

Heritage Strategy for Houses

1 Overall

The driving forces in this project are heritage, function, and budget, and there are many different outcomes possible. The following discussion looks at influences, the physical parameters of the building, possible options, and sets out the reasons behind the recommended approach.

1.1 Key points

1.1.1 Heritage

These houses have had some changes, but largely retain their original form, layout, and finishes. They have recognised heritage significance. It is important to retain and enhance the heritage character, material and features.

The following are statements relating to the houses taken from the Heritage Features Report:

- a) *'The keepers' houses, built entirely of New Zealand woods, are identical in plan, each having five rooms – three bedrooms, a living room, and a drawing-room, a scullery, bathroom, and washhouse, and outhouses. The interiors have been tastefully papered and paneled and a number of built in cupboards and wardrobes lend an atmosphere of compact comfort to the buildings.'*
- b) *'Tenders were subsequently advertised for unspecified alterations to the cottages in November 1937. Whether these changes were undertaken is not known.'*
- c) *'In 1950, the area was connected to mains electrical power, thus ending the use of the diesel generators.⁶⁵ This work took two years and involved the construction of a power line to Baring Head at a considerable cost. Changes were made to the cottages to accommodate the changeover, including the provision of electric cookers.'*
- d) *'In 1967, there were unspecified changes to the houses.⁶⁸ These took place between June and November, so they must have been reasonably substantial.'*
- e) *'The last remaining lights were progressively automated from late 1988 onwards, with Baring Head converted on 31 October 1988. However, keeper Steve O'Neill did not leave until 31 January 1989.'*

Details of what the changes were are not currently known, but may be discovered with more research.

The largest change occurred in 1967, and it is likely to have been the bathroom alteration. It is not currently clear why the bathroom was moved, particularly as it reduced the house from two to three of the original bedrooms. However, it is probably linked to the provision of internal toilet facilities. The original bathroom contained a bath and a basin, and was too small to accommodate a toilet. At that time, it was also a building rule that there were two doors between a toilet and a kitchen. Together these facts ruled out provision of the toilet in the original bathroom, and probably resulted in the new bathroom, separate toilet, and probably the kitchen alterations all taking place at the same time.

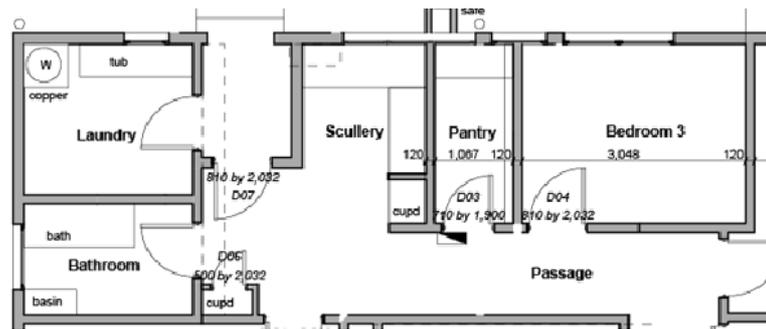


Figure 1. Extract from original plan showing scullery, pantry, and bedroom.

The supposition that all this change happened at the same time is corroborated by the fact that the new wall between the kitchen and the toilet also contains a door between the kitchen and the hall. The original drawing does not show a door, but this alteration incorporates a door, which gives the required two doors between toilet and kitchen. In addition, both of the original walls to the pantry were demolished, and both the new walls to the toilet were constructed in new locations. This shows that the entire length of the original kitchen, pantry, and bedroom areas were divided to suit the new rooms. If the kitchen and bathroom changes had been done separately, it would have been logical to simply divide the bedroom into a toilet, and a bathroom.



Figure 2. Extract from existing plan showing scullery, pantry, and bedroom.

If we accept that the changes to kitchen and bathroom occurred at the same time, then a decision to keep one part also predicates the retention of the other. Conversely, returning one space to original would also require the other to return.

Since this major alteration, there have been changes to kitchen and bathroom fittings and fixtures. There have also been changes to the front and back porch areas, possibly occurring independently to the internal layout changes.

A possible timeline for the known changes is as follows (to be confirmed):

1935: Houses built.

1937: Porches added to give additional protection from conditions.

1950: Electric cookers added.

1967: Indoor toilet, new bathroom, opening up of kitchens to both houses.

1989: New kitchen and bathroom fittings and fixtures to No.1 Keeper's House.

1.1.2 Functionality

The new use of the houses as visitor accommodation requires some changes, mostly to the interior.

- a) The Building Act requires buildings to be accessible, and have features suiting them for use by people with disabilities. In the case of the Baring Head houses, this means one house needs to have a ramp for access, space inside for a wheel chair to manoeuvre, and an accessible bathroom.
- b) The houses need to be suitable for a larger number of occupants, with potentially three groups of people in each house (one group per bedroom). This raises questions about the current capacity of the kitchen facilities, toilet facilities etc.

