

WDC District Plan Review – Built Heritage Assessment



HERITAGE
CONSULTANCY
SERVICES

for Waikato District Council
by Heritage Consultancy Services

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Executive Summary

The built environment of Waikato District embodies a rich history, encompassing pioneering settlement, the physical and cultural impacts of the Waikato War, and the construction of key social, civic and industrial infrastructure. The Waikato and Waipa Rivers, and the North Island Main Trunk railway line, have influenced the physical and historic development of the district and its contribution to the nation's story. Built heritage features underwrite the established character and community identity of the district's towns and villages; in concert, they create a visual connection to a past that is typical of many provincial New Zealand places but also particular to this landscape and its people.

Waikato District Council commissioned this assessment of built heritage resources as part of its review of the Waikato District Plan. The assessment project involved a review of items scheduled within the Operative Plan, both Waikato and Franklin sections, as well as a consideration of 'new' scheduled items that have been identified by Heritage Consultancy Services or suggested by the public, council staff and/or other consultants in the past.

At present the built heritage items in the Franklin Section of the Waikato District Plan (WDP) are not ranked and are limited in scope to only ten built heritage items. These currently scheduled built heritage items have been assessed in order to rank them, given that Waikato District Council intends to maintain a two-tier inventory of built heritage items in the Proposed District Plan (PDP). There are also other built heritage resources in the former Franklin area of Waikato District that merit scheduling in the PDP.

Built heritage items in the Waikato section of the WDP were largely identified and assessed by Dinah Holman in 1997. These items were ranked according to whether they possessed 'special or outstanding' cultural heritage value or cultural heritage value. The criteria used by Holman in 1997 are included in the operative Waikato District Plan (C.A1 Criteria for Heritage Listings). These criteria and the corresponding built heritage inventory therefore predate the 2003 amendment to the Resource Management Act (RMA), which made the protection of historic heritage a matter of national importance (section 6(f)). More recently the district plan's heritage criteria have been superseded by the criteria in the revised Waikato Regional Policy Statement (WRPS), which must be given effect to by the WDP. The assessment of built heritage items provided in this report has been predicated upon the criteria in Section 10A of the Waikato Regional Policy Statement. A guidance note has been prepared to assist with the ranking of built heritage items and this is also appended to the report.

The principal recommendations of the Built Heritage Assessment project are as follows:

- Some currently scheduled items do not have sufficient historic heritage significance to warrant their retention on the District Plan. It is recommended they are not included in the PDP built heritage schedule.
- Currently scheduled built heritage resources in the former Franklin District need to be ranked to maintain consistency across the district in the new unitary plan.
- Revised rankings for some currently scheduled built heritage items are recommended to recognise their level of significance, according to the guidance note prepared, and to achieve greater consistency and defensibility across the district.
- A number of additional significant [B ranking] and highly significant [A ranking] built heritage resources are proposed for addition to the Waikato District Plan, as this is the best tool available to the council for the sustainable management and protection of historic heritage resources. Some of the recommended additions were identified as part of the Tuakau and Ngaruawahia and District Structure Plan built heritage assessments.

Methodology & Outcomes

The Built Heritage Assessment project was commissioned by Waikato District Council to contextualise, identify and assess the built heritage resources of Waikato district. The built heritage inventory in the Waikato Section of the operative Waikato District Plan is exemplary for its breadth of listings as to building types and locations throughout the district. There is a risk, however, that significant built heritage resources may have been overlooked in the past. Fresh research may also determine that some currently scheduled items no longer merit scheduling. The Built Heritage Assessment project seeks to ensure the Proposed District Plan (PDP) contains a robust and defensible schedule of built heritage items for the long-term benefit of the community and to meet the Council's statutory obligations.

Project research has drawn upon published sources and archival documents, historic plans and photographs. The fieldwork for this project was undertaken entirely from the public domain. The historic overview of the district provides a baseline of information against which to establish key historic events, personnel, locations and themes. The overview also creates the backdrop against which individual built heritage items can be identified, researched and assessed. The overview is presented as a place-based narrative history with illustrations. It is fully footnoted and accompanied by a comprehensive list of sources.

