

Review of Dunedin City Council Dangerous, Insanitary, and Earthquake-prone Buildings Policy

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Background

- 2009 - Building Control and City Development committed to an early joint review of Dunedin's 2007 policy
- November 2010 - Planning and Environment Committee approved review initiation
- May 2011 - Draft policy released for consultation
- July 2011 - Hearings
- October 2011 - New policy adopted by Council

The Dunedin context

- Building stock reflects Dunedin's Victorian growth – a large number of URM buildings particularly in the CBD, but throughout the entire city
- Broad heritage protections over a majority of the city's URMs
- Limited development/redevelopment
- Modest economic growth
- Low levels of investment and return
- Strong public support for retaining the city's unique heritage buildings, even after Canterbury earthquakes















Key issues with the 2007 policy

- A lack of clarity around priorities
- Unclear process for both Council and building owners
- Suitability of timeframes
- A lack of integration with other Council policies/strategies
- Appropriateness of a passive approach
- Perceptions of a low level of implementation

Draft Policy

- Released for public consultation May 2011
- Key proposed amendments
 - Clearer and more active process for implementation
 - Reviewed definition of 'significant alteration'
 - Reviewed definition of 'heritage' and 'historic' buildings
 - Date timeframes commence
 - Timeframe for providing initial assessments
 - Timeframes for strengthening work to be completed

Draft Policy

- Key proposed amendments
 - Portfolio process
 - Extensions of time for façade/roof level strengthening
 - Provisions for buildings damaged in an earthquake
 - Clarification of policy towards heritage buildings – but no separate section
 - Rural churches and halls

Draft Policy

- Key proposed amendments
 - Financial assistance
 - Process for dangerous and insanitary buildings
 - Minimum requirement to remain at 1/3 of New Building Standard (NBS), but Council to encourage building owners to strengthen to 2/3 or more
 - Change of use remained 2/3 of NBS

Public consultation and hearing

- A total of 23 submitters
- Six submitters presented at the hearing
- Key areas of submission
 - The need for policy review/intent of the policy
 - The level of strengthening required
 - Timeframes
 - Processes for identifying and taking action on
 - The definition of a 'significant alteration'
 - Interaction with the Building Act including 'change of use'

The new 2011 Policy

- One-third retained as minimum, but with recommendation to achieve 2/3 or more
- Two years to provide initial assessment – this will provide our list of EPBs
- Timeframes from 15-30 years depending on current assessment
- A more permissive approach to 'significant alterations' than originally proposed to encourage continued investment and maintenance
- Party wall notification
- An approach to staging
- Portfolio approach

Other initiatives

- Annual free workshop for heritage building owners
- Expanded heritage fund assistance to earthquake strengthening projects
- Rates relief assistance to earthquake strengthening projects
- Targeted rate for earthquake strengthening of heritage buildings
- Maintenance checklists for heritage buildings
- Regular public site visits to strengthening projects
- Award for earthquake strengthening of heritage buildings

The post-Christchurch environment

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- Strong interest from building owners in Dunedin in initiating the process
- Seismic upgrade work has increased, but also further into the policy timeframes
- Majority are achieving 2/3 NBS or greater as part of a change of use
- Strong uptake for staged approaches to strengthening for economic viability reasons
- Some opportunistic building owners using perceptions of risk to achieve outcomes that undermine other city goals
- Need for targeted, specific information for owners of residential dwellings

Continued challenges

- For Council this is a delicate balancing act
- Encouraging continual safety improvements without undermining the city's economy and vibrancy
- Change can only be incremental, given need to work around tenancies, available space, buildings – Council needs to take a measured approach
- Information on the large number of pre-1900 buildings can be difficult to locate
- Discouraging and taking action on 'demolition by neglect' – do not want EPB status increasing these cases
- Staging and prioritisation of building components
- Working with building owners to find mutually beneficial approaches is rewarding, but time intensive

Continued challenges

- Building owners see uncertainty and perceive continually shifting goalposts – this discourages upgrade and investment
- Clarity about what is trying to be achieved
- The lack of central government financial assistance and incentives/removal of earlier 'incentives', e.g. depreciation changes
- Combined cost of seismic upgrade and upgrades for fire, accessibility
- Low returns on investment in seismic upgrades
- Perception that achieving 2/3 is twice as costly as 1/3 when this is not always the case
- Sensationalist headlines discouraging positive short to medium term investment in URMs