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figure 1 gordon wilson flats, archifact architecture & conservation ltd., 2014)

gordon wilson flats
314 the terrace
wellington

heritage assessment

on behalf of

wareham cameron + co

may 2015

prepared for:

victoria university of wellington
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auckland, may 2015

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1.0 executive summary

This report is an objective and independent assessment of heritage values of the Gordon Wilson Flats development and has proved to be a finely balanced exercise in determining the level of significance for the place. The Gordon Wilson Flats are considered overall to be of **moderate** significance.

The place has architectural value for its Modernist influences as a building type that is relatively rare in the Wellington region and in the wider national context. It has **considerable** historical value for a design that is a surviving example of the work of Gordon Wilson and his team within the Ministry of Works Architectural Section, recognised as one of the most important design offices of cost effective, high density social housing during the mid-twentieth century. The Gordon Wilson Flats hold **considerable** historic and social significance in signifying the forward thinking aspirations of the State during the 1950s, and the building continued to function as a key centre of local social housing through to its closure in 2012. **Moderate** significance is recognised for its aesthetic, architectural and townscape values, with **no** functional significance and only **minor** significance attributable to scientific and technological values (archaeological significance was not assessed as part of this assessment).

The development was originally envisaged to provide economic State rental accommodation, however, the architects were challenged to provide a building at basic cost, on what was determined a difficult site. Building design was undertaken by the head office of the Ministry of Works under the leadership of Gordon F Wilson, and was of a similar design to the earlier development of the Grey's Avenue Flats, Auckland. The foundation stone for the Gordon Wilson building was laid on the 6 August 1957 with completion in 1959. Few alterations have been carried out to the building ensuring the scale, mass and layout of the original Modernist building form and integrity has not been compromised over the design conceived in the post-war years. However, engineering assessments undertaken in 2011 identified an urgent need for remedial works to the façade to such a degree that a decision was made to evacuate the residents in May 2012.

The building is formed as an 11-storeyed residential block with an externally expressed superstructure of wall and floor slabs creating a rhythm of cellular units. The Ground Floor is generally laid out with 12 bed-sitting room flats and ancillary spaces and on the floor above are a total of 75 maisonette-style flats; 70 of which cover a floor area of 64m² with two double bedrooms, whilst the remainder have one double bedroom and a single room. The foundation system devised for the project had not previously been used on any structures in New Zealand at that time and consequently the building was the subject of a structural monitoring programme by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research to measure earthquake movement.

Following the success of earlier high density developments including the Dixon Street Flats (Wellington) and Auckland's Symonds Street and Lower Greys Avenue flats (first stage), post war accommodation pressures challenged designers to develop cost effective social housing. Based on a potential template design model during the period when Modernist influences were integral to social housing design and development, the first of type was envisaged with the construction of the Upper Greys Avenue Flats (second stage) in Auckland and the subject place followed quickly thereafter. However, ongoing political and public pressures ensured that the second building to be constructed, in the form of the Gordon Wilson Flats, was also the last; so forming a premature end to the brief foray by government in the provision of high density social housing in the post-war years.

2.0 description of the place

2.1 ownership

The property is owned by the Victoria University of Wellington.

2.2 address

Gordon Wilson Flats
314 The Terrace
Wellington

2.3 legal description

Lot 1 DP 3630505

NZTM reference:

Easting: / Northing: 1748250/5427637

2.4 local authority designation

- The property is recognised on the Wellington City Council District Plan – Heritage list as: Building item 299. Refer Wellington City Council District Plan Map: 16 in *Chapter 21- Heritage Rules – Heritage List: Areas*.
- The property has not been attributed Earthquake Prone Status by Wellington City Council, however, the building has been vacant since May 2012 following evacuation due to safety concerns over falling masonry from unstable and decayed façade elements.

2.5 registration

The Gordon Wilson Flats are not registered under provisions of the Heritage New Zealand Act 2014, however, it is understood that the site was occupied prior to 1900. Therefore, the site may be defined as an archaeological site in accordance with Section 6 (a) (i) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, which recognises that places associated with human occupation prior to 1900 are by definition archaeological sites.

3.0 brief

3.1 requirements

The brief required the preparation of an objective and independent Heritage Assessment for the Gordon Wilson Flats as found and to inform ongoing investigations into options for developing the building and its site.

3.2 authors

This Conservation Plan has been prepared by Archifact - Architecture & Conservation Limited. The authors have been Adam Wild and Andy O'Neil.

3.3 methodology

This assessment of heritage values pays regard to the terms adopted and taken from a selection of criteria included in Section 66 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. This section of the Act lists criteria used in qualifying the inclusion of a place on the New Zealand Heritage List administered by Heritage New Zealand. Criteria from this list used in this report include the following values and a short description of these follows below:

A – Aesthetic:

Considering the formal qualities of the fabric and setting: the form, scale, materials, space etc. Assessment of the space or its parts demonstrating aesthetic significance or contribution to the overall integrity of the design of the place.

B – Archaeological:

The degree to which the space can be said to have an archaeological potential.

C – Architectural:

Addressing the design and architectural aspects of the place. Assessment of the space demonstrating those particular characteristics of a school of design.

D – Functional

The contribution of the function of the place that can be assessed as having cultural heritage significance.

E – Historical:

The ability to demonstrate an association with persons, ideas or events. Included in this section are the histories of all the other criteria considered.

F – Scientific:

Concerned with the importance of the place as evidence and with the physical survival of that evidence in the building fabric. Scientific value is the potential to provide information about past human activity. This may encompass technology, archaeology, philosophy, custom, taste and usage as well as technique or material.

G – Social:

The notion of a spiritual, traditional, political, national, or any other cultural sentiment expressed by a group.

H – Technological:

Assessment of the demonstration of particular characteristics of a building technique or craft.

I – Townscape:

An assessment of the 'Townscape Value' or the contribution of the space to its greater context.

3.4 constraints

This heritage assessment has been based on information available at the time. A site visit was conducted on Thursday 18 December 2014. Free and open access to the majority of the place and its site surrounds has been made available. However, due to safety concerns a defined secure perimeter had been placed around the base of the building which prevented close inspection of any external element at ground floor level. It was not possible to access any of the ground floor flats, the southern glazed stairwell or the section of roof containing the boiler house facilities.

4.0 development history

4.1 early settlement

The formation of The Terrace dates back to the beginning of formal colonial settlement of the Wellington region in 1840. The Terrace is located towards the western boundary of the Te Aro Valley through which once ran the Te Aro Stream (Wai Mapihi) and is situated on a hillside at the edge of the Te Ara Flat on land leading to the sea. The hillside was described as being filled with "*detritus of slips and deposits from small streams,*"¹ whilst the lower levels of the Flat were "*covered with fern and flax: and being bog from Courtenay Place to Basin Reserve.*"²

The topography of the hill-enclosed harbour city resulted in early housing development being grouped along the beach. Plans for sub-division were quickly developed, however, these early schemes were relatively short-lived. Early settlers experienced regular minor earthquakes until two significant events in 1848 and 1855. The 1848 quake is recorded as causing widespread damage to brick masonry structures in the area and as a result later buildings were initially mostly constructed from wood, however, the second earthquake in 1855 caused significant deformation and uplift of the land around the shore.³ Manners Street and Lambton Quay were no longer waterfront roads and additional land had been created between Lambton Quay and the sea. Consequently, early subdivision surveys of the area were subject to extensive remodelling to accommodate additional available land⁴ and as the port grew, residential development began to spread up the valley sides; graduating from small shops on the landward side of Lambton Quay to larger houses....

4.2 site and building development

In the early subdivision of land in the Wellington settlement much of the area behind the foreshore was divided into one-acre lots which were granted to settlers who had already bought farms of over 100 acres in the outlying districts.⁵ This size of lot was sufficient for the landowner to build a townhouse with associated horse paddocks to which they could reside when away from the country and the 'town-acre' arrangement was particularly prevalent along the Terrace, where grand four or five level timber dwellings lined the hillside.⁶

With the particularly restrictive topography of Wellington came pressures to provide sufficient land for housing and this need became particularly prevalent following the transfer of Governance from Auckland to Wellington in 1865.⁷ These pressures continued into the early part of the twentieth century but became more acute following the end of the Second World War with returning servicemen seeking a new start to life.

As of 3 February 1943, the subject site was one of the few remaining large blocks in the residential part of the city and at this time was purchased by the Government for housing purposes for approximately £14,000. The site comprised a little over two acres and was considered for many years one of the beauty spots of the city. At the time of purchase by the Government, it contained two houses; with the smaller of the two recognised as being one of the oldest dwellings in the city. This property was constructed by Mr R. R. Strang in the early 1840s and it was his daughter who married Sir Donald McLean; with Sir R. D. D. McLean being born in the house and enforcing the family link with the site. The larger of the houses on the site was used as the city residence by Sir R. D. D. McLean⁸ and remained so until the death of Lady McLean.

¹ The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, Vol, 28, No. 1, February 1961, J, Serial No.222

² Ward, L., E., 1991, Early Wellington.

³ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/4433/eyewitness-account-of-the-1855-earthquake>

⁴ Chao, S., 2005, Where Fashion Sold for Less

⁵ McLeod, N.L. and Farland, G.H, 1970., Wellington Prospect, p169

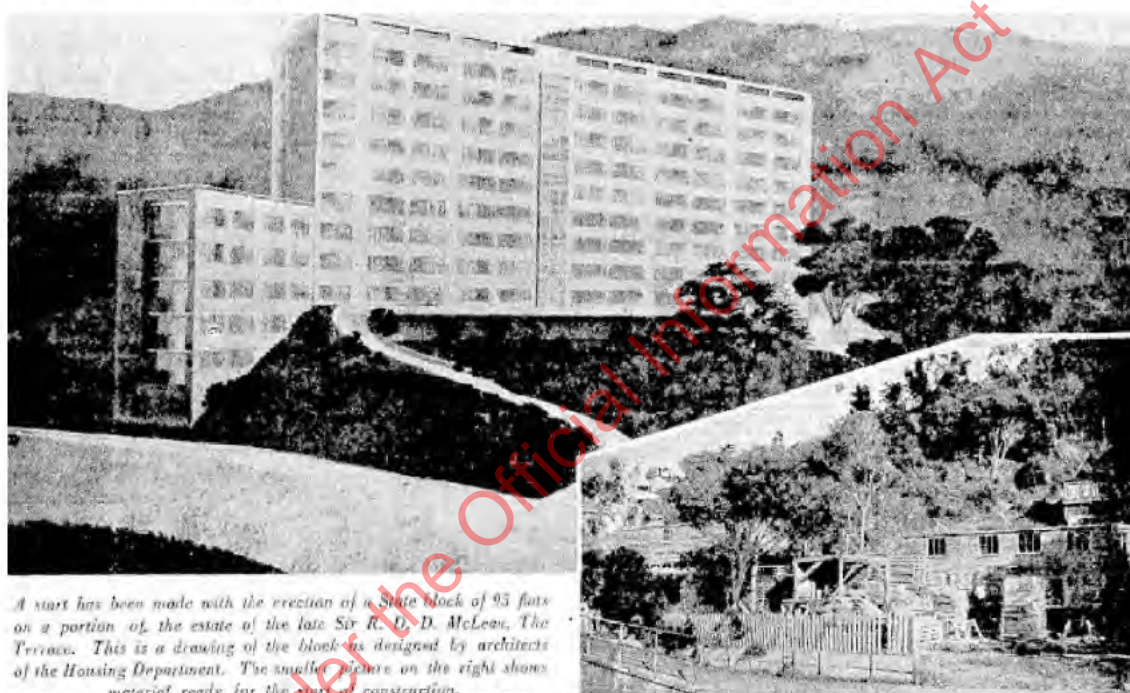
⁶ Fowler, M., 1981, Wellington, Wellington., A History, P12

⁷ Ibid, p14

⁸ Papers Past, Evening Post, Volume CXXXV, Issue 28, 3 February 1943, P3

The first stage of development on the former Sir R. D. D. McLean estate was secured by a New Plymouth development firm and was to be undertaken in stages with construction beginning in 1943 with a five-storey block of 14 flats. This first block was to serve as a hostel for women of the armed forces (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and Women's Auxiliary Air Force) stationed in Wellington and then a second stage was proposed for a later date in the form of a nine storey block.⁹

The first stage was nearing completion in May 1944 and was expected to be occupied by June of that year. The women at that time had been stationed on the site in old wooden buildings on the area of land that was to form the second stage of development. Those buildings were renovated and turned into two large flats for large families and were also scheduled for occupation in June, although these buildings were scheduled for demolition once the second stage large block was built.¹⁰ It was unknown at that stage however, when the next stage would be implemented although early designs had been developed in conjunction with the McLean State Flats.



A start has been made with the erection of a State block of 95 flats on a portion of the estate of the late Sir R. D. D. McLean, The Terrace. This is a drawing of the block as designed by architects of the Housing Department. The smaller picture on the right shows material ready for the start of construction.

Figure 2. Image taken from the Evening post dating to 5 May 1943. This image shows a perspective sketch of the proposed erection of a State block of 95 flats and is attributed to Ernst Plischke. The proposal was formed from two individual elements, with the smaller block representing the Mclean State Flats that constituted the first phase of the development and was built between 1943 and 1944. Note the design of the larger scale principal block encompasses design cues similar to those incorporated in the Dixon Street flats (constructed 1943). (Source: Papers Past: Evening Post, Volume CXXXV, Issue 105, 5 May 1943).

The original design for the second stage of multi-unit flats on the McLean site featured similar design cues to the Dixon Street Flats, which were situated a short distance to the east and developed in line with well-established Modernist concepts from the United States and Europe. A perspective sketch of the proposed scheme for the McLean and Terrace Flats dating to 1942 has been attributed to Ernst Plischke who worked under Gordon Wilson as Chief Architect. The sketch reveals that the original design for the Gordon Wilson Flats was reflective of the Dixon Street Flats, which were under construction at the time this sketch was produced. However, his involvement in the McLean site scheme from that point is unclear, as professional conflict between Gordon Wilson and Plischke became intolerable.¹¹ Consequently Plischke left the Architectural Section in 1942 and transferred to another department as head of

⁹ Papers Past, Auckland Star, Volume LXXIV, Issue 94, 21 April 1943, P2

¹⁰ Evening post, Volume CXXXVII, Issue 117, 19 May 1944, P4.