- c) The No.1 Keeper's House does not have a front porch currently, although photographs show that it has had one in the past. A front porch similar to that on the No.2 Keeper's House is proposed, for reasons of weather protection, and providing an additional small living space/viewing area.
- d) There is some maintenance needed.

1.1.3 Budget/ Other Resources

GWRC are working with public money, and the Friends of Baring Head will be seeking to raise considerable for restoration work.

Hence care needs to be taken to find a level of work compatible with both the responsible expenditure of money, and the care required by the heritage values.

The need for maintenance is growing, and keeping costs lower will allow work to happen in a shorter period, making Baring Head accommodation available to the public sooner.

2 Options

As noted, there have been changes to the houses over the years, and some more alteration is required. Hence the potential strategies are:

- a) Return to the original design
- b) Return to any earlier period
- c) Retain as they are now
- d) Make additional changes

The same strategy could apply to both houses, or different choices to each house.

Options a) and b) would give a direct experience of the living conditions of the Keepers and their families. Option c) would do the same for the No.2 Keeper's House, but not for the No.1 House, where the latest upgrades to the bathroom do not appear to have been used. Option d) will have to be chosen for one house to meet accessibility requirements.

2.1 Option A: Return to 1935

We have the original floor plans for the typical house. It appears this was generally followed, however, at this point we cannot be sure if there were any differences.

Returning a house to the original design removes the alteration that have taken place over the years. The alterations are part of the story, and have a value for that. Any decision to revert to original needs to be based on a very strong reason or to recognise the strong significance of that period. An example of this is the Katherine Mansfield House, where the significance is all about the occupant. In the case of the Baring Head Houses, the significance is to the entire life of the compound rather than to a particular period.

We have no photos or documentation that tells us anything about original fittings, fixtures, or finishes. This would mean that although the spaces could be recreated, the fittings could only be 'typical' of the period, and hence lack some authenticity.

In terms of function, the changes that were made to the houses over time were made for practical reasons, for instance: a single larger kitchen space; an internal separate toilet; a larger bathroom near the bedrooms; or enclosed porches to protect from weather. One of the drivers of this project is to provide comfortable and useable accommodation to visitors. The reversal of these changes decreases the usability of the house, and hence lessens its practical suitability as visitor accommodation.

Returning a house, or houses to an earlier period requires demolition of current non-original walls, and construction of new, relocation of plumbing fixtures, and provision of 'new' 1930s joinery. There is a cost premium associated with this that needs to be weighed against the gains.

Conclusion

There is no compelling reason to return a house layout to the original design, and not enough information currently to do it to a high standard. It is vitally important that these houses have a viable and sustainable use. As popular and well used visitor accommodation, their survival is a good deal more certain than if they are less well

used. For this reason, it appears that some degree of modernity is required, and it is unrealistic to return the house to original drawings.

Hence, we do not believe returning a house to the original design as a whole is appropriate in this case. However, this does not preclude discrete aspects being returned (ie removal of paint from panelling). Also, this option remains open, with a different decision possible in the future when more information may be available.

2.2 Option B: 1967

The argument for this option is that the house(s) as existing is very similar to as it was after the last major alteration in 1967. This is a convincing approach with regard to the overall layout which appears to be essentially unchanged from the 1967 alterations. There are some details, such as the new (unused) fittings in the No.1 Keeper's House kitchen and bathroom that were installed after the age of the lighthouse keepers but these are limited.

Functionally, the current layout of the houses is generally suitable, but is limited by one toilet, and a small, divided kitchen/dining/living area.

Cost wise this is the most effective, as acceptance of the current kitchen and bathroom fittings allows focus on other elements that have more relevance to the story.

Conclusion

This option is low impact, while still leaving open potential further restoration in the future. The 1967 date is during the occupation by light house keepers, so is relevant to the larger story of the site.

It allows the houses to start their new uses as quickly as possible; giving the public access to this heritage area.

Functionally, there may be a need to provide more sanitary facilities or living space.

2.3 Option C: 1967 Plus

One house will require additional changes to meet Building Act requirements for accessibility. Additional changes to it, or to the other house could be considered to improve the functionality. These changes are best accommodated in areas that have already experienced change, or are secondary areas.

The new use of these houses as visitor accommodation requires that provision is made to allow people with disabilities to enter and use them (ie are accessible, or have accessible features). These adaptations, while not huge, have an unavoidable impact on the heritage values.

3 Proposal

As one house has to be altered to become accessible, there is one Option C) '1967 Plus' required.

