

RUSSELL PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC)

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Russell, Bay of Islands
rps.org.nz

Clause 6 of Schedule 1, Resource Management Act 1991

Form 5: Submission on Proposed Far North District Plan

This is a submission on the Proposed District Plan for the Far North District.

1. Submitter details:

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2. We could not gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission.

3. The general provisions of the Plan that our submission relates to are:

3.1 We generally support the Plan and wish to commend the Council for listening to the Russell Community and for taking the necessary steps to provide adequate protection of the important heritage and natural resources there, while also safeguarding the unique character of the Russell Township.

3.2 We consider that there are some improvements that could be made to the Kororāreka Russell Township Zone, the Heritage Area Overlays, the Mixed Use Zone, the Orongo, Bay Zone, the Coastal Environment provisions, Natural Character and Natural and Landscapes Overlays, the Earthworks section, the Notable Trees section, the Open Space section, the Subdivision section and the Zone Maps.

The specific details of the Plan that our submission relates to include:

4.0 The Kororareka Russell Township Zone

4.1 We generally support the Objectives (KRT 01-KRT 05) and Policies (KRT P1- KRT P06) of the Kororareka Russell Township Zone, but

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consider that these can be strengthened by providing clarification of what is meant by “scale, character and amenity values”. This can be done by making specific reference to a FNDC document entitled “*Russell Design Guidelines*” in KRT P1. A copy of that document is appended to this submission. Alternatively, the following provisions of the Operative Plan could be modified for incorporation into the new Plan:

“11.21 RUSSELL TOWNSHIP BASIN AND GATEWAY AREA The extent to which any proposed building or development within the Russell Township Basin and Gateway Area, as defined on Maps 89 and HP4, has regard to the following general design guidelines: (a) Where existing buildings are being added to or altered, pitches of new roofs should be the same as the existing roof, unless the alterations are generally re-establishing the proven original style or character of the building. (b) Where existing buildings are altered or added to, this should be in a manner which preserves their essential character or which recovers original character lost through subsequent unsympathetic modification. (c) Window size and shape should be appropriate to the style of building. (d) Generally, traditional construction methods (e.g. timber frame), together with traditional cladding such as weatherboard or corrugated sheet steel and traditional roof coverings such as shingles or corrugated sheet steel, reinforce historic forms and are generally appropriate. Concrete block walls, concrete or pressed metal roof tiles, and aluminium joinery are generally considered inappropriate. (e) Dormer windows are only considered appropriate where they are generally consistent with the historic style of the building. (f) A low level of ornamentation is generally desirable in Russell. (g) The protection and enhancement of existing vegetation will be encouraged and soft landscaping (including hedging) will be preferred at site boundaries except on the Strand where hard edges such as fences are more appropriate. (h) Buildings should not be visually obtrusive as viewed from the Strand or Kororareka Bay and Matauwhi Bay. In particular, buildings on the skyline should not exceed the maximum height.”

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In terms of KRT -P6 we also suggest two additions. A statement could be made acknowledging that there is a need to protect historical sight line corridors that provide views of Kororareka Bay. In addition, a policy from the Operative Plan that reads.. “*That a reasonable level of privacy and peaceful enjoyment be provided for residents*” could be incorporated into the Plan.

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4.2 The impermeable surface coverage control for this zone of 35% (KPT-R2, PER-1) is supported, however no specific indication is given as to what level of coverage is considered appropriate as a Restricted Discretionary activity. The Operative District Plan specifies 40% as an appropriate level and this should be incorporated into the new Scheme.

S179.013 4.3 The residential intensity (KRT-R3) in this zone of 1000m2 is supported, however it would be useful here to also acknowledge the Restricted Discretionary control of 800m2, in order to provide a clearer understanding of the anticipated scale or intensity of development considered appropriate for this Zone.

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S179.017 4.4 The provisions for Visitor Accommodation (KRT-R4), Home Business (KRT-R5), Educational Facility (KRT-R6) and Supported Residential Care (KRT-R7) are supported because these reflect the nature and character of Russell where many people are either self-employed or working in small scale craft industries.

S179.018 4.5 The provision for Minor Residential Units (KRT-R8) is supported, however there is an outstanding need to define what a minor residential unit is in terms of scale. It is suggested that 45m2 is an appropriate scale for a minor unit, provided that it satisfies the impermeable surface control for the site.