¹¹ Wellington City Council, Heritage Report, May 2012, Gordon Wilson Flats, 320 The Terrace.

Community Planning.¹² Therefore, this relocation is likely to have removed Plischke's involvement in the development of the building from that point.

What is clear is that the length of time between the implementation of the staged construction resulted in a change of design emphasis that reflected the evolving Modernist Style of architecture and government budget limitations. With the new design, gone was the monolithic form and central vertical glazed stairwell, and in was a lighter building both in terms of construction techniques and living environment, with the building alignment orientated further towards the north-south axis to maximise the daily exposure of each unit to the sun and to views of the surrounding city and harbour. Much emphasis was also placed on ensuring high quality building services that together with the light and airy environment provided characteristics the designers hoped would not repeat issues inherently recognised within the slum conditions of multi-level developments in Europe.

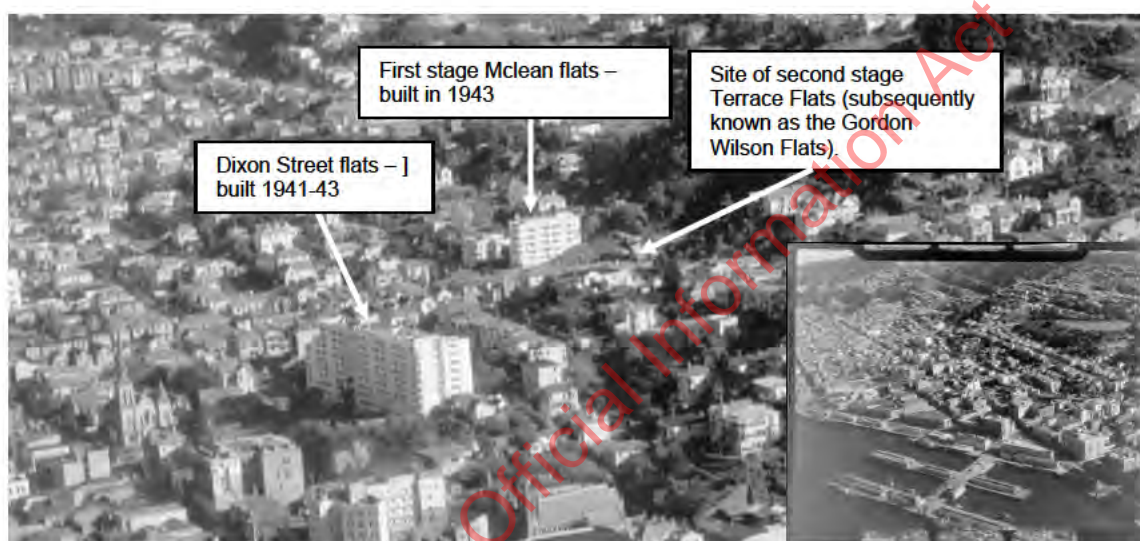


Figure 3. Extract image (see full aerial inset) showing the site in 1947 with the Stage 1 Mclean State flats completed, the context with the Stage 2 site and the Dixon Street flats. (Source: Wellington City central business district with Queens Wharf in foreground, looking to The Terrace and the suburbs of Kelburn and Brooklyn beyond. Whites Aviation Ltd: Photographs. Ref: WA-07187-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/30662143>).

The Gordon Wilson Flats was envisaged to provide economic State rental accommodation, however, the designers were challenged to provide a building at basic cost, on what was determined a difficult site. With regard to the building layout, the Architects and engineers devised a solution to reduce costs that included accommodation in the form of bed-sitting rooms at Ground level with the remainder of the building featuring two-bedroom maisonettes.¹³

It is also noted that the Department of Housing Construction and the Ministry of Works and Development actively sought out new ideas for new materials and systems of construction that would potentially speed up the supply of houses or reduce costs. In particular, experiments were undertaken in various methods of construction in poured concrete, concrete blocks and brickwork.¹⁴ Whether such materials or practices were applied to the construction of the subject building is not known at this stage, however, it has been identified that the foundation design chosen for the works was in a format not previously employed in New Zealand.¹⁵

¹² Samitz, A., Ottillinger, E., B., 2004, Ernst Plischke: Modern Architecture for the New World: The Complete Works.

¹³ The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, Vol, 28, No. 1, February 1961, J, Serial No.222

¹⁴ Firth, C., Wilson, G., F., 1949, State Housing in New Zealand, Ministry of Works Wellington, New Zealand

¹⁵ The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, Vol, 28, No. 1, February 1961, J, Serial No.222

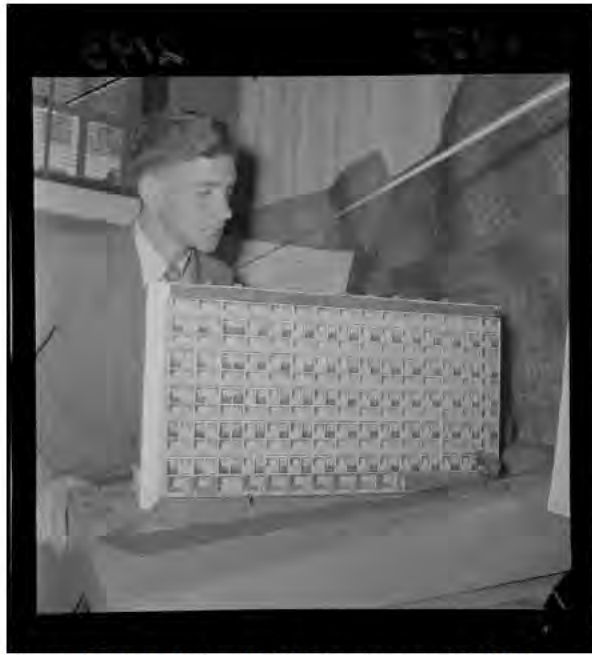


Figure 4. Image dating to 1955 showing a model of the proposed Terrace Flats multi-storey flat development in Wellington. (Source Ref: Unidentified man with architectural model of Gordon Wilson Flats, a State Advances Corporation housing block, at housing exhibition, Drapery and General Importing Company of New Zealand Ltd gallery. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP/1955/2193-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23023267>



Figure 5. Looking at the foundation stone for the Gordon Wilson Flats laid on the 6 August 1957. (Archifact Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

The Gordon Wilson building itself was designed by the head office of the Ministry of Works under the leadership of Gordon F. Wilson, and was of a similar design to the recently completed block in Grey's Avenue, Auckland. The construction supervision was carried out by the Wellington District Office¹⁶ and the project builders were Downer and Company Ltd and McKenzie Thomson Hoskins Ltd.¹⁷ The foundation stone for the building was laid on the 6 August 1957 by the Hon. Dean J. Eyre, minister of Housing.

Unfortunately, Gordon Wilson passed away during the later stages of the construction period and in recognition of his work, the building was subsequently renamed The Gordon Wilson Flats in his honour and completed in 1959.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Foundation stone text



Figure 6. Gordon Wilson Flats under construction, The Terrace, Wellington. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP/1957/0397-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23171607>



Figure 7. Terrace flats under construction, The Terrace, Wellington. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP/1957/4364-1-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23246983>



Figure 7. Aerial image dating to 4 February 1958 showing the Gordon Wilson Flats under construction on The Terrace. (Source: Gordon Wilson Flats (Wellington). Gordon Wilson Flats under construction on The Terrace, Wellington. Dominion post (Newspaper) :Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post and Dominion newspapers. Ref: EP Industry- Housing-State-02. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22299856>).

The building served its original purpose as State Housing through to 2012 with only a few modifications undertaken up to 2011, at which time a programme of repair works and modifications were initiated to upgrade the accommodation. The proposed works were to be undertaken in two phases, with the first phase involving the replacement of the stairwell glazing systems, repair of the membrane roof, the replacement of the service stairs and general repair and maintenance work.¹⁸

The initial phase was budgeted at a cost of \$1.3 million but due to additional works this rose to a final cost of \$1.5 million. The second phase was initiated, however, significant decay of the structural façade was identified at that stage and works were halted. Engineering assessment of the building identified urgent need for remedial works to the façade and that there was a significant risk of sections of the façade becoming detached in the event of an earthquake or strong winds.¹⁹

Consequently, a decision was made to evacuate the residents, and in May 2012 they were given just one week's notice given to find alternative accommodation. Housing New Zealand considered a number of options regarding the future of the building but eventually sold the site to Victoria University in September 2014.²⁰

4.3 multi-unit state housing in new zealand

Efforts to address housing shortages and poor living conditions were undertaken by various New Zealand authorities from the time of the earliest days of Colonial settlement, with the initial efforts of both New Zealand Company officials and provincial governments focussing on providing barrack accommodation for new arrivals. However, it was not until the early 1900s when Central Government first recognised concern over the standard of housing in the main cities, areas of which were rapidly descending into slum-like conditions.

Various schemes were conceived to address the issues; with a mixture of state erected dwellings and offers of low-interest loans for land-owning workers, although successive governments had conflicting viewpoints on the appropriateness of such schemes. However, by the end of the 1920s the state was financing half of all new homes built in New Zealand.

In 1935 the then Labour Government introduced the Housing Survey Act which provided information on the existing living conditions within the main towns and cities. The survey revealed that the condition of housing for poor income families was acute with poor sanitation and lack of cooking facilities. Consequently the government developed plans in 1936 to build 5,000 State House rental properties that would offer a standard of accommodation that was *"at least up to the standard of, and preferably better than, the houses inhabited by ordinary typical citizens.....and in no circumstances were the same designs to be used to such an extent that they would be labelled as "Government mass-produced houses."*²¹ In light of the extensive nature of the programme, a new department of Housing Construction was formed to oversee the works.²² *The programme was aimed at low - to - middle income families - partly to encourage breeding,*²³ and the first State House under the new scheme was constructed in 1937 at 12 Fife Lane, Miramar, Wellington.²⁴ By 1939 the houses were being erected across the country at the rate of 57 each week.²⁵

¹⁸ Wellington City Council, Heritage Report, May 2012, Gordon Wilson Flats, 320 The Terrace.

¹⁹ Stuff.co.nz, Dominion post. 03 April 2014, *More Than \$1m To Upgrade Now-Empty Flats.*

²⁰ Stuff.co.nz, Dominion post. 12 September 2014, *Quake - Prone flats sold to University.*

²¹ Firth, C and Wilson, G. F., 1949, *State Housing in New Zealand*, Ministry of Works Wellington, New Zealand.

²² <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/housing-and-government/page-2>

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/we-call-it-home/first-state-house>

²⁵ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/housing-and-government/page-2>

The ideal housing standard for New Zealanders was considered at that time to constitute building in detached formation, however, it was already being recognised by planners that suburbs were spreading uncontrollably and some considered that the open plan layout required for detached housing was “*unsatisfactory aesthetically*.”²⁶ Much discussion over the previous years had centred on the merits of houses over multi-unit accommodation and New Zealanders studied with interest the experiences encountered of both types in Europe and the United States. In particular, concerns over serious overcrowding in the Wellington context led to suggestions that flats could be seen as the ideal solution to the pressing issues.

The argument in favour of flats primarily centred on their supposed ability to do away with overcrowding of the inner areas of cities where land is expensive.²⁷ However, many considered that previous examples of multi-unit social housing lacked planning, were little more than rooms rather than dwellings,²⁸ had poor standards of light and air and external space, and were often associated with tall barrack-like structures offering poor appearance.²⁹

The newly formed Department of Housing Construction under the leadership of Gordon F Wilson, sought to address the negative connotations by planning centrally situated multi-unit accommodation that were close to the centre of town and places of employment. The first of the new multi-unit developments was erected in Wellington, although this development was situated a few kilometres from the centre of the City and became known as the Berhampore Flats (originally called the Centennial Flats). This medium density development was designed by Gordon Wilson and constituted one of the first examples of Modernism in New Zealand³⁰ with monolithic form, sharp angles and clean lines of bold horizontal elements formed by windows and balconies, broken by strong vertical forms such as stairwells.

The Second World War placed further pressure on the development of social housing provision within New Zealand, both through delays on construction projects due to priorities placed on defence work and then the subsequent need to house returning servicemen. Towards the end of 1944 a total of 2276 State rental houses and flats had been allotted to returned servicemen, widows of servicemen and to wives of prisoners of war throughout New Zealand. In Wellington alone, 742 houses and flats had been allotted to returned men by that date³¹

Multi-unit development in the cities was considered to be important to the economy of the country, although the then Labour Government continued to prove reluctant in building city flats as opposed to urban housing³². This type of development retained the stigma of overcrowded slum from experiences overseas so the need for well-designed flats was required to counter those views and to offer accommodation that provided good light, air, amenities and spaciousness. Following in the success of the Berhampore Flats, plans were put into place to construct high-density multi-storey accommodation in both Wellington and Auckland and by 1941 the Government’s first high-density multi-unit development was underway in the form of the Dixon Flats, Wellington.

Completed in 1944, this ten storey structure provided 115 one-bedroom flats that were intended for couples and single people and was New Zealand’s first multi-unit slab apartment block. It was designed by staff from the Department of Housing

²⁶ Firth, C and Wilson, G. F., 1949, *State Housing in New Zealand*, Ministry of Works Wellington, New Zealand, p14

²⁷ *PapersPast-Evening Post*, Volume CXXI, Issue 75, 28 March 1936, P14

²⁸ *PapersPast-New Zealand Herald*, Volume LXXV, Issue 23202, 23 November 1938, P15

²⁹ Firth, C and Wilson, G. F., 1949, *State Housing in New Zealand*, Ministry of Works Wellington, New Zealand.

³⁰ Schrader, B, 2005, *We Call It Home: A History of State Housing*.

³¹ *Evening Post*, Volume CXXXVIII, Issue 125, 23 November 1944, p8

³² Schrader, B, 2005, *We Call It Home: A History of State Housing*.

Construction (the Department merged into the Ministry of Works and Development in 1943³³), with the work overseen by Gordon Wilson. Of note, the plans for the Dixon Street block indicate that up to sixteen staff were involved in the design process to some degree including notable architects such as Ernst Plischke, however, the extent of his involvement with the building design is questionable³⁴

The scheme paid regard to both American and European Modernist precedents and its prominent location with its significant scale, soon proved to be a major element in the Wellington landscape. Similar development was planned a short distance from the Dixon Street Flats with the acquisition of the McLean site in 1943 and construction of the first stage of a two-stage development was completed in 1944. The next multi-storey housing development was proposed for the Auckland region with two sites selected in close proximity; Symonds Street and Grey's Avenue. The design for these projects continued in with Modernist influences and the design of the Symonds Street Flats was attributed to Friedrich Newman, although his work was conducted through the Department of Housing Construction which was essentially overseen by Gordon Wilson.