The Built Heritage Assessment project builds upon previous work undertaken by Heritage Consultancy Services for Waikato District Council. That work adhered to a best practice approach to robust and defensible heritage identification and assessment that was fully cognisant of the historic development of the district. Alignment with the RMA definition of historic heritage and the assessment criteria contained within the WRPS was considered essential. Benchmarking against other territorial authority built heritage studies and inventories was a key component of the methodology. Research files provided by the consultant with every built heritage assessment record form will ensure that statements of significance can be substantiated and council staff have direct access to valuable information to assist with consent processing and monitoring, as well as planning policy development.

Council records for all currently scheduled items in the WDP typically offer little information about the item and its heritage significance. Information that describes and assesses each built heritage item is necessary so that WDC can support each listing through the plan notification, submission and hearings process. The historic heritage record form template devised by Heritage Consultancy Services in 2015 for Waikato District Council, was trialled on the Tuakau Structure Plan items and then adopted for this project [Appendix 3]. The template provides a concise summary of the key characteristics of the built heritage item and addresses each of the significance criteria in the WRPS [Appendix 1]. A guidance note prepared by Heritage Consultancy Services provides direction in the application of the assessment criteria and how a determination of ranking is made [Appendix 2]. In keeping with the practice of other councils, it is advised that the guidance note forms part of the section 32 report for built heritage in the PDP but is not included within the plan.

This report provides the following outputs requested of the consultant:

- Preparation of an historic overview of the district and identification of key themes, events, people and activities that contribute to community identity and sense of place.
- Review of existing built heritage items that have been scheduled on the District Plan and/or listed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga in recognition of their importance to residents and the wider community.
- Identification of 'new' built heritage items that are recommended for scheduling on the Proposed District Plan and/or merit recording for future information and interpretation.

The Built Heritage Assessment project may also provide information useful to the future development of design guidelines, urban design strategies and historic interpretation outputs, such as heritage trails and signage.

Recommended Future Built Heritage Actions

The identification, review and assessment of built heritage resources is an ongoing process that is influenced by new research, community engagement and information, and increased awareness of historic values.