S179.019 4.6 The provision for Retirement Villages (KRT-R9), in setting a limit of six occupants, may be unworkable given the usual size of such villages. This may be an activity more appropriately located in the Mixed Use Zone or, alternatively the permitted capacity may have to be increased in the KRT.

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S179.030 4.7 The provisions of KRT R10 - 20 are supported, however it is suggested that helicopter landing areas, except for emergency purposes, should also be a non-complying activity. S179.108

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S179.039 4.8 The Standards for Maximum Building Height (KRT-S1), Height in Relation to Boundaries (KRT-S2), Setbacks (KRT-S3), Setbacks from Water (KRT-S4), Building Coverage (KRT-S5), Outdoor Living Space (KRT-S6), Fencing and Boundary Walls (KRT-S7), Outdoor Storage (KRT-S8) and Multi-Unit Residential Unit Size (KRT-S9) are supported.

5.0 Heritage Area Overlays

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S179.041 5.1 We generally support the Overview and Policies for the Kororareka Russell Heritage Overlay Areas, including Part A-The Strand, Part B-Wellington Street, Part C-Christ Church, and Part D-Remainder.

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S179.043 5.2 We support the proposed Rules and Standards, however we are concerned that key controls in the Operative Plan appear to have been omitted. We refer to the following Operative Rules:

12.5A.6.1.3 PARKING AND ACCESS IN THE STRAND Car parking and vehicle access is permitted, provided that it is not accessed off The Strand, or located between any building and The Strand

12.5A.6.1.2 SIGNS IN THE STRAND AND KERIKERI BASIN HERITAGE PRECINCTS Signs are permitted in The Strand and Kerikeri Basin Heritage Precincts provided they are limited to a description of the activity on the site and do not exceed 0.2m² in area.

12.5A.6.2.3 NEW BUILDINGS WHICH ARE NOT VISIBLE TO THE PUBLIC The construction of a new building in any of the Heritage Precincts, except The Strand and Kerikeri Basin Heritage Precincts and the Kerikeri Basin Heritage Precinct Visual Buffer, is a controlled activity provided that it is not visible from a public place

We ask that the existing Rules or Standards on parking and access, signage and visible buildings on The Strand, which are entirely consistent with the proposed Objectives and Policies, be incorporated into the relevant HAR or HAS Part A The Strand sections of the Proposed Plan. Parking, access, signposting and new buildings have the potential to easily detract from what is a nationally significant heritage area. We also question whether the 200m³ of earthworks (PER-2) provided for in Parts B, C, D of the Kororareka Russell Heritage Overlay Areas may be too generous, given the proposed rules for the Coastal Environment Overlay (CE-S3)

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6. Mixed Use Zone

6.1 We generally support the Objective and Policies of the Mixed Use Zone, with particular regard to requiring visitor or residential accommodation to be located above the ground floor (MUZ-P5).

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6.2 We generally support the proposed Rules and Standards for the Zone, with the exception of MUX-S1 Maximum Height of 12m. The Russell commercial area is characterised by single and two story buildings which blend in well with the village atmosphere of the Township. The Operative District Plan recognises this by specifying the following:

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(b) The maximum height of any building in the following Commercial Zones shall be 8.5m: (i) Russell (Map 89).

We ask that the current height limit of 8.5m be reinstated, consistent with the proposals for Paihia.

7. The Orongo Bay Zone

7.1 We generally support the Objectives (OBZ-1-2) and Policies (OBZ-P1-8) for the zone, with particular regard to protecting the visual amenity

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values of the area, given that it is a rather obtrusive site at the entry to historic Russell.

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7.2 However we note that the Rules (OBZ-S1-22) and Standards (OBZ-S1-5) for the Orongo Bay Zone do not provide clarity for the storage of second hand houses, some of which can be in a poor state of repair. This serves to detract from the visual amenity of the area, something that the Zone specifically aims to protect. On that basis, the Rules (OBZ-R) should make it clear that the storage of second hand buildings is not a permitted use.