However, the second house can have a different option. This would allow one house to have adaptations to allow its use by disabled visitors, while the other has a minimum of additional change. This approach of treating one house as a 'additional changes' and one for 'retain as is' has a clarity that is appealing, and is especially suitable in this case, where there are two very similar cottages.

3.1.1 '1967 Plus' House

The adaptations required are set out in the Building Act. A common means of complying with the requirements is to use the Department of Building and Housing (DBH) document which contains solutions that comply with the Act. These 'acceptable solutions' give requirements for space sizes, layouts, fittings etc. The alteration house must have sufficient space to accommodate these. Externally, a ramp is required for access, and this is best located at the rear, where the change in level is less.

As this house is going to be altered to become accessible, there is the question of whether more alteration to increase usability is acceptable. The original design had three bedrooms, however, one became a bathroom. It is desirable to have three bedrooms for visitor accommodation use, which turns the original parlour into a bedroom. This leaves only the living room for dining and sitting for all occupants (potentially six to eight people).

Hence the idea of opening up the unused ex-bathroom space, and the large laundry to the kitchen, and forming a space for a large dining table. This leaves the living room as a sitting area, which can allow some separation for visitors. Removing this wall does change the original layout, however this can be mitigated by leaving 'clues' that hint at previous uses (ie original floor coverings, old laundry sinks).

Spaces not affected by the changes above would be treated as Option B) '1967'.

3.1.2 '1967' House

We propose the Option C) '1967' approach for the remaining house. This is a practical solution, as it maintains the heritage values, while still leaving open the possibility of restoration or further change in the future. The approach would apply to the layout, and general facilities of the house. We would also take the opportunity to enhance the heritage values, by removal of paint from timber, appropriate finishes, etc. Dependant on visitor numbers, the functionality of the house may require additional sanitary facilities, or a larger living space in the future.

3.1.3 Which house?

Logic would dictate that the '1967 Plus' option is best accommodated in the house which has already had the most changes, and hence the lower heritage values. However, both houses have had changes of a relatively similar nature up to and including the 1967 alterations. The likely differences at this point is that the No.1 Keeper's House has the original layout of the laundry and back door which is missing from the No.2 Keeper's House.

However, the changes since 1967 have had most impact on the No.1 Keeper's House. In terms of fittings, the kitchen and bathroom, storeroom and laundry in the No.2 Keeper's House are authentic to the 1967 renovations. In contrast, these fittings have been replaced by 1990s versions in the No.1 Keeper's House.

The other main difference is that the timber panelling in the hall, and doors in the No.1 Keeper's House have not been painted, and hence this house is more authentic in appearance. However, paint can be removed, and this factor should perhaps not weigh strongly.

Another factor to consider is what the changes have brought to the houses, and what is most suitable for reuse? Here, we note that the No.1 Keeper's House has new kitchen units, sink and bench top, and has a lot of bench space. This makes it more suitable for reuse as part of the accessible unit.

With regard to the accessible ramp requirement, the No.2 Keeper's House would require the back porch extending to allow a wheelchair turning circle, and a large door. This is a considerable amount of change to the back porch, however this can be accommodated as the porches have little heritage value. However, there is a visual change to the exterior, as well as cost. Alternatively, the No.1 Keeper's House has no rear porch, and there would be no need to reinstate one. However, the original internal porch shown on the drawings is present, meaning that access is harder into the house due to doors close together, and the change of level would remain infilled.

3.1.4 Presentation of Houses

The above sets out the approach to the layout of the buildings. The interior finishes (colours, fittings, fixtures, and furnishings) of the houses also need consideration.

For the '1967' option we suggest that the interior finishes reflect the late 1960s. This would reuse existing colour schemes, use similar wall papers etc.

In the '1967 Plus' areas of the No.1 Keeper's House, we suggest that the finishes and fittings are of today, but with reference to the 1960s. For example, colours could be a modern version of the 1960s original.

3.2 Conclusion

Overall, the change required to make one house accessible is best accommodated in the No.1 Keeper's House, primarily because the kitchen and bathroom fittings and fixtures date from the 1990s. This lets the new accessible bathroom occur in the space that has had the most change.

This leaves the No.2 Keeper's House as the '1967' house. Here we propose that no major changes are made to the layout, or kitchen and bathroom fittings, although some

additional working space should be added to the kitchen. The solution of a kitchen table that doubles as work space and the dining table is proposed for here. This will put the room under some pressure, however we see this as an opportunity to test if this works, or if the combined kitchen/dining option in the No.1 Keeper's House is preferable. If this is deemed successful, and visitor numbers warrant it, the change can be easily accommodated in the No.2 Keeper's House at a later time.

No.1 Keeper's House is the '1967 Plus' house

No.2 Keeper's House is the '1967' house