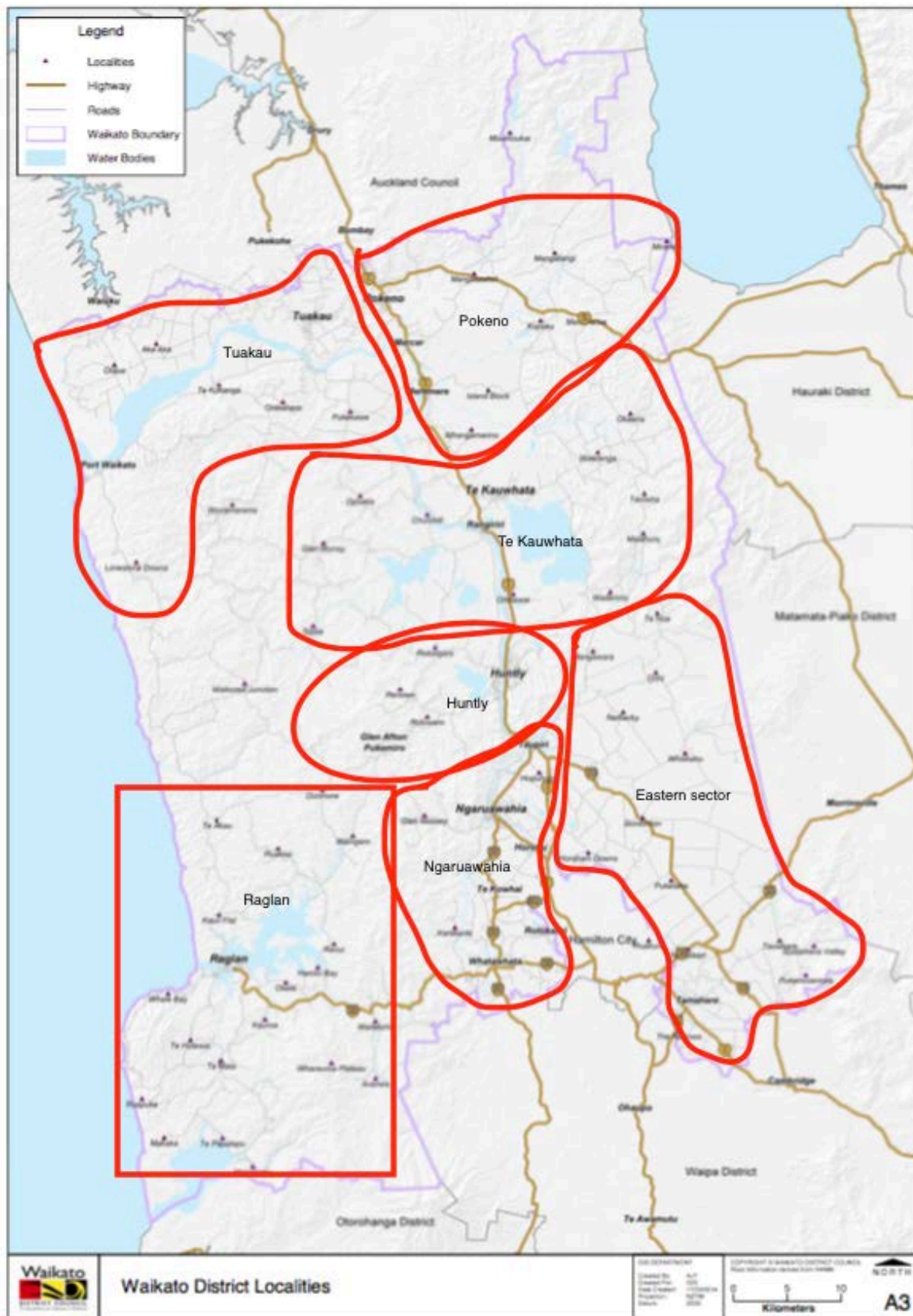
The following future actions are put forward for consideration:

- Engagement with council and community board elected representatives and council officers to introduce the recommended built heritage schedule and to discuss how the district's history and heritage values are embodied in the physical resources that merit protection under section 6(f) of the Resource Management Act
- Identification of privately owned 'A' ranked items in poor condition that may benefit from WDC support, whether in the form of incentive funding, professional conservation advice, and/or assistance with heritage funding applications.
- Preparation of condition reports for all council-owned built heritage assets to create a priority list of assets requiring earthquake strengthening, maintenance and repairs and/or modifications to maintain the longevity and viability of the asset.
- Engagement with all owners of scheduled built heritage assets to identify potential issues regarding ongoing maintenance, plans for alterations and/or additions, and opportunities for interpretation and community access.

Authorship & Acknowledgements

Heritage Consultancy Services (HCS) was established by Dr Ann McEwan in 2006. HCS provides historic heritage identification, research, assessment and policy advice to a range of clients, including government departments, territorial authorities and private property owners. HCS specialises in built heritage identification, research and assessment and has provided these services in relation to district plan reviews for Thames-Coromandel District Council, Christchurch City Council and Nelson City Council in recent years. Heritage Consultancy Services provided input that helped to shape the historic heritage assessment criteria in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement and has devised and refined assessment methodology and assessment record templates for Thames-Coromandel District and Nelson City Councils.

This report has been prepared by Dr Ann McEwan, with assistance from Lynette Williams, Moepatu Borell, Meri Low, and Rebecca Nuttall. With thanks to Betty Connolly, Jane Macartney, Jenni Vernon and Damon Mathfield at Waikato District Council and Alexy Simmons of Simmons & Associates Ltd. Many thanks to Kay Vincent, Ann Anderson, Jenny Kelly, Steve Soanes, Warwick Kellaway and Michael Kelly for their input.



Map A: Geographic areas within Waikato District that have been delineated to assist in the organisation of the historic overview and the identification, review and assessment of built heritage resources throughout the district.