8. Coastal Environment, Natural Character and Natural Features and Landscapes Overlays

8.1 In view of the fact that coastal zones are not provided for in the Proposed District Plan, then the Coastal Environment, Natural Character and Natural Features and Landscapes Overlays become very important in helping to define the boundaries of Russell and in safeguarding a suitable backdrop or canvass with which to interpret and appreciate the historic Township.

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8.2 It is especially important that these Overlays provide adequate protection to the headlands framing Russell and the natural coastal escarpments that characterise the balance of the Russell Peninsula. For this reason it is important to control subdivision and development of coastal lands in the area. We strongly support the Objectives, Policies, Rules and Standards of these Overlays, especially CE-02 c. which states “*does not result in urban sprawl occurring outside of urban zones*”. This is particularly relevant for Russell where ribbon development is actively occurring along the Peninsula.

8.3 We note that there may be some challenges in applying the Coastal Environment Overlay to urban areas. For instance, the permitted height limit within the Overlay is 5m (CE-S1), whereas the permitted height in the Kororareka Russell Township Zone is appropriately set at 7.2m (KRT-S1).

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9. Earthworks

9.1 The natural marine environment, especially estuarine areas, is being progressively degraded through land-use activities in the Bay of Islands. The Objectives and Policies (EW, EW-P) of this section contain a fundamental contradiction between “efficiency” and “protection of environmental values”. Unfortunately the Rules (EW-R) and Standards

(EW-S) do not provide adequate direction as to how to appropriately manage this tension, especially where significant resources are involved.

9.2 It should be evident by now that standard erosion control methods are largely ineffectual. This is because parts of the Bay of Islands are characterised by heavy clay soils, steep topography and heavy rainfalls. Examination of streams during storm events reveal heavy sediment loads, particularly below recent subdivisions. While we support the Objectives and Policies of the Earthworks section, we believe that the subsequent Rules and Standards must contain specific reference to new and effective standards for erosion and sediment control. It is suggested that Council has a primary responsibility for developing these standards rather than simply relying on other agencies such as the Regional Council.

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9.3 It is recognised that land use subdivision and development provide a foundation for Northland's economy. However, this is also why proper control of these process is essential to the longer term sustainability of our economy. For this reason, standard erosion control methods are no longer satisfactory and we ask that new standards be developed in this regard and be referenced in the EW-R section of the proposed Plan.

10. Notable Trees

10.1 The Morton Bay Fig tree located at the historic Police house (Custom's House) along The Strand in Russell is probably the most photographed tree in Northland, if not New Zealand. It was with some surprise that we discovered that this important tree is not on the Schedule of Notable Trees.

10.2 The NZ Police have now clearly signalled that they intend to sell this property and to relocate the current community policeman elsewhere. This would leave the historic Morton Bay Fig tree without any form of protection. From all accounts the tree is in good health and with judicious pruning would remain for years to come for tourists and locals alike to enjoy. It would be unconscionable for this much admired tree to be lost. For these reasons we request that the Morton Bay Fig tree at the Custom's House be added to the proposed Schedule of Notable Trees.

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11. Open Spaces

11.1 The OSZ/P Objectives and Policies are supported, however it is suggested that these could be broadened to recognise that in some instances open space also serves the important function of preserving sight-line corridors that strategically link public places with views of the sea, prominent geologic features, significant trees or historic sites.

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11.2 The associated Rules and Standards should include a requirement to preserve important sight-lines as part of the permitted use provisions (OSZ-R1).

12. Subdivision

12.1 We support the Objectives (SUB-01-04) and Policies (SUB-P1-11) of this section, with particular regard to ensuring the subdivision is consistent with the purposes of each zone. However, there is a need to consider the cumulative effects of subdivision, particularly within coastal, rural and special purpose areas. It is therefore suggested SUB-P11 could be expanded to require Council to have regard to the cumulative effects that subdivision would have upon the values of the area in question.

12.2 In particular, we support Policy SUB-P10 in order to discourage “backdoor” non-complying subdivisions of properties containing minor dwelling units.

12.1 We specifically support SUB-S1, Minimum Allotment sizes for Kororareka Russell Township Zone of 1000m² and 800m² Discretionary Activity. We also support the Minimum Allotment sizes for Rural Production, Rural Residential and Rural Lifestyle Zones in order to retain the level of protection previously afforded by the General Coastal, Coastal Living and Coastal Residential Zones in the Operative Plan.