The Greys Avenue development was part of a planned programme of slum clearance; a condition which had blighted that part of Auckland for many years and the Auckland City Council contributed finance to purchase the land. The scheme design was attributed to Gordon Wilson and the Ministry of Works and Development with initial proposals submitted to erect a total of 486 units throughout Greys Avenue although initial construction was delayed due to the Second World War. Ultimately, when the decision to proceed with the project was taken the scale of the development proved too ambitious in light of the post-war financial restrictions and only the Symonds Street Flats and four blocks of the Greys Avenue Flat development was completed. Both sites were opened on the same day in 1947.

Further development of both the Grey's Avenue site in Auckland and the McLean site in Wellington was delayed due to post-war construction costs being prohibitively high³⁵ and it was not until the advent of economic recovery of the early 1950s that a decision was made to proceed with the second stages of both projects. By the time of that decision, the original design of the Greys Avenue Flats was considered to be outdated and proposals were put in place to redesign the second (southern) stage. Research was undertaken into producing a building that was cost effective yet provided a good standard of accommodation and amenities. The resultant multi-level unit featured a design encompassing evolved Modernist influences and included 70 two-bedroom maisonettes and sixteen bed-sits. The building was opened on 9 August 1957 by the Minister of Housing, Dean Eyre.³⁶ Once completed, the designers had produced a building that was both lighter in structural mass and featured improved daylight transmission through the use of extensive glazed elements.

The new model of high density housing was potentially envisaged to form a template for future development; saving costs both in planning and construction. However, the view remained in Government that blocks of flats represented a European model of urbanism that was at odds with the suburban nature of the general New Zealand condition. Reinforcing this perception, applications from prospective tenants for suburban State houses were noted as continuously outnumbering those for city flats and all subsequent State flats were designed to be small-scale and low-rise.³⁷

³³ Samitz, A., Ottillinger, E., B., 2004, Ernst Plischke: Modern Architecture for the New World: The Complete Works.

³⁴ Gately, J, 2008, Long Live the Modern, New Zealand's Architecture 1904-1984.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Auckland City Council Listed Buildings/places/ Objects History Checklist, 12 December 1995.

³⁷ Schrader, B, 2005, We Call It Home: A History of State Housing.

5.0 description and physical condition

5.1 location map

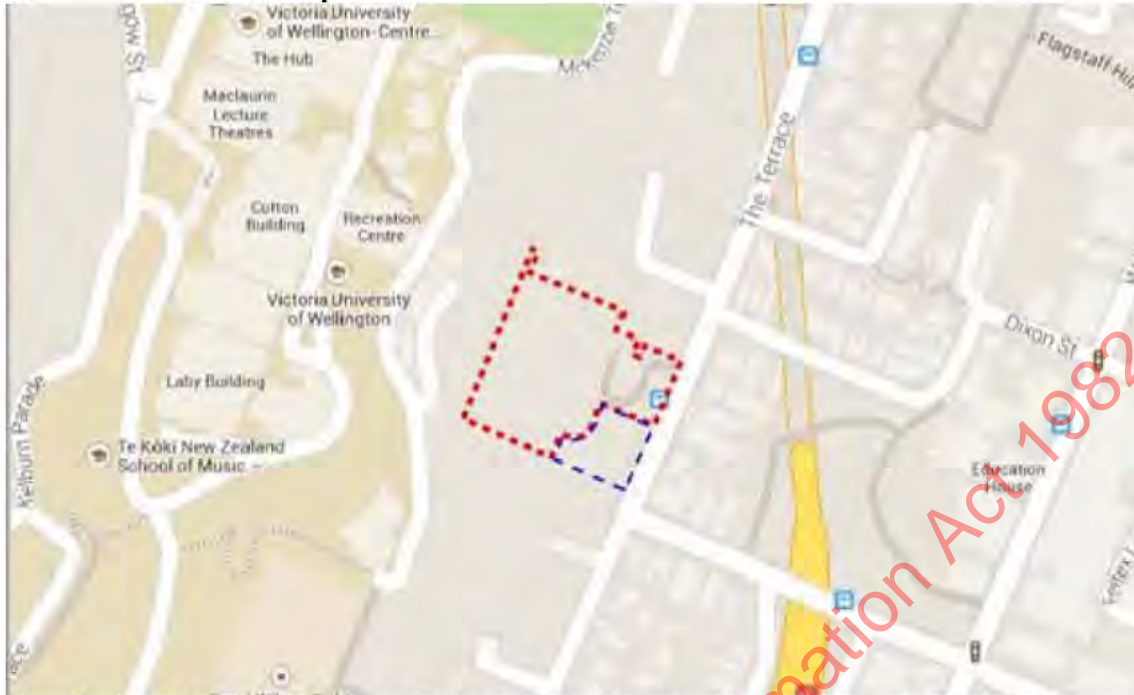


Figure 8. Aerial photo from 2014 showing the location of, and boundary of the subject property. The boundary for the Gordon Wilson flats is delineated with a dashed line in red. The dashed line in blue indicates the site boundary of the McLean State flats. (Google Maps, 2014).

5.2 site

The Terrace is one of the main thoroughfares in the city of Wellington, running in a generally north-south direction. It begins at the crossroad junction with Bowen St and Museum St to the north and terminates at the corner of Abel Smith St to the south.

The subject site encompassing 314 The Terrace is located on the north-western site of the street, close to the T-junctions with Macdonald Crescent and Ghuznee Street. This section of The Terrace slopes downwards in a north/south direction and contains predominantly residential buildings. The site encompasses an area of approximately 0.7 hectares and is identified as Lot 1 DP 363050, whilst the topography of the site is generally formed by the steep hillside that rises away from the flat land of the Te Aro valley. The subject building is located in the approximate centre of a terrace of land carved into the side of the hill and set back from the street side by approximately 40m.

The site is accessed from The Terrace via a winding driveway which leads to a hardstand carpark that was originally for use of residents only. Mature trees and metal fencing of approximately 2m in height are situated along the site boundary, partially screening the subject building from view of the street. Due to the significant height of the subject building, it is clearly visible from the surround area. To the rear of the site, the land is populated by mature vegetation and rises steeply away to the west and the McLean State Flats are located in close proximity to the subject building on land lying directly towards the south-east aspect.



Figure 9. Image showing 1892 survey map extract of Wellington with the subject site highlighted in red and the shadow footprint of the Gordon Wilson State Flats overlaid on that of the 1892 building outlines (Wellington City Council, GIS Viewer, 2014).



Figure 10. Looking along the entrance driveway leading to the eastern aspect of the Gordon Wilson building. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014).



Figure 11. Looking north towards the Mclean State Flats from the junction of Ghuznee Street and The Terrace. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014).



Figure 12. Looking east towards the Gordon Wilson building from the junction of Macdonald Crescent and The Terrace. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014).



Figure 13. Looking north-west towards the Gordon Wilson building from the junction of Ghuznee Street with Willis Street. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014).



Figure 14. Looking north-west towards the Gordon Wilson building from Willis Street. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014).



Figure 15. Looking north-west towards the Gordon Wilson building from the junction of Victoria Street with Ghuznee Street. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014).



Figure 16. Looking west towards the Gordon Wilson building with the harbour in the distance (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 17. Looking west towards the Gordon Wilson building with the city context in the background. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

5.3 structure

The subject property identified as 314 The Terrace sits on a hillside site overlooking Te Aro. The hillside is noted as originally being filled with “*detritus slips and deposits from small streams combined into a heterogeneous mixture of clays and silts....to a depth of some 40ft.*” The hillside was therefore recognised as a difficult site on which to erect a multi-storey building and it was determined that the foundations for such a building would require piles bored to a sufficient depth in order to meet firm bedrock.

The system of piling devised for the project had not previously been used on any structures in New Zealand at that time. The process involved boring the pile holes, then placing reinforcement before adding a dry-mix of concrete aggregate. The final process involved injecting a fluid grout mixture, and once poured, the piles were left to set for a few months. The centre piles were bored to a depth of 48ft, reducing to 20ft at the ends of the block, which were located on two rock outcrops extending back to the main ridgeline, whilst a proportion the piles were raked to improve structural stability. Further structural support was provided along the western side of the building through a set of short buttresses that acted as stiffening members. These buttresses anchored the structure to the pile heads and rose vertically to the third floor level of the building.

As a result of the inherent time delay required to allow the piles to set before loading commenced, the building process required a novel construction method to be adopted, and instead of the building being erected floor by floor, a plan was developed to erect the building in a diagonal sequence to suit the varying setting times of the varying pile lengths.

The 11 storey structure is configured in a cellular format and considerable building weight was saved through a two storey arrangement of the units, with the dividing floors formed from 5 inch thick concrete and the intermediate floors being constructed of timber. Due to the slender nature of the structure, the building was stiffened longitudinally with a central spine wall 9 inches thick and diagonally reinforced. Openings through this wall were staggered and 8 inch thick transverse walls divided each unit.

As the construction methods were unusual in the context of New Zealand at that time, the building was also the subject of a structural monitoring programme by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research³⁸ to measure earthquake movement.

³⁸ Shepherd, R. and Wood, J., H., April 1963, The Dynamic Design of Earthquake-Resistant Structures

This type of system was considered common practice overseas at that time and enabled monitoring and measurement of earthquake movements and the resulting strain in the building materials. Strain gauges and motion accelerators were installed within the building with the aim to determine *“the natural period of vibration and to get the modal shapes,”* and the resultant data collected provided interesting data sets. Of note, the data contributed to an understanding that *“with relatively symmetrical structures there could be a considerable amount of torsional effect.”*³⁹

Recent searches of the building have, however, failed to locate any surviving monitoring equipment and the whereabouts of any data obtained by that equipment through the monitoring process is also unknown at this time. However, modern analyses by structural engineers of the appropriateness of the methods used to establish the foundations have suggested that the method employed is questionable for reliability in a seismic context.

Other measures to counter seismic activity included strengthening the detached lift tower with alternate access links, and by stabilising the surrounding hillside with crib walling. The crib walling required to stabilise the excavated face of the hillside rose approximately 60 feet behind the structure and each level was set back 4 feet horizontally and 8 feet vertically.⁴⁰

5.4 exterior

The subject building is an 11-storeyed residential block with an externally expressed superstructure of wall and floor slabs creating a rhythm of cellular units. Main access to the flats is via an open area to the northeast corner of the building; currently with use of a steel shipping container to protect visitors from any falling debris that is the result of advanced decay of reinforced concrete façade elements. A secure perimeter has been set up around the base of the building to prevent access within 5.0m of the façade.

The in-fill panels forming the façade consist of pre-cast slabs divided by, and supported by, precast concrete posts. Above each panel on the eastern elevation, a line of rectilinear timber framed windows combine with the panels below to form defined horizontal bands, but these are also subtly divided vertically with finer lines of the superstructure. This façade is punctuated at each unit by a single width balcony; the fronts of which are formed from vitreous enamelled metal panels framed with tubular steel members.

On the western elevation, the horizontal emphasis appears more defined due to a negative detail formed by the alternating layers of open balconies that provide pedestrian access to each unit. In a similar manner to the eastern side, this elevation also features a subtle vertical subdivision formed by the expressed superstructure, however, the vertical sub-division over the first three levels is emphasised by buttressing that ties the structure to the foundations.

Apartments at ground floor level are boarded up to prevent access to the interior, but it is noted that these are detailed in a different manner than the levels above with brick panelled fronts supporting timber framed window and door sets. Small flights of steps with cantilevered cover provide secondary access routes into the ground floor apartments at the rear, western side of the building. Some planting features to the front of the ground floor apartments, although this is now largely unkempt and overgrown.

Glazed stairwells define the north and south ends of the building and these are positioned at the north-western and south-eastern corners. These provide a link to

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, Vol, 28, No. 1, February 1961, J, Serial No.222

each level of the building as does the detached lift tower that is located at the northern end of the western elevation. The lift shaft is connected to the main structure by alternating levels of access lobbies that intersect with the open balconies. The stairwells and lift also provide access to the roof area that provided laundry facilities along the length of the roof. The roof area is bounded by painted fence formed from timber and steel although it is difficult to observe this feature from the street level.

Originally, the building was presented with a carefully considered colour scheme of grey, green and red elements that was designed to express the individual structural and non-structural façade elements. The original colour scheme included light grey for the end walls, the in-situ structural walls floor slabs; whilst dark grey was utilised for the precast posts, slabs and soffits over balconies and a pale green coated the horizontal wall slabs. The single balcony fronts were finished in alternate colours of blue and light red and the double balcony fronts were very dark brown. On the roof, the trellis fence which bounded the perimeter was light grey, and all window trim was in white.⁴¹

The building now features a slightly reduced colour palette, of graded panels ranging from dark blue at the lower apartments to pale blue at the top of the building. The exposed structure remains expressed with painted white so that it further enhances the building's cellular appearance. However, there is evidence of extensive decay of both structural and secondary components and consequently the general condition of the external elevations is considered to be poor.



Figure 18. Looking at the north end of the building with the glazed access stairwell set on the north-east corner of the building. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 19. Looking up at the glazed elevation of the northern stairwell. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 20. Looking south towards the lift tower and its junction with the west elevation. (Archifactor-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

⁴¹ The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, Vol, 28, No. 1, February 1961, J, Serial No.222
2015-05-06__2141007- heritage assessment-final
314 the terrace, wellington



Figure 21. Looking north at the left tower and its junction with the west elevation.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 22. Looking south along the western elevation. Note the slender buttresses that act as stiffening members anchoring the structure to the pile heads.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 23. Looking north along the western elevation. Note the slender buttresses on the right of the image that act as stiffening members anchoring the structure to the pile heads.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 24. Looking at the upper levels of the southern end of the building with the glazed access stairwell set onto the south-west corner of the building.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 25. Looking at the southern end of the building's eastern elevation.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 26. Looking at the lower levels of the eastern elevation. Note the Ground Floor level apartments are boarded over preventing access into the interior.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 27. Looking at the northern end of the eastern elevation. Note the steel shipping container slotted into the main entrance to protect visitors from falling debris. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 28. Looking at the main entrance wall entrance signage. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 29. Looking south along the open roof deck. Note the laundry and storage rooms to the left of the image. Also note the flue serving the buildings boiler house. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

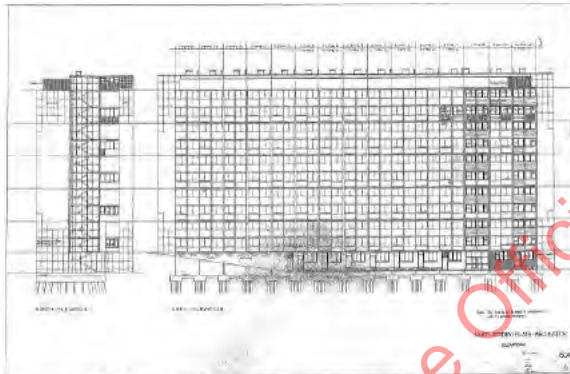


Figure 30. North and East elevations for the proposed State Flats dating to July 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).

