



Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance

Information Sheet 19

Assessing Impacts on Historic Sites, including Archaeological Sites

Note: These standards apply to the RMA process and they do not relate to the archaeological authority procedures under the Historic Places Act 1993.

Principles

Historic sites are historic places that generally do not include buildings. They often mark an important event or person. They can include heritage trees, gardens, memorials, battle sites, or landing sites.

Wherever possible, the destruction, damage or modification of historic and archaeological sites should be avoided or minimised. In the context of the RMA, this may include places of archaeological significance that post-date 1900.

In the case of rural subdivision that may affect historic and archaeological sites, development needs to be planned to avoid sites with the location of any earthworks (driveways, services, fencing, building platforms, etc) determined at an early planning stage. The future physical management of archaeological sites is an important consideration of any subdivision proposal.

Avoiding effects on historic and archaeological sites will also be an important issue with regard to development within historic town centres, historic urban precincts, forestry development, and mining.

Obtaining professional archaeological advice is an important first step for any proposal that may affect archaeological sites.

Integration with archaeological authority processes under the Historic Places Act 1993 is essential and advice should be sought from the regional NZHPT archaeologist.

The applicant should be informed, as soon as possible if, on the basis of an archaeological assessment, an archaeological authority from the NZHPT is required.

The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi will be relevant where an historic or archaeological site is associated with Maori historical occupation and use.

Where an historic or archaeological site will be lost as a consequence of the development activity, the values of the site should be fully documented and investigated by a professionally qualified archaeologist.

The management of all large and complex historic and archaeological sites should be guided by a conservation plan prepared by a heritage professional. A conservation plan should guide the active management of the site and matters such as the control of vegetation, stock, soil erosion, vandalism, and public access and interpretation.

Checklist for assessing resource consent applications that have the potential to damage historic and archaeological sites

- The proposed activity should be designed and located in an area so as to avoid all known historic and archaeological sites. This can be achieved by encouraging the consideration of alternative development options and provision of protective buffer areas.
- The proposed activity should avoid affecting a place or area of significance to Maori as stated by tangata whenua.
- In relation to an archaeological site, the proposed activity or site should be the subject of an archaeological assessment prepared by a professional archaeologist according to the NZHPT's guidelines.
- In relation to a historic site that is not an archaeological site, the proposed activity should be subject to a heritage impact assessment.
- The concept of the greater or total conservation benefit of a proposal applies with regards to complex historic or archaeological landscapes. The loss of some minor parts may be justified for the place to continue to function or to accommodate a proposal which achieves the conservation of the greater portion of the complex as informed by a conservation plan.
- The proposed activity should achieve positive heritage outcomes by the provision for ongoing physical management including the use of a covenant. Historic and archaeological sites should not be abandoned but benefit from active management such as control of stock, vegetation, and soil erosion as guided by expert advice and a conservation plan.
- The proposed activity should remedy or mitigate any damage to a historic or archaeological site that has been partially destroyed as a result of damage from past earthworks, construction of structures and buildings or natural erosion.
- Any historic markers or plaques at historic sites should be retained and upgraded. Public access and interpretation should be provided as appropriate. The site should be protected from vandalism.
- Any heritage trees or other vegetation should be preserved on the basis of advice provided by a professional arboriculturalist.
- For archaeological sites dating before 1900, the proposed activity must be authorised by an archaeological authority issued by the NZHPT under the Historic Places Act 1993.

Source: NZHPT, *Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Series*, Discussion Paper No.2, Assessment of Effects on the Historic Environment, 3 August 2007.

The NZHPT welcomes any feedback and comments on this information sheet.

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