13. Zone Maps

13.1 There appears to be a glaring anomaly in the pattern of zoning for Russell. The historic Township is appropriately zoned Kororareka Russell Township, with the exception of five properties (16/26A/26B Gould Street and 24B/24C Florance Ave), which are zoned General Residential.

13.2 There is no indication given on the Map as to why these properties are zoned General Residential, since these properties have similar characteristics to the surrounding Kororareka Russell Township zoned lands. The zoning of properties for more intensive development in the middle or heart of the special zone would serve to undermine the integrity and purpose of that zone. There does not appear to be any justification or logical planning reason for this anomaly and therefore we ask that the above named properties be zoned Kororareka Russell Township Zone, consistent with the surrounding properties.

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We wish to be heard in support of our submission

If others make a similar submission, we will consider presenting a joint case with them at a hearing

We do not wish to present our submission via Microsoft Teams.

Email to: pdp@fndc.govt.nz

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Drey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Bob Drey
Chairperson
Russell Protection Society

Address for Service: As above

Appendix: FNDC-Russell Design Guidelines (Attached as a separate email document)



Far North District Council

Dept. of Conservation
Kaitiaki

18 SEP 2007

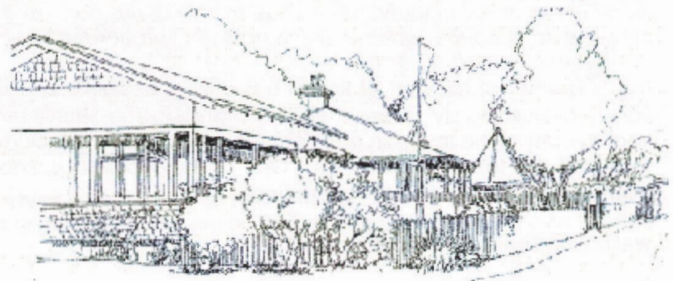
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RUSSELL DESIGN GUIDELINES

The History of Russell

The town of Russell exists in the general location of Kororareka, a Maori kainga located near the beach to which Tupi guided the ship *City of Edinburgh* for repairs in 1810. Following this, increasing contact with European visitors saw a change in the character of the settlement. By the late 1830s the town had some 300 European residents, not to mention visitors from the dozens of ships at anchor. The only buildings remaining from the pre-1845 period are Christ Church (1835), now substantially altered, and Pompallier (1841-2).

A variety of buildings exist from later periods. A notable example from the later nineteenth century is the former Customhouse (1870), now the Russell Police Station. Other smaller buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century include cottages and villas as well as a few bungalows, some built originally as holiday homes.



Houses in the 'Californian bungalow' style near Pompallier.

The Role of the Guidelines

Development in Russell (including new buildings and additions and alterations) is subject to the provisions of the Far North District Plan. As a 'non-statutory' document, this design guideline sits outside the District Plan, but provides further information to assist in the protection of the historic character of Russell. It is necessary to refer to the provisions of the District Plan to ascertain requirements for resource consents, issues to be addressed and assessment criteria for applications.

The Far North District Plan

The District Plan identifies a number of specific buildings and sites which have particular heritage value and are accordingly scheduled for protection in Appendix 4 of the District Plan. Development proposals that affect these properties are subject to the rules in Part 11 of the District Plan.

Within Russell, the District Plan identifies three 'Heritage Precincts'. This brochure describes the historic character of each of the heritage precincts in Russell in some detail, which elaborates on the material provided in the District Plan.

Other planning matters also apply in Russell. It is therefore necessary to refer to the District Plan to ascertain the full range of resource management issues and rules that apply, or to discuss these matters with a Council planner.

Archaeology

Any site within Russell has the potential to yield archaeological remains or evidence, of either Maori or European origin, even though little or nothing of interest may be visible on the surface of the ground.

The *Historic Places Act 1993* protects all archaeological remains associated with human activity prior to 1900. The provisions of this Act apply irrespective of the status of any activity under the District Plan (and the *Resource Management Act 1991*).

Even if a resource consent has been granted for a particular activity, it may still be necessary to obtain an Authority to Modify an Archaeological Site under the *Historic Places Act 1993*. For this reason, it is advisable that prior to any disturbance of the ground in Russell, contact is made with the Northland Area Office of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust; Ph: 09 407 4443.