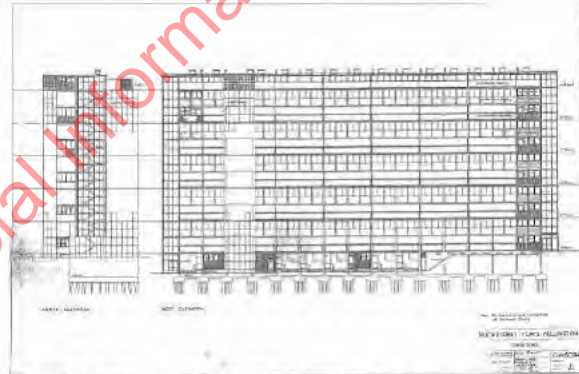


Figure 31. South and West elevations for the proposed State Flats dating to July 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).

5.5 interior

The Ground Floor of the building is generally laid out with 12 bed-sitting room flats but also incorporates the main entrance and lift lobby, a caretaker's office, waste disposal and storage areas. Above this level there are a total of 75 maisonette style flats; 70 of which cover a floor area of 64m² with two double bedrooms, whilst the remainder have one double bedroom and a single in each. On entering each flat a short hallway leads to a kitchen immediately to the right and onwards to a living area. This space features large windows with views spreading out across the city and a further doorway leading out to a small balcony area. A set of stairs leads from this space to the first floor area that contains the two bedrooms and a bathroom.

Glazed stairwells set at each end of the building provide access to each of five balconies and then on to individual flat entrances. There are two lifts that also link the main ground floor entrance to the balconies and these as well as the stairwells continue to roof level where laundry and storage facilities are provided. The stairwells also contain access hatches for building services with metering and electrical panels for each flat.

It is noted that a number of the interior spaces are displaying a degree of fabric decay and this is particularly apparent throughout the lower levels of the building where water ingress is causing areas of mould growth and efflorescence. Overall, the interior spaces are however, considered to be in a fair condition.

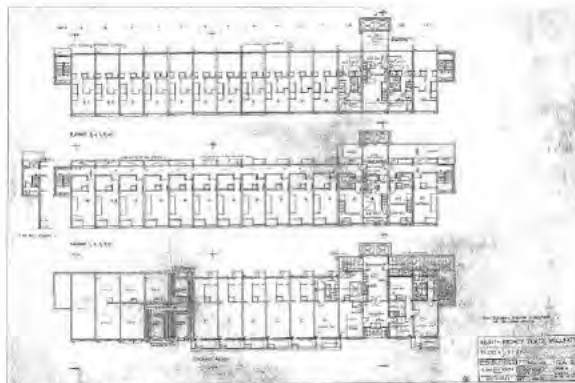


Figure 32. Floor plans for the proposed State Flats dating to August 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).

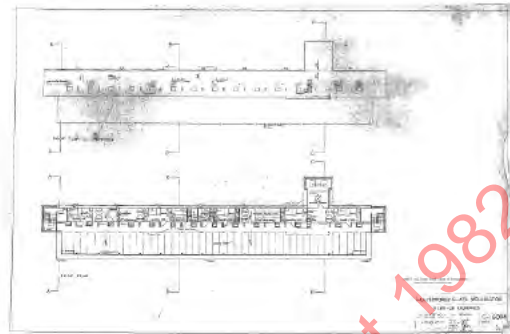


Figure 33. Roof and Laundry plans for the proposed State Flats dating to July 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).



Figure 34. Type A floor plans for the proposed State Flats dating to July 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).

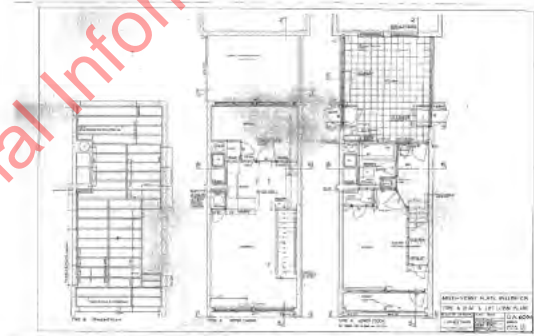


Figure 35. Type B floor plans (smaller second bedroom and reorganised living area) for the proposed State Flats dating to July 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).

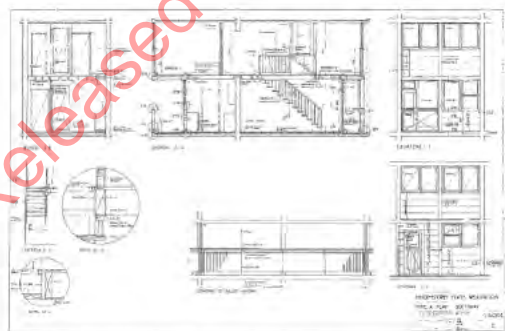


Figure 36. Type A sections for the proposed State Flats dating to August 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).



Figure 37. Type C floor plans (Ground Level bed-sits) for the proposed State Flats dating to July 1954. Note these plans are considered to include approval initials of Gordon Wilson. (Source: Wareham Cameron Co, 2014).



Figure 38. Looking at the main entrance lobby at Ground Floor level. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 39. Looking at the stainless steel letterbox array within the main entrance lobby. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 40. Looking at the main passenger lift entrance lobby at Ground Floor level. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 41. Looking at a typical stairwell positioned at the north and south ends of the building. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 42. Looking at a typical entrance doorway leading to the balcony walkways. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 43. Looking north along a typical balcony walkway providing access to flats. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 44. Looking south along a typical walkway. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 45. Looking into a typical junction along the walkway that leads into lift lobby for that level. (Archifac-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 46. Looking at a typical lift lobby.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 47. Looking at a typical set of lift doors.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 48. Looking at a typical entrance doorway for the flats.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 49. Looking at the western elevation of a typical flat.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 50. Looking at a typical entrance hallway leading in to a flat.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 51. Looking at a typical kitchen.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

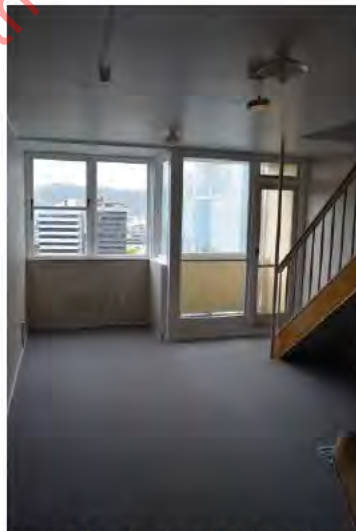


Figure 52. Looking at a typical living room.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 53. Looking at a typical set of stairs within the living room rising to the first floor level.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 54. Looking at a typical balcony enclosure. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 55. Looking out towards a typical balcony that serves each of the flats. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 56. Looking at a typical east side bedroom. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 57. Looking at a typical east side bedroom. Note damp patch with mould growth on the external wall. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 58. Looking at a typical bathroom. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 59. Looking at a typical west side bedroom. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

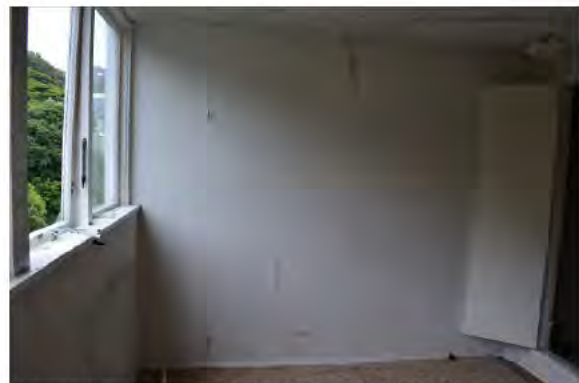


Figure 60. Looking at a typical west side bedroom. (Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 61. A typical view from an apartment looking towards the east.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 62. A typical view from an apartment looking towards the McLean Flats which are situated at the southern end of the site.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 63. A typical view from an apartment looking towards the west. Note the Victoria University of Wellington buildings lining the ridge.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 64. A typical view from an apartment looking towards the south-west.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 65. Looking at the laundry and storage facilities located at roof level.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 66. Looking at a typical laundry room.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

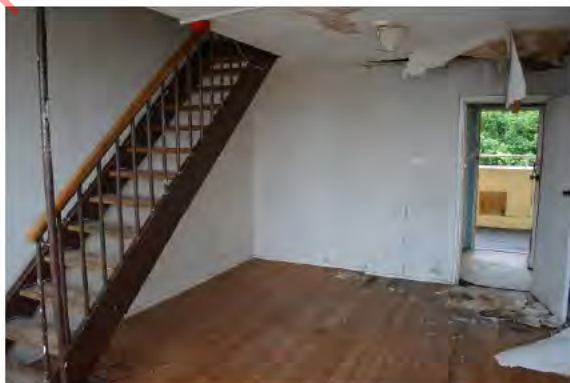


Figure 67. Looking at the living area of Flat 15 on level 3. Note the extent of water damage which has resulted in a collapsed ceiling.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

Figure 68. Looking at typical spalling of concrete elements.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 69. Looking at broken glazing within the southern stairwell.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

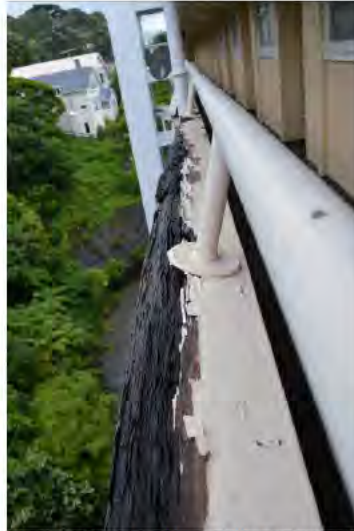


Figure 70. Looking at the extent of decay apparent in the balcony balustrading.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 71. Looking at the extent of flooding on the First Floor level.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

6.0 extent of surviving original fabric

6.1 chronology of change

The site has experienced a degree of alteration and loss of historical fabric since the building was constructed. The principal periods during which alterations have been undertaken and their extent is recorded below, although this list is not exhaustive:

- 1957-59 – Construction of building
- 2011 –
 - Replacement of stairwell windows,
 - repair and replace membrane roof
 - Replacement of service stair
 - Safety railing
 - General fire upgrade
 - Installation of 10 abseil anchor points on roof
 - General repair and maintenance work⁴²

⁴² Wellington City Council Archive – SR 22613, SR227008

7.0 the individuals or institutions connected with the place

7.1 francis gordon wilson (1900-1959)



Figure 72. Francis Gordon Wilson, F.N.Z.I.A., A.R.I.B.A. (1900-1959). (Source: The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects., Vol. , No. 1, February 1959, Serial No. 202).

Francis Gordon Wilson was born on 27 November 1900 in Perth, Western Australia. His father, Francis John Wilson was originally from New Zealand and also an architect and his mother, Mary Catherine O'Hagen, was from Ireland.

Francis attended Terrace School Primary, Wellington and Wellington Technical College after which he attended the Auckland University School of Architecture where he completed the Professional Examinations of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. In 1928 he was elected an associate of the Institute in that same year; advancing to fellowship in 1951 and then elected an Associate of the R.I.B.A in 1954.

His career first saw him articulated to architect William M. Page in Wellington between 1916 and 1920, after which he transferred to the office of Hoggard, Prouse and Gummer that evolved into Gummer and Ford in 1922.

During his time with this practice, he advanced from draughtsman to Chief Assistant and by 1928 he was offered a partnership role. During his time with Gummer Ford he was associated in the design of numerous notable projects including:

- Remuera Library, Auckland (1926)
- Dilworth Trust Building, Auckland (1927)
- The Auckland Railway Station (1930)
- New Zealand National War Memorial (1932)
- New Zealand Dominion Museum Building, Wellington (1936)

In 1936 the Government introduced a major state housing scheme and consequently formed the Department of Housing Construction⁴³. Wilson applied for, and succeeded in securing the position of Architect to the newly formed Department, where he was responsible for overseeing the construction of state rental houses.

He eventually gained the status of Chief Architect in 1945 with the newly titled Housing Division of the Ministry of Works and Development and this period of his career saw his skills instrumental in improving the standard of both State house design and construction; improvements that also filtered through to the wider public realm. The housing programme was not limited to suburban schemes for individual properties, but also focussed on multi-unit development with designs produced for apartments and flats; often over multiple stories.

His department was able to attract architects of significant talent including Ernst Plischke, Fred Newman, Helmut Einhorn, Ian Reynolds and George Porter; architects who would continue to excel in their own right. Wilson's approach to overseeing the design work produced through the department is recorded as being particular thorough with him retaining close control and overseeing all work prior to issue. He is recorded

⁴³ <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/we-call-it-home/timeline>

as being 'a dominant person who had strong influence on all the work of the architectural office.'⁴⁴

Further recognition of his work came in 1948 when he was appointed Assistant Government Architect; finally succeeding to the position of Government Architect in 1952 and during this period he was responsible for a greater total amount of building than any of his predecessors in his office.

