Assessment. Note that loss of other historic buildings of an old town does not reduce these values in terms of setting and as part of a small surviving group.

Appendix:

List of heritage items which were of the Listing of the historic place.

Note windows form part of the exterior and interior. The memorial gate is specifically itemised in the Heritage New Zealand Listing.

Otakeho Church EXCLUDED CHATTELS

(Excluded Chattels have been marked with a blue dot sticker).

Stained Glass windows above altar

Altar

Coat of Alms (Family Crest) - on both sides of the altar rail

Organ and Organ seat

Reading table

War Memorial Board

Bible

Bell

Font

Carved wooden Hymn Board

Sam Hunt poem framed

Old Key

Plaques

William le Fleming, Thomas Parsons, Mary Whitcombe

Memorial gate and plaque J R Hastie

Note: Some of these chattels may remain with the church depending on the final location and use of the building, and family permissions.

Guidelines on relocation, repairs and maintenance are also attached.