The NZ Historic Places Trust

In addition to its regulatory role in archaeology, the NZ Historic Places Trust is an affected party to resource consent applications in Russell and in respect of any building listed in Appendix 4. In consideration of specific development proposals, the Trust is happy to provide advice.

The Strand Heritage Precinct

As a maritime service centre, early Russell naturally developed close to the edge of the harbour. This gave the earliest businesses ready access to the water, and provided convenient amenity to the many visitors arriving by sea. This was accompanied by residential development close to the waterfront and a hinterland of small farm holdings and other dwellings. The core of the new community was thus concentrated in the area contained by The Strand and York Street. The defining physical quality of the precinct derives from the close alignment of the Strand and its adjacent buildings to the water.

Part of the modern commercial centre remains within The Strand Precinct, and is centred on Cass Street, which functions as a sort of town square (once known as Sydney square). The success of this as a public space is certainly due to its location, but is also due to its alignment with the wharf, which is the point of entry for water-based transport to and from Russell.

The physical shape and character of the precinct has evolved over time, and a great many building types are now represented here, including some of the oldest buildings in Russell. The general scale of building is two-storeys, but with many single storey residential buildings, mainly at the north end. These buildings are typically small and modest examples of their style and type, whether single storey or two storey.

The character of this part of Russell has always been mixed. This defining attribute is equally the case today, where the variety of building styles and their relationship to The Strand sets a pattern of scale and proximity which is quite different from the rest of the town. In addition, The Strand Precinct includes 7 buildings specifically identified in the District Plan (more than half the total for the town). One of these buildings, known as Pompallier is of national heritage significance and defines the southern end of the precinct.

Wellington Street Heritage Precinct

The Wellington Street Heritage Precinct is a small part of Russell immediately to the north of the Strand Precinct and is centred on the intersection of York and Wellington Streets. The landscape rises from the beach to the lower slopes of Maiki hill and is characterised by a generally low intensity of residential-scale development with generous amount of open space between houses. Mature trees are another important ingredient of this landscape.

The range of dwellings is quite varied, with predominantly nineteenth century houses ranging from quite small cottages to large villas, one of which is a scheduled historic building. Houses are generally oriented to the street, thus reinforcing the street alignment.

The importance of this precinct derives from the way in which it supports the Strand precinct and maintains consistency of character and scale along the waterfront. The precinct is also important for defining consistency of character and scale of development further along Wellington Street and into York Street.

Christ Church Heritage Precinct

The Christ Church Precinct has particular importance for its location at the entrance to central Russell, where Matauwhi Road meets Robertson Street. Christ Church is an historic building of national significance which lies at the southern end of the commercial centre. Standing within its graveyard, the church dominates a larger open area to the north with older residential buildings on rising ground to the south and east.

While many of these houses are from a much later period of development than the church, they are important nonetheless, for maintaining a complementary scale to the key heritage building and for defining the established residential character and built landscape of older Russell. It will be important to retain this character, to ensure that development within the precinct is appropriate in scale and location.

Additions and alterations

It is not hard to add to old houses or to make internal changes which will make them more agreeable to live in, and which allow them to reflect changing life styles. Modernisation of amenities is not, however, the same thing as modernising the appearance of the house.

A key objective in refurbishing an older house is to retain the original character of the exterior while making necessary changes. It is important to be clear about the correct style of a house and to recognise that there are important differences between each style.

There are 3 quite simple guidelines which are worth following:

- Keep the original street front intact
- Retain original features
- Don't break the roof line

If a larger house is needed, consider adding another building block to the existing - perhaps a lean-to or a repeat of the original house form. These additions should not dominate the original house. It is sensible to match existing construction materials to enable a sympathetic addition to be made, but it should always be apparent where the original house ends and the new begins.

New buildings

There is no contradiction between preserving historic character and new development. It is the nature of towns to continue to grow and it is important that each period of development should be of its own time - so copying old styles is usually not the best solution.

It is equally important that new development in areas of established character should "fit in" to the existing setting, and should not dominate its surroundings - either through appearance or through difference in scale of development. For this reason, new construction in each precinct may require different solutions.