Notable project designs produced by the Department of Housing under the direction of Wilson include, amongst others:

- The Berhampore Flats (1939-40)
- The Dixon Street Flats, Wellington (1941-44) (Received the Gold Medal by the NZIA in 1947)
- McLean State Flats, Wellington (1945-47)
- Greys Avenue Flats (first stage), Wellington (1945-47)
- Symonds Street Flats, Auckland (1945-47)
- Greys Avenue Flats (second stage), Auckland (1957)
- The Terrace Flats (Gordon Wilson Flats), Wellington (1957-59)
- Bledisloe State Building, Auckland (1959)
- The School of Engineering, University of Canterbury (1957-61)
- Bowen State Building (1962)

Wilson was also particularly active in other organisations including Chairman of the Wellington branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, the Council of the National Historic Places Trust, and the Association of the New Zealand Art Societies. He also sought to gain extensive knowledge of housing development throughout the world with numerous study trips abroad. In 1928-29 he visited the United States to study and visited again in 1945 as part of a Ministry of Housing delegation to form an understanding of housing and building techniques. Further trips to the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe occurred in 1954 and then again in 1957 where he acted as consultant on the design of New Zealand House in London.

As part of his extensive studies and considerable research in the housing division, Wilson wrote several articles.

Wilson died suddenly on 23 February 1959 and was survived by his wife, three sons and two daughters. It is considered that the legacy of Wilson's work has resulted in many fine buildings throughout the country.

8.0 similar places

A brief study of similar places has been undertaken with a view to establishing a comparative assessment between characteristics inherent in the Gordon Wilson Flats and other similar social housing projects that were developed by the Ministry of Works Housing Division during the 1950s both within the local and wider national context. This study is not exhaustive and focuses on high density development from that period whilst excluding low-to-medium scale developments such as the Berhampore Flats.

8.1 dixon street flats

Although the design of the Dixon Street Flats is widely attributed to Gordon Wilson, it is purported that another member of the Ministry of Works Housing Division in the guise of Ernst Plischke, was most involved with the development of the building⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/wilson-francis-gordon>

⁴⁵ According to <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/2646/dixon-street-state-flats-wellington>, although the extent of Plischke's input has been disputed by other sources.

Constructed between 1940 and 1944, the flats represent the Labour government's first initiative in high-density state rental housing and New Zealand's first slab housing block. The ten-storey reinforced concrete building of 116 private rooms followed European precedents such as Walter Gropius' unrealised Berlin apartments (1931) and van Tijen, Brinckman & van der Vlugt's Bergpolder block in Rotterdam (1933-34), although the monolithic design is compromised to a degree by the stepped appearance of the south end due to Wellington's height controls.⁴⁶

In a similar manner to the Gordon Wilson Flats, the Dixon Street Flats feature a regimented appearance characterised by external balconies and rectangular window arrays with feature planter boxes coloured to provide relief and depth to the façade. Access corridors for the apartments are to the rear of the building with a semi-glazed stairwell located at the northeast corner and a fully glazed stairwell positioned mid-way along the eastern elevation. The roof area provides the laundry and storage facilities for the residents.

The building is recorded in the Wellington City Council Operative District Plan Heritage List: Buildings, and is classified as a Category 1 Historic Place by Heritage New Zealand. The building was awarded the NZIA Gold Medal in 1947; being recognised as having considerable contribution to the modernist movement in New Zealand.



Figure 73. Dixon Flats nearing completion in 1944. (Source: Gatley, J, 2008, page 42)



Figure 74. Front façade of flats, showing colour scheme. (<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/dixon-street-flats-wellington>)



Figure 75. Rear façade of flats, with access balconies feeding the apartments creating a cruise liner appearance. (Gatley, Julia, 2008, page 42)



Figure 76. Rooftop laundry rooms, similar to those found on the Gordon Wilson Flats. (Source: Part of the roof of the Dixon Street Flats, Wellington. Pascoe, John Dobree, 1908-1972 :Photographic albums, prints and negatives. Ref: 1/4-000820-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23066090>)

⁴⁶ Gatley, J, 2008, Long Live the Modern, New Zealand's Architecture 1904-1984.

8.2 symonds street flats

Following influences from Wellington's Dixon Flats, the Symonds Street Flats were constructed in order to house childless couples and single people in Auckland City Centre. The building was to the design of Austrian Fred Newman of the Ministry of Works between 1945-47 and a T-shaped plan consisting of 45 apartments was established with a subtle curve in the street façade following the curve of the road.

The building was designed with modernist influences of regimented white-painted façades, balconies and rectangular window arrays that in many respects are similar to the Grey's Avenue Flats, Auckland (first stage) and the Dixon Street Flats in Wellington. The development was opened on the same day as the Grey's Avenue Flats in

The Symonds Street Flats are included within the Auckland Council Unitary Plan as a Category A item inclusive of interiors.



Figure 77. Street view of flats, showing colour scheme.

(Source: <http://www.architecture.archive.auckland.ac.nz/docs/block-digital/2007-07/BlockDigital-CityApartmentGuide.pdf>)



Figure 78. Historical street view of flats, 1947.

(Source: Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd, 1947 - http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/LibraryCatalogue/P5285.detail?Ordinal=1&c_keyword_search=symonds+street+flats)



Figure 79. Curved front façade of flats.

(Source: Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd, 1947 - http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/LibraryCatalogue/504.detail?Ordinal=6&c_keyword_search=symonds+street+flats-)



Figure 80. Living room of flats showing tenants furnishings and ornamentation.

(Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd, 1947 - http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/LibraryCatalogue/503.detail?Ordinal=8&c_keyword_search=symonds+street+flats)

8.3 lower greys avenue flats

With financial support from Auckland City, a 'slum clearance' programme was developed to transform Greys Avenue into an area of State housing and the project began with the construction of the lower Greys Avenue Flats between 1945-47 to a design attributed to Ernst Plischke working under the Housing Division, Ministry of Works. The design inherited similarities with Wellington's Dixon Flats although window planting boxes were kept to a minimum along the frontages visible from the public realm.

The selected building contractor for the project was Fletcher Construction Ltd. However, initial construction of the building was delayed due to the outbreak of the Second World War and disproportionately high post-war costs resulted in the decision to reduce the design from the proposed 468 units to just 50 units. Those were arranged in four blocks with the southern end of the development postponed indefinitely.

Built on a sloping site, the building is arranged so that there are three distinctive rectilinear street side blocks with two blocks extending to the rear. The front façade has a regimented appearance with square windows and natural ventilation in the reinforced concrete structure. Communal glazed stairwells are entered at ground floor level via a small entrance porch. Balconies are located to the rear of the building, overlooking a planted area and hardstand carpark for residents. The lower Greys Avenue Flats are scheduled under the Auckland Council Unitary Plan as a Category A Item and are listed as an Historic Place, Category 2 by Heritage New Zealand.



Figure 81. Model of original proposal for Greys Avenue development. (Gatley, J, 2008, page 42)



Figure 82. Front façade of Flats, 1960-79. (Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, ID 435-B4-188)



Figure 83. Rear view of Lower Greys Avenue Flats, 26 November 1981. (Source: Heritage New Zealand List report Number 583).



Figure 84. Approach to flats from north end of Greys Avenue, 1947. (Source: Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd, 1947 http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/LibraryCatalogue/597_detail?Ordinal=9&c_keyword_search=greys+avenue+flats)

8.4 upper greys avenue flats

Built between 1957-58 and designed by F. Gordon Wilson within the Ministry of Works, the upper Greys Avenue flats was the second phase of the Council's 'slum clearance' development scheme, replacing what was originally intended to be part of the lower set of flats which were interrupted due to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Engineered by F. M. Hanson and built by Fletcher Construction Ltd, the upper Greys Avenue flats was designed to reflect the technological developments of the 1950s with notable features such as taller and slimmer form that tended to reduce mass and extensive glazing.



Figure 85. Approach to flats from south end of Greys Avenue.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 86. View of flats from neighbouring YMCA hostel.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 87. Street view of flats, partially obscured by mature trees at the street side.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 88. Approach to flats from north end of Greys Avenue.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 89. Front façade of flats.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 90. Rear façade of flats.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

The design of the Greys Avenue Flats is considered to have potentially formed a template for future inner-city social housing development and is similar in style, scale, and form to the subject Gordon Wilson Flats building in Wellington; the construction of which began immediately following the completion of the Greys Avenue Flats in August 1957.



Figure 91. Stairwell to north side of flats.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 92. Stairwell to south side of flats.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 93. Upper Greys Avenue Flats, 1986.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 94. Main entrance area.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)



Figure 95. Ground floor apartments.
(Archifact-Architecture & Conservation Ltd., 2014)

The accommodation consists of 70, two-bedroom maisonettes in addition to 16 bed-sits at Ground Floor level and the cellular appearance is formed by the expressed superstructure with rows of external balconies dividing regimented horizontal banks of windows. Lift towers and glazed stairwells are located at the southwest and northeast corners of the building with the main entrance located at the northeast corner in a similar arrangement to that of the Gordon Wilson Flats.

A series of buttresses rise between ground and first level although these are less pronounced than those featured on the Gordon Wilson Flats, which rise as far as the third storey. The Greys Avenue flats are still in operation as a residential dwelling and in a significantly better condition than those in Wellington.

Historic images show that the original colour scheme was off-white, but the flats are currently coloured a pale yellow with pale brown lift towers and the limited palette tends to soften the expression of the structural system. Similar to the Gordon Wilson Flats, small sets of stairs with cantilevered canopies are formed at ground floor level to provide access into apartments. There is a grass area to the front of the building and a hardstand carpark for residential use only to the rear.

The upper Greys Avenue flats are not currently listed under the provisions of either the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan or Heritage New Zealand as a place of historical value.

9.0 assessment

9.1 general criteria for significance

This section establishes the criteria adopted in the assessment of cultural heritage value. The criteria adopted are taken from a selection included in with Section 66 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. This section of the Act lists criteria used in qualifying the inclusion of a place on the New Zealand Heritage List administered by Heritage New Zealand.

9.2 degree of significance

A conservative approach has been adopted for the assessment. Where the origin of an item is inconclusive and has the potential of having cultural heritage value (such as the archaeological significance of a site), it has been assigned the highest value possible in order to avoid loss of potential cultural heritage value through lack of information at this time. Should, at a later time, more information become available these items should be reassessed.

A six-level scale of value has been adopted in tabulating the cultural heritage value of the spaces or elements within this place. This is based on the New Zealand Historic Places Trust' 1994 *Guidelines for Preparing a Conservation Plan*. These values are:

A Exceptional Significance

The element or space is of exceptional importance to the overall significance of the place.

B Considerable Significance

The element or space is of considerable importance to the overall heritage significance of the place.

C Moderate Significance

The element or space is of moderate importance to the overall heritage significance of the place.

D Minor Significance

The element or space is of minor importance to the overall heritage significance of the place.

0 No Significance

The element or space is of little or no importance to the significance of the place and is not intrusive or negative.

X Intrusive

The element or space obscures or passively detracts from the heritage significance of the place.

9.2.1 aesthetic significance moderate C

The aesthetic significance considers the formal qualities of the fabric and setting: the form, scale, materials, space, etc. Assessment of the space or its parts demonstrating aesthetic significance or contribution to the overall integrity of the design of the place is made.

The Gordon Wilson Flats sit on an elevated position highly visible from the public realm; both from within the immediate setting where the building is set in stark contrast to the surrounding low-rise traditional villa and bungalow forms, and visible from vantage points across much of the Te Aro valley. Accordingly, due to its significant scale and form in relation to the modestly scaled buildings within the immediate setting there is potential for the perception of the place to be considered incongruous when viewed in relation to its immediate contextual setting.

However, the property has undergone few alterations over the years ensuring the scale, mass and layout of the original Modernist building form has not been unduly compromised over the design conceived in the post-war years; so retaining aesthetic significance of the building itself to a large extent.

In light of the values identified above, the Gordon Wilson Flats is considered overall to hold **moderate** aesthetic significance.

9.2.2 archaeological significance not assessed

The archaeological significance shows the degree to which the place can be said to have an archaeological potential.

No formal archaeological assessment has been undertaken of the site to date. The site may be classified as an archaeological site in accordance with Section 6 (a) (i) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, which recognises that places associated with human occupation prior to 1900 are, by definition, archaeological sites.

It is the site, not the building that by definition in the Act may be found to be an archaeological site since it has been associated with human activity prior to 1900. However, post 1900 development of the site particularly with the construction of the Gordon Wilson Building has been very significant and may well have compromised any archaeological values.

9.2.3 architectural significance moderate C

The architectural significance addresses the design and architectural aspects of the place and includes assessment of the place demonstrating particular characteristics of a school of design or style.

This place is inextricably linked to one of the most influential New Zealand architects of the mid-twentieth century in the guise of Gordon F Wilson, who was associated with a number of highly significant civic projects throughout his career.

The place has architectural value for the Modernist influences in a building type that is relatively rare in the Wellington region and wider national context. The design represents a surviving example of the work of Gordon Wilson and the team within the Ministry of Works Architectural Section, who are recognised as being one of the most important designers of cost effective, high density social housing during the mid-twentieth century. His designs also paid close regard to the living environment with much emphasis placed on the provision of good views, sunlight, air and good amenities. This focus was to ensure that the slum perception of multi-level flats within Europe was not repeated in New Zealand.

It is noted that the original design for the development of the McLean site was intended to reflect an earlier International Style of Modernism; the first stage of which was formed by the McLean State Flats. Consequently, the original conception of the two individual buildings would have formed a closer, more intimate design relationship than is currently perceived and the alteration in style and design for the later development tends to disrupt those original intentions presented in Plischkes' perspective drawing dating to 1942 for the site as a whole.

The place is therefore considered to lose a degree of architectural significance through the loss of continuity of design with the associated with the McLean State Flats which together were originally conceived to be an integral and intimate part of the McLean site development.

Any intimate association of Plischke with the design of the Gordon Wilson Flats is also debateable as his involvement in the design of high density social housing was potentially restricted to the earlier schemes such as the Dixon Street Flats and Greys Avenue Flats in particular. Through his departure from the Architectural Section in 1942, further design influence over projects including the Greys Avenue and Gordon Wilson Flats would therefore have been limited.

In light of the values identified above, the Gordon Wilson Flats is considered overall to hold **moderate** architectural significance.

9.2.4 functional significance **no significance 0**
The functional significance addresses the contribution of the function of the place that can be assessed as having cultural heritage significance.

Throughout its lifespan, The Gordon Wilson Flats have proved adaptable particularly through the building's ability to provide social housing to residents with a wide range of accommodation needs.

However, due to the redundancy of the place as an operational social housing facility following its identification as a health and safety risk, the Gordon Wilson Flats as found are, at this point in time, considered to hold **no** functional significance.

9.2.5 historical significance **considerable B**
The historic significance describes the extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history, the association with events, persons or ideas of importance and the potential to provide knowledge of New Zealand history.

The historical importance of the Gordon Wilson Flats relates not only to the association with the development of social housing provision during the mid-twentieth century, but also to the association of the place with Gordon Wilson and the Architectural Section of the Ministry of Works who produced some of the finest examples of 1950s Modernist social housing architecture within New Zealand. However, the Gordon Wilson Flats were not the first of type and are likely to have been originally envisaged as just one of many such developments in the future under a common template.

Following the success of earlier high density developments including the Dixon Street Flats, Symonds Street flats and Greys Avenue flats, post war accommodation pressures challenged designers to develop cost effective social housing. Based on a potential template design, the first of type was envisaged with the construction of the Greys Avenue Flats in Auckland, however, ongoing political and public pressures ensured that the second building to be constructed, in the form of the Gordon Wilson

Flats, was also the last; so forming a premature end to the brief foray by government in the provision of high density social housing in the post-war years.

The history of the Gordon Wilson Flats has **considerable** significance in signifying the forward thinking aspirations of the nation during the 1950s, and the building continued to function as a key centre of local social housing through to its closure in 2012.

In light of the values identified above, the place is therefore considered to be of **considerable** historic significance.

9.2.6 scientific significance minor D

The scientific significance is concerned with the importance of a place as evidence of scientific knowledge and development and with the physical survival of that evidence in the building fabric and its potential to provide information about past human activity.

As the construction methods for the foundation support of the structure were unusual in the context of New Zealand at that time, the building became the subject of a structural monitoring programme operated by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research to measure earthquake movement.

It is understood that data obtained by that equipment was used to contribute to at least one scientific paper although recent searches of the building have failed to locate any physical evidence of the monitoring equipment, or any of the original data obtained through the process. This lack of physical evidence therefore restricts any potential to provide information of any analytical value.

Therefore, in light of the lack of surviving physical evidence of the monitoring programme it is considered that the property holds only **minor** scientific significance.

9.2.7 social significance considerable B

The social significance is concerned with the importance of the place to tangata whenua, the community association with, or public esteem for, the place and the potential of the place for public education.

There is social significance attributable to the place through its contribution to the development of social housing through the mid-twentieth century. Although the Gordon Wilson Flats were destined to be the last multi-level, multi-unit project of this scale the development was pre-empted by a number of fine examples of similar social housing projects built during the period when Modernist influences were integral to social housing design and development.

The social significance of the place is principally born from its original function as one of only a few multi-storey, multi-unit social housing blocks conceived in the post war period to provide inner-city State housing for many vulnerable members of society. It could be considered that the social significance of the place has been compromised to a degree by its closure to State tenants and subsequent sale to a new owner, however, the place remains a prominent feature in the community and consequently retains **considerable** social significance.

9.2.8 technological significance minor D

The technological significance includes the technical accomplishment or value, or design of the place. It also includes the ability to demonstrate particular characteristics of a building technique or craft.

The survival of the original building fabric provides an insight to past human activities, customs and lifestyles. The arrangement and use of the internal floor space and the techniques utilised in their construction provide a permanent record of the materials and skills available during that period and the ability to integrate them into the building. The techniques utilised for the construction of the expressed structural framework were borne from those techniques practised and refined for many similarly framed structures both in New Zealand and throughout the world.

It is also noted that the Department of Housing Construction and Ministry of Works actively sought out new ideas for new materials and systems of construction that would potentially speed up the supply of houses or reduce costs. In particular, experiments were undertaken in various methods of construction in poured concrete, concrete blocks and brickwork.⁴⁷ Whether such materials or practices were applied to the construction of the subject building is not known at this stage, however, it has been identified that the foundation design chosen for the works was in a format not previously employed in New Zealand.

The inclusion of the unusual method of foundation design does lend a degree of technological significance to the place, however, due to the very nature of its sub-surface location, it would prove challenging to physically demonstrate the particular characteristics of that building technique. Modern analyses by structural engineers of the appropriateness of the methods used to establish the foundations have suggested that the method employed is questionable for its reliability in a seismic context.

Therefore, in light of the potential for the techniques utilised in forming the foundation to be poorly conceived and the naturally inaccessible nature of the foundation structure constraining an ability to demonstrate, it is suggested that the technological characteristics contribute only **minor** technological value to the place.

9.2.9 townscape significance moderate C

The townscape significance describes the extent to which the place forms part of a wider historical or cultural complex or historical or cultural landscape.

The construction of the Gordon Wilson Flats has produced a distinct landmark within the Wellington City region and together with the McLean Flats and Dixon Street Flats contributes strongly to the group value of similar buildings providing social housing.

Its significant scale and mass, set amongst the largely residential small-scale single storey buildings that line the valley and surrounding area forms a prominent, readily identifiable element within the cultural landscape, although potentially incongruous set within the context of the surrounding low-scale villas and bungalows.

In light of the values identified above, the Gordon Wilson Flat development is overall considered to hold **moderate** townscape significance.

⁴⁷ Firth, C., Wilson, G., F., 1949, State Housing in New Zealand, Ministry of Works Wellington, New Zealand
2015-05-06__2141007- heritage assessment-final
314 the terrace, wellington

10.0 conclusion

The Gordon Wilson Flats are inextricably linked to one of the most influential New Zealand architects during the mid-twentieth century in the guise of Gordon F Wilson, who was associated with a collaborative team of architects within the Ministry of Works that created a number of highly significant government projects. This place is considered to hold **considerable** historical and social value for the role the building played in providing a cost-effective approach to State social housing provision, whilst ensuring that the tenants were provided with accommodation that was light, airy and had high quality amenities to counter the public and professional perception that this type of development could potentially degenerate into slum conditions.

Gordon F Wilson ensured that all of his work was contemporary in style and presided over the design of significant buildings such as the Bledisloe civic building in Auckland and high density Modernist social housing in the form of the Dixon Street (Wellington), and the Auckland Symonds Street and Lower Greys Avenue flats. His designs sought a cost-effective approach to the provision of social housing, whilst ensuring that the tenants were provided with accommodation that was of high contemporary design. The Gordon Wilson Flats were designed within these parameters and mindful of Wellington's seismic condition. Under Wilson the Ministry of Works strived to be at the forefront of new design direction and produced a design for the place that was at the cutting edge of available technology. The design highlights the department's commitment to innovative technologies such as the system of piling utilised for the foundation design, however, it is considered that the system employed is unreliable under current engineering science.

The commissioning date of the Gordon Wilson Flats came at a time when the template of building type is also likely to have been finalised and established for the construction of a second stage of State housing in Greys Avenue, Auckland, which presented the first example of the evolved Modernist design for future Government high-density State social housing. It is likely, but unsubstantiated, that Gordon Wilson's involvement in the overall design of the Gordon Wilson Flats was at a reduced level as the project may have then been handled by the collaborative team within the Ministry of Works following resolution of the design of the Greys Avenue development. It remains likely however, that his managerial style would have overseen everything leaving the office. In addition, any perceived association with the design (particularly the façade design) being attributed to Plischke is unlikely as he had left the Architecture Section of the Ministry in 1942, some time prior to the commencement of the next building stages during the mid-1950s.

The place contributes to the historical, cultural, planning, architectural, and social consciousness of Wellington during the post-war period and has **considerable** historical and social value for the part it plays in defining the approach to social housing provision in New Zealand. The building forms part of a number of vistas into and out of the central city area and can be regarded as a distinct landmark building particularly within its local context. Further to the redundancy of the place, functional significance has been lost and only **minor** significance is attributable to scientific and technological values (archaeological significance was not assessed as part of this assessment). Of some note however, the similar development of the Upper Greys Avenue Flats in Auckland has not been formally recognised by either the local planning authority or Heritage New Zealand.

It is concluded, in light of the above values, that the Gordon Wilson Flats is of **moderate** significance overall.

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12.0 appendices

appendix 1 – wellington city council 314 the terrace heritage report

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Gordon Wilson Flats

320 The Terrace



View of Gordon Wilson Flats from The Terrace

(Charles Collins, 2015)

Summary of heritage significance

- The Gordon Wilson Flats have architectural value as a good representative example of 1950s Modernist high density social housing, that though common internationally, is relatively rare in New Zealand.
- The flats are associated with the social policy of the government of the day and were an endeavour to solve a chronic housing shortage. They were the last of the high-rise tower-block social housing developments designed by the Ministry of Works & Development. The flats are also associated with economic recovery in the 1950s which led to a boom in the building industry.
- The flats were designed by Government Architect Gordon Wilson, who died while the flats were nearing completion. It is for this reason they were named in his honour.

District Plan:	Map 16, Symbol 299
Legal Description:	Lot 1, DP 363050
Heritage Area:	None 2012
HPT Listed:	None 2012
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	The Terrace Flats
Key physical dates:	Built: 1957-1959
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Architectural Division of the Ministry of Works, under chief architect Gordon Wilson.
Former uses:	Low cost State Housing rental accommodation
Current uses:	Vacant as at May 2012 (evacuated - safety concerns)
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not EQP (IEP 27/11/2006, SR 210925)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The Department of Housing Construction was set up in 1936 by New Zealand's first Labour government to construct state rental houses.¹ Gordon Wilson was appointed chief architect of the Department in 1938, he became chief architect of the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works from 1943 – 1952, assistant Government Architect from 1948 – 1952 and Government Architect from 1952-59.² The Gordon Wilson Flats (originally known as The Terrace Flats), were renamed to honour Wilson when he died shortly before their completion in 1959.³

The flats were built on the site of the first residence of Mr George Hunter, the first mayor of Wellington.⁴ They were sited next to the existing McLean State Flats (built 1943-44), an earlier social housing scheme of which Gordon Wilson was involved in the design and construction. The original plans are signed by 'Gordon Wilson, Government Architect' and dated August 1954, at a time when Wilson was Government Architect at the head office of the Ministry of Works. The detailed design was completed by the Wellington District Office of the Ministry of Works.⁵

New Zealand's state social housing (multi-unit) designs of the 1930s – 1950s were influenced by the 'International Style' of Modernism promoted by Swiss/French architect Le Corbusier, German architects Mies van de Rohe, Walter Gropius and others. The manifesto of Modernism spread from continental Europe in the 1930s, partly due to the Diaspora that fled from the oppressive regime in Nazi Germany at a time when Modernism was at odds with the prevailing political ideology. Two outstanding examples of New Zealand's state housing designed in the 'International Style' are the Berhampore (Centennial) Flats (1939-40), and the Dixon Street State Flats (1941-44). The Berhampore Flats were the Labour Government's first multi-unit scheme of social housing, and one of the first, largest and most complete schemes of buildings designed in the 'International Style' in New Zealand⁶ and the similarly styled Dixon Street State Flats won the NZIA Gold Medal in 1947.

In New Zealand the best known Modernist architect 'refugee' was Austrian Ernst Plischke who worked for the Department of Housing Construction (c1939-1947)⁷. For some of this time he worked under Gordon Wilson as Chief Architect on designs for multiple-unit housing blocks. However, due to a personality clash, in 1942 Plischke became a community planner under Reg Hammond in the same department.

¹ See also: Ben Schrader, "Housing and government - State loans and state houses", *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 13-Jul-12, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/housing-and-government/page-2>

² Julia Gatley, "Wilson, Francis Gordon – Biography", from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 1 September 2010, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/1>

³ "The Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington: The Work of the Architectural Division, Ministry of Works," *The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, Vol 28, No 1 (February 1961):1

⁴ Wellington City Council, "Gordon Wilson Flats," *Heritage Inventory - 1995* (Wellington City Council, 1995)

⁵ "The Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington: The Work of the Architectural Division, Ministry of Works," *The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, Vol 28, No 1 (February 1961):1

⁶ Julia Gatley, "For Modern Living: Government Blocks of Flats" in *Zeal and Crusade*, (Christchurch: Waihora Press, 1996), 53; also Julia Gatley, *Long Live the Modern: Zealand's New Architecture 1904-1984*, (Auckland; Auckland University Press, 2008), 34.

⁷ Linda Tyler, "Plischke, Ernst Anton - Biography", from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 30 October 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5p31/plischke-ernst-anton>

The level to which Plischke may have been involved in the design of the building when he still worked under Wilson is unknown, but a 1942 drawing by Plischke shows a design for the McLean and Terrace Flats.⁸ This drawing is slightly different from the final plans, the most notable differences being the siting of the building; that the staircase is located in the middle of the block, rather than at one end; and the monolithic finish of the building that is closer to the streamlined 'International Style' than the later 1950s Modernism of the Gordon Wilson Flats.

The final design of the Gordon Wilson Flats is somewhat similar to the Grays Avenue Flats in Auckland. The basic plan was designed to maximise views and sunlight on a difficult and steeply sloping site, and to manage costs, structure and amenities.⁹ "After basic research by architects and associated specialist engineers, the solution finally adopted was to provide bed-sitting rooms in the basement and above that to make the remainder of the accommodation in two-bedroom flats on the maisonette principle."¹⁰ The building was the last large, high-rise block of flats designed by the Ministry of Works, before a change in ideology led the provision of social housing solely by low density houses and low rise units.



An architectural model of Gordon Wilson Flats at a housing exhibition in 1955 (ATL, EP/1955/2193-F)

High-rise, high-density social housing schemes designed on Modernist principles have been identified as problematic in many European countries. In many instances social problems have been exacerbated by housing high-density, at-risk populations in building that were poorly maintained and with insecure communal spaces (particularly staircases & lifts). In New Zealand these problems have been exacerbated by structural problems with the innovative designs of the Modernist era, and in 2011 the nearby McLean State Flats were evacuated when they were deemed to be earthquake prone.¹¹

The Gordon Wilson Flats were evacuated in May 2012 following an engineer's report commissioned by Housing New Zealand that identified the need for urgent remedial work to large concrete panels on the building's exterior facade. The media reported that "they could fall and crush people during an earthquake or strong wind..."¹² and the buildings population of over 130 residents were given seven days to vacate the building. Although some residents spoke to media about their sentimental attachment to the building including one who said that "This is my castle, I love it here,"¹³ others were more equivocal noting problems with other marginalised, often anti-social tenants, and a lack of building maintenance.

⁸ August Sarnitz, and Eva B Ottillinger, *Ernst Plischke: Modern Architecture for the New World* (Prestel Publishing, 2004)

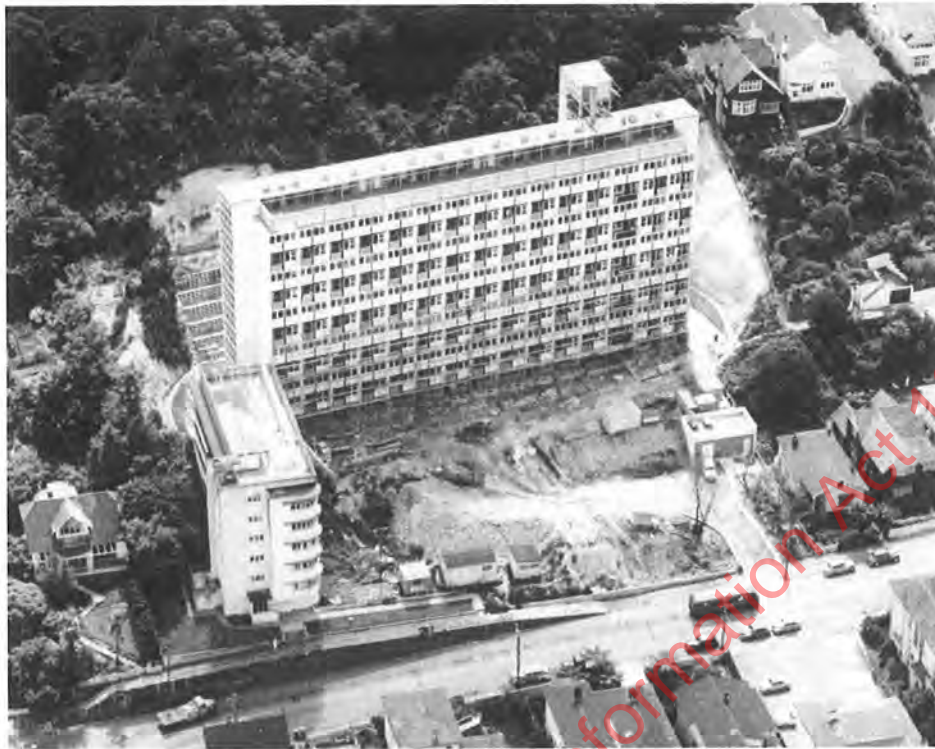
⁹ "The Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington: The Work of the Architectural Division, Ministry of Works," *The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, Vol 28, No 1 (February 1961):1

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Lane Nichols, 'Unsafe flats: Tenants told to leave within week', *Dominion Post*, May 10 2012, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/6897604/Unsafe-flats-Tenants-told-to-leave-within-week>

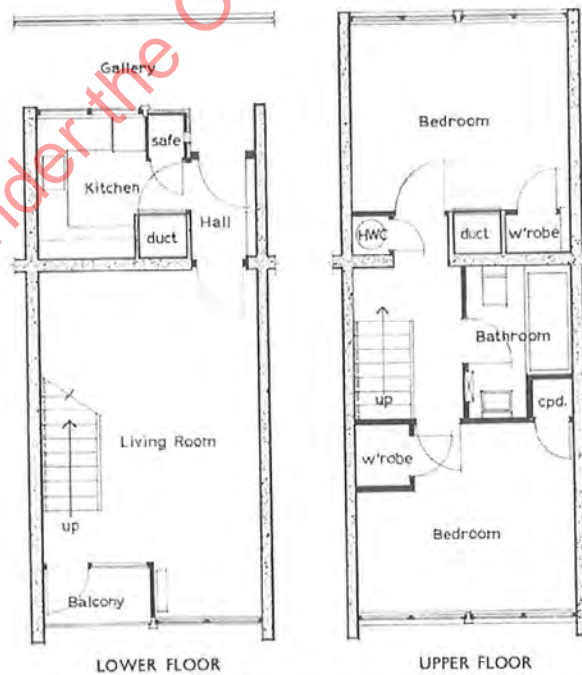
¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Lane Nichols, 'Unsafe flats: 'This is my castle.' *Dominion Post*, May 11 012 <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/6900410/Unsafe-flats-This-is-my-castle>



Aerial view of the Gordon Wilson Flats under construction c1958-9. The McLean State Flats are to the left (Ref: EP-Industry-Housing-State-02, ATL)

1.2 Timeline of modifications



DETAIL OF PLAN
Layout of a typical two double-bedroom maisonette flat. The distance between the cross walls is 12 ft.

Image reproduced from The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, p3

1957-9 Building constructed

2011 Replacement of stairwell windows, repair and replace membrane roof, replacement of service stair and safety railing, general fire upgrade, install 10 abseil anchor points on the roof, general repair and maintenance work (SR 226613, SR227008).

1.3 Architect

(Francis) Gordon Wilson – Government Architect (1952 – 1959)

Gordon Wilson's¹⁴ began his public service career as chief architect for the Department of Housing in 1938. He had worked previously as an associate partner at Gummer and Ford and is known to have been involved in the design of the Remuera Public Library, Auckland Railway Station, Wellington Public Library, the National War Memorial and Carillon, and the National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum building in Wellington. The design of both the Wellington Public Library (now the City Gallery) and the Dominion Museum building have also been attributed to him. He continued with the Department of Housing until 1943 when he was appointed chief architect of the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works from 1943 – 1952, and progressed to assistant Government Architect from 1948 – 1952. He was Government Architect until his death in 1959.

The various civil service government architectural offices led by Wilson produced many buildings that were at the leading edge of architectural design style throughout the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The result was that he was able to attract many gifted young architects to the civil service, particularly the 'refugee architects who had fled Europe in the 1930s'.¹⁵ Many of his protégées became noted architects in their own right including Ernst Plischke, Fred Newman, Helmut Einhorn, Ian Reynolds and George Porter.

The key buildings during Wilson's years in the NZ civil service include:

- Bledisloe State Building
- Flats in Grey's Avenue, Auckland
- Bowen State Building
- Gordon Wilson Flats
- School of Engineering building at the University of Canterbury
- University of Otago Dental School building

¹⁴ Julia Gatley, "Wilson, Francis Gordon – Biography", from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 1 September 2010, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/1>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The Gordon Wilson Flats are a multi-storey block of social housing that varies in height from 7 – 10 storeys depending on topography. The building was designed with bedsitting rooms on the ground floor level(s) along with a caretaker's office, and storage for baggage and prams. There were 75 maisonette flats above ground floor and laundry washing and drying facilities on the roof. Each 64m² maisonette consisted of a lounge and kitchen at entry level, with a stair to two bedrooms and a bathroom on the upper level.¹⁶

Exterior of the building is dominated by the expressed structural grid pattern. A primary grid denotes the individual two-storey, two bay maisonette tenancies, and this is further divided by a secondary grid that divides the elevation of the maisonettes at bedroom floor level, and vertically through the bedroom and living room windows. Most of the visible structural elements are concrete, particularly the wall and floor slabs, the precast spandrel panels and window (mullion) posts. The balcony fronts were vitreous enamelled metal and were once decorated in an alternating pattern of red & blue, although this appears to have been over-painted at a later date. The concrete structure was designed as a fair-faced finish, although the internal walls of the apartments were generally papered or painted. The internal floors within the maisonettes were constructed in timber.

The building was partly built into a site that sloped steeply and the hillside was stabilised with a series of crib walls that step back into the hillside and retain up to 20m vertically. The building's piling system was a new technology for its time and consisted of pre-drilling the holes, filling them with reinforcement and aggregate, and pumping them full of a wet mix of sand and cement.

2.2 Materials

Reinforced concrete piles, foundations, walls, floor-slabs, roofs, and stairs

2.3 Setting

The Gordon Wilson Flats are located on a large, prominent, steeply sloping site on the Terrace and are a landmark that is visible from various points around the city, including Mt Victoria and Roseneath. The site includes the much smaller McLean State Flats (1943-44) designed in an earlier 'International Style'.

¹⁶ "The Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington: The Work of the Architectural Division, Ministry of Works," The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, Vol 28, No 1 (February 1961): 6

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4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?

The Gordon Wilson Flats have architectural value as a good representative example of 1950s Modernist high-density social housing, that though common internationally, is relatively rare in New Zealand.

Townscape: Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?

The monolithic high-rise block of flats is a significant visual element in the cityscape and has townscape value for that reason.

Group: Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?

The Gordon Wilson Flats have a relationship to the neighbouring McLean State Flats, and the nearby Dixon Street Flats, forming a collection of buildings of similar design and purpose in the same part of central Wellington.

Historic Value:

Association: Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?

Association: Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?

The flats are associated with the social policy of the government of the day and were an endeavour to solve a chronic housing shortage. They were the last of the high-rise tower-block social housing developments designed by the Ministry of Works & Development (although there were several later high-rise social housing developments constructed by the Wellington City Council). The flats are also associated with economic recovery in the 1950s which led to a boom in the building industry.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?

Central City NZAA R27/270

Educational: Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?

Technological: Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?

The building has technological value for the inclusion of equipment to measure earthquake movements, a practice that was not widely used in New Zealand at the time. The building also has technological value for being one of, if not the first, building in New Zealand to use the particular system of piling employed.

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

This building fulfils an ongoing function as social housing, although this is in temporary respite while the earthquake prone status of the building is resolved.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

The Gordon Wilson Flats have architectural value as a good representative example of 1950s Modernist high-density social housing, that though common internationally, is relatively rare in New Zealand.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The building has had relatively few intrusive modern alterations or additions and retains much of its original built fabric.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

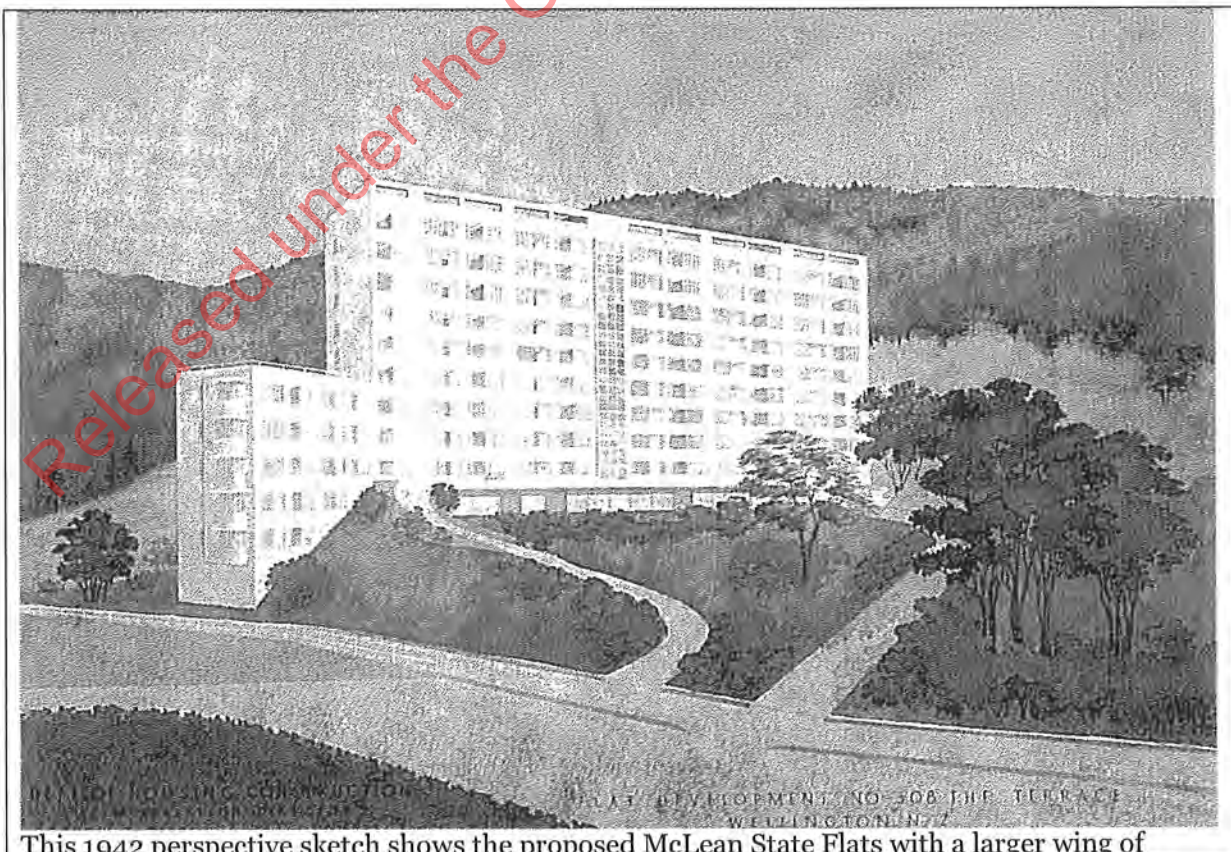
The building is of local significance as an example of Modernist high-density social housing. It is of some significance nationally as the last high-rise tower block designed as social housing by the Ministry of Works.

5.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	N	Not included
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	N	Not listed
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

Background research



multi-storey flats behind that later became the Gordon Wilson Flats.¹⁷



Gordon Wilson Flats under construction circa 11 February 1957. The McLean State Flats are behind the Downer crane. *Evening Post*. (Timeframes EP/1957/0397-F)

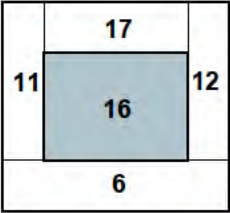
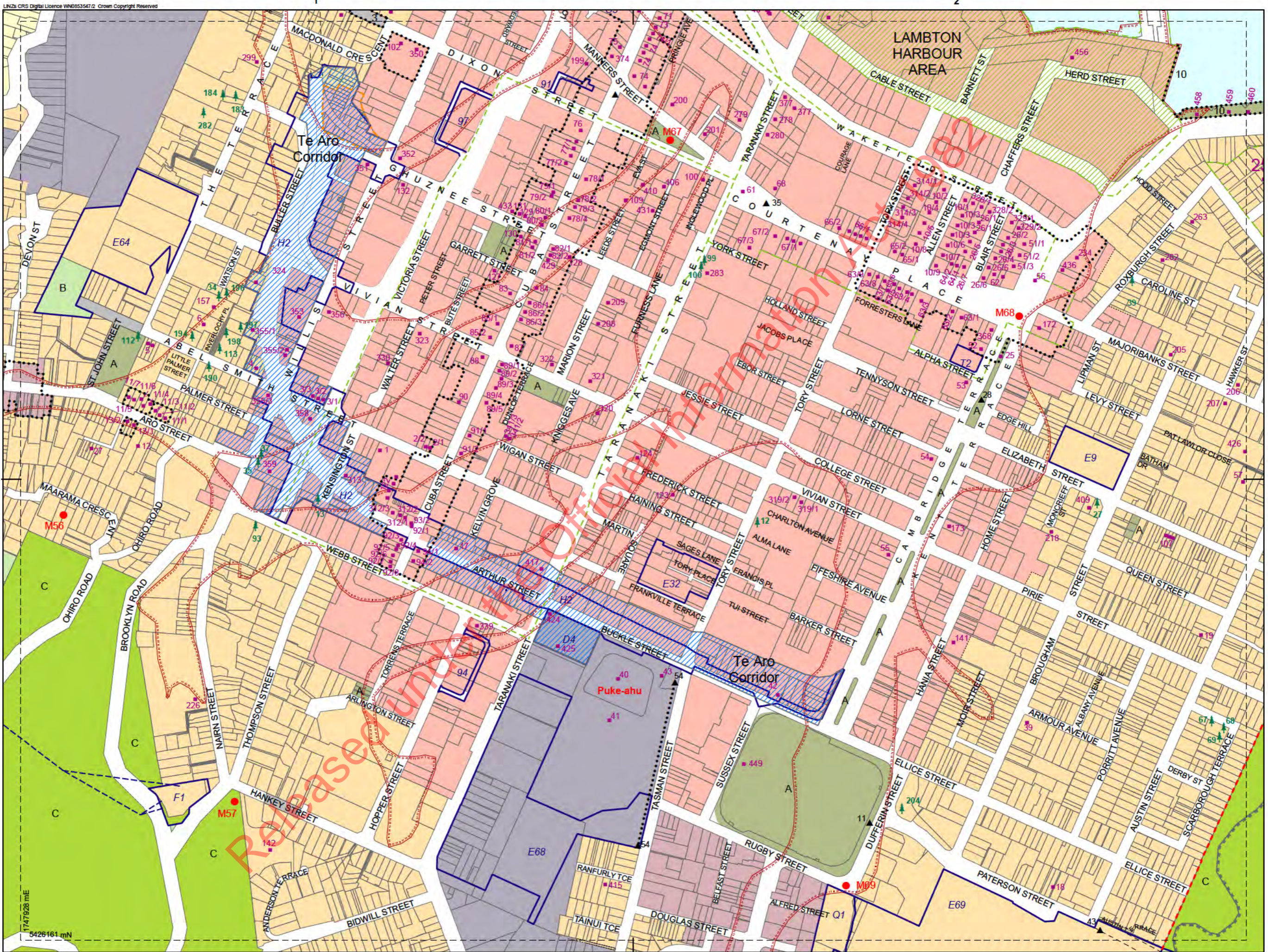
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¹⁷ Image: Ernst Plischke: *Modern Architecture for the New World*, p 148

appendix 2 – wellington city council district plan map 16

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appendix 3 – historic plans

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SCHEDULE OF DRAWINGS

ARCHITECTURAL LAYOUT

- 1 SITE LAYOUT
- 2 FLOOR PLANS
- 3 ROOF & LAUNDRY PLANS
- 4 SECTIONS
- 5 ELEVATIONS 1
- 6 ELEVATIONS 2

STRUCTURAL CARCASE

- 7 FOUNDATIONS
- 8 SITE EXCAVATION WORKS
- 9 SITE WORKS
- 10 BASE & FLOOR SLABS
- 11 FLOORS 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 & ROOF
- 12 SPINEWALL / FLOORS 3, 5, 7, 9
- 13 ENDWALL 'A' / CROSSWALLS B, D, F
- 14 CROSSWALL N / LIFT TOWER
- 15 STAIRWAYS
- 16 DUCTS
- 17 TERRACES & SITWORKS 17A TEST BORE DETAILS

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

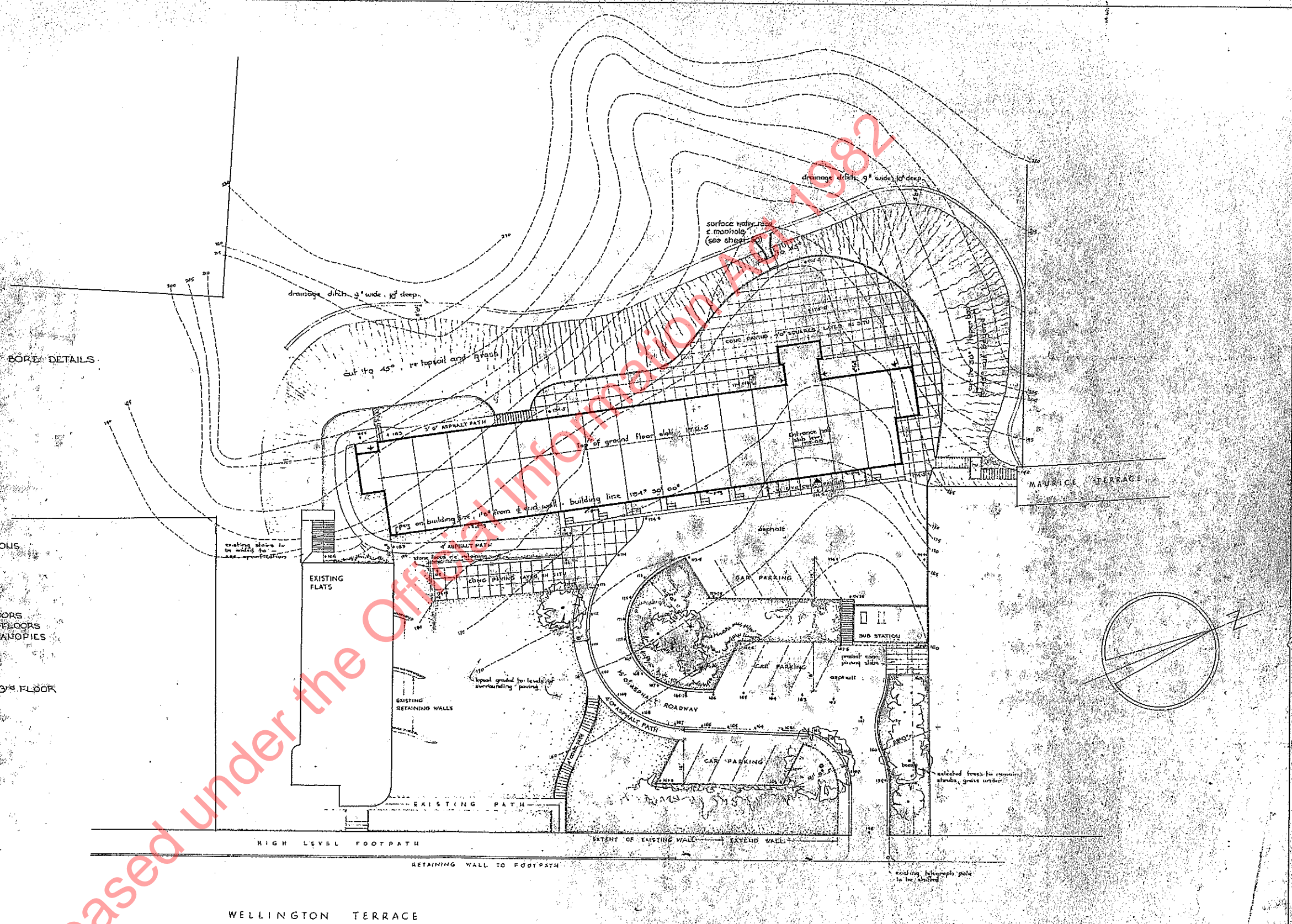
- 18 TYPE 'A' FLAT PLANS
- 19 TYPE 'A' FLAT SECTIONS ETC
- 20 PRECAST PANELS - CONSTRUCTION
- 21 PRECAST PANELS - COMPONENTS
- 22 TYPE 'B' FLAT PLANS
- 23 TYPE 'B' FLAT SECTIONS ETC
- 24 LIFT LOBBY DETAILS ETC
- 25 TYPE 'C' FLAT PLANS, SECTIONS ETC
- 26 TYPE 'C' FLAT DETAILS, WINDOWS ETC
- 27 KITCHEN DETAILS
- 28 ENTRANCE HALL PLANS, DETAILS
- 29 ENTRANCE HALL SECTIONS
- 30 STAIRS / PLANS SECTIONS
- 31 STAIRS / ELEVATIONS DETAILS
- 32 STAIRS / DETAILS
- 33 LAUNDRIES / PLAN, ELEVATIONS, SECTIONS
- 34 LIFT MACHINE ROOM
- 35 ROOF LEVEL DETAILS

STRUCTURAL REINFORCEMENT

- 36 FOUNDATION DETAILS
- 37 FOUNDATION WALLS
- 38 CROSSWALLS, DETAILS GD TO 3RD FLOORS
- 38A CROSSWALLS F, N, O, P GROUND TO 1ST FLOORS
- 39 ENTRANCE HALL, PRAM RM, SLAB, CANOPIES
- 40 FLOOR SLABS 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 & ROOF
- 41 FLOOR SLABS 2, 4, 6, 8, 10
- 42 SPINE WALL TO FLOOR 7
- 43 SPINE WALL 7 TO ROOF
- 44 ENDWALLS 44A ENDWALLS ABOVE 3RD FLOOR
- 45 CROSSWALLS ABOVE 3RD FLOOR
- 46 LIFTSHAFT & ACCESS SLAB
- 47 STAIRS
- 48 EXTERNAL WALLS TO STAIRS
- 49 DUCTS

BUILDING SERVICES

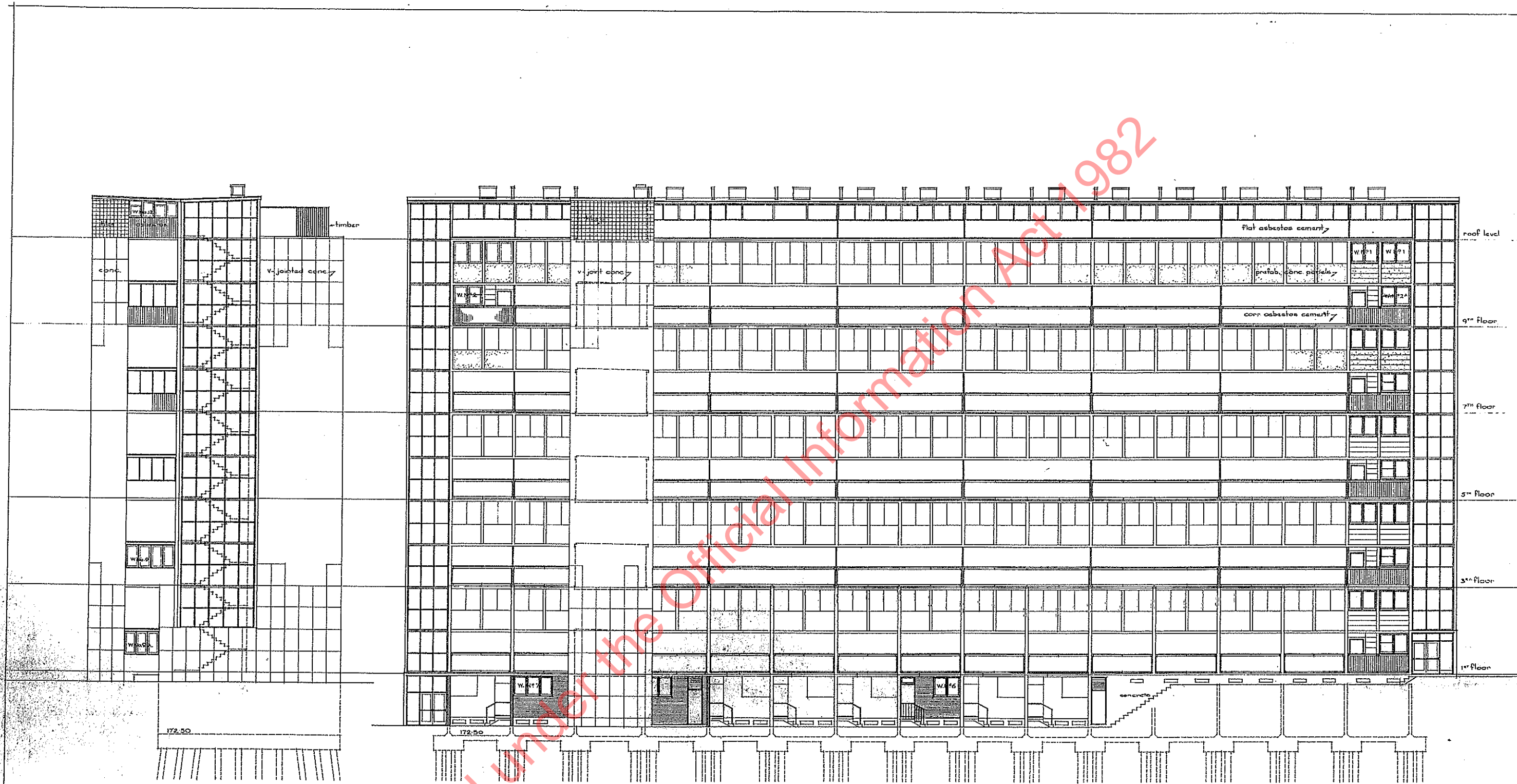
- 50 SITE LAYOUT
- 51 PLUMBING / FLAT DETAILS
- 52 PLUMBING SECTION
- 53 WATER
- 54 GAS 1
- 55 GAS 2
- 56 ELECTRICAL / FLOORS GD TO 10
- 57 ELECTRICAL / LAUNDRIES
- 58 MAIN SWITCH GEAR & RISING MAIN
- 59 RADIO CONDUITS
- 60 INCINERATOR 1
- 61 INCINERATOR 2
- 62 INCINERATOR 3



MULTI-STOREY FLATS WELLINGTON

SITE PLAN

MINISTRY OF WORKS ARCHITECTURAL DIVISION	SCALE: 1/6" = 1'-0"	G 6094
T. GORDON WILSON PLANNING	DRAWN BY: E.M.P. & D.W.M.	
GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT WELLINGTON	CHECKED BY: J.A.S.	
	APPROVED BY: [Signature]	
	DATE: AUGUST 54	62



SOUTH · ELEVATION