A simple addition to a cottage, in traditional manner.

It is important to understand the existing pattern of development - how buildings relate to the street and to the landscape, the spaces between buildings and the positions of buildings on their plots. Attention to these details will ensure a better fit in the wider context.

The single most important quality in a new design will be scale and successful new design will respond to its context by striving to preserve the general scale of existing development, or the scale of the nearest buildings.

A second important consideration is form - the overall shape and arrangement of the building. Clear simple forms are most likely to be successful, but moderate use of features such as verandahs is a sound way of creating additional accommodation. It is not necessary to mimic existing houses, but roof pitches similar to those on adjacent buildings will help new houses fit in. Once scale and form have been addressed, attention to materials and details will ensure a successful outcome.



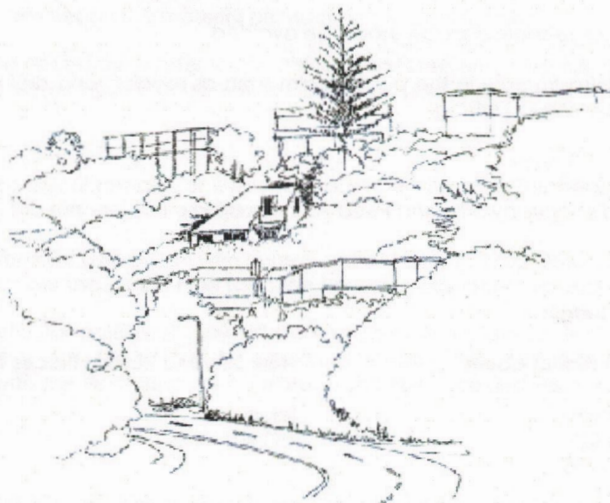
A new house sharing its site with an early bach (in the foreground). The new house is designed to avoid a harsh contrast with either the existing bach on the site or the land-form on which it is sited.

Other Aspects of Character

While this guideline has focussed on built form as an aspect of historic character and appropriate responses in terms of development, historic character can be compromised by other changes.

Landscaping

The landscaping chosen should be appropriate to the context. Locally sourced native plants, or others that are in accordance with established plantings should be preferred over visually dramatic 'architectural' plants such as exotic palms or aloes.



A contemporary house (below and to the left of the Norfolk Island Pine tree) using traditional forms, unobtrusively located in a landscaped setting. Its location below the horizon, and the presence of vegetation assists it to fit within its particular context on a sloping site.

Signage

While sensitively designed, generally small-scaled signage can be used to identify and promote commercial activities without adversely affecting historic character; the same can not be said for all types of signage. In general, the scale of signage should be in keeping with the scale of the building on the site and should not dominate that building or others in the vicinity. Fluorescent colours should be avoided and bright colours used sparingly and with caution, particularly on or close to scheduled sites. Visual impact should be gained by the use of interesting and finely crafted signs.

Paving and Kerbing

Whether in the public realm or on private property, paving should be chosen to blend with the natural environment. Tar seal, which weathers to a soft grey, or other paving which reflects the brown coloured beach shingle, should be preferred over concrete, which can create glare and when used on longer ascending driveways, can create an appearance of 'scarring' the natural landscape.



The character of the Strand derives not only from its buildings, but its landscaped setting proximity to the water and the virtual absence of obtrusive signage.

Without limiting the need to dispose of storm-water in accordance with good engineering practice, kerbing and channelling should only be used where absolutely necessary. This avoids a harsh and strongly urban appearance being imposed on a town which has grown 'organically' with limited infrastructure, to attain an informal and relaxed character.

Summary

The character of Russell can be retained by following a few simple principles. These can be summarised as follows:

- New buildings should be a genuine response to the character of their context.
- New buildings and additions to buildings should use simple forms and be designed to maintain the traditional small 'scale', aggregating forms where necessary.
- Buildings should use sloping roofs, traditional materials, and simple traditional detailing, and generally minimal ornamentation.
- Generous, appropriately landscaped yards should be maintained to complement the subject building and its context.
- Large-scale signage should be avoided
- Infrastructure in the public realm such as roading and drainage should use 'green' solutions that avoid extensive paving or kerbing.

(Text and images by Salmond Reed Architects Ltd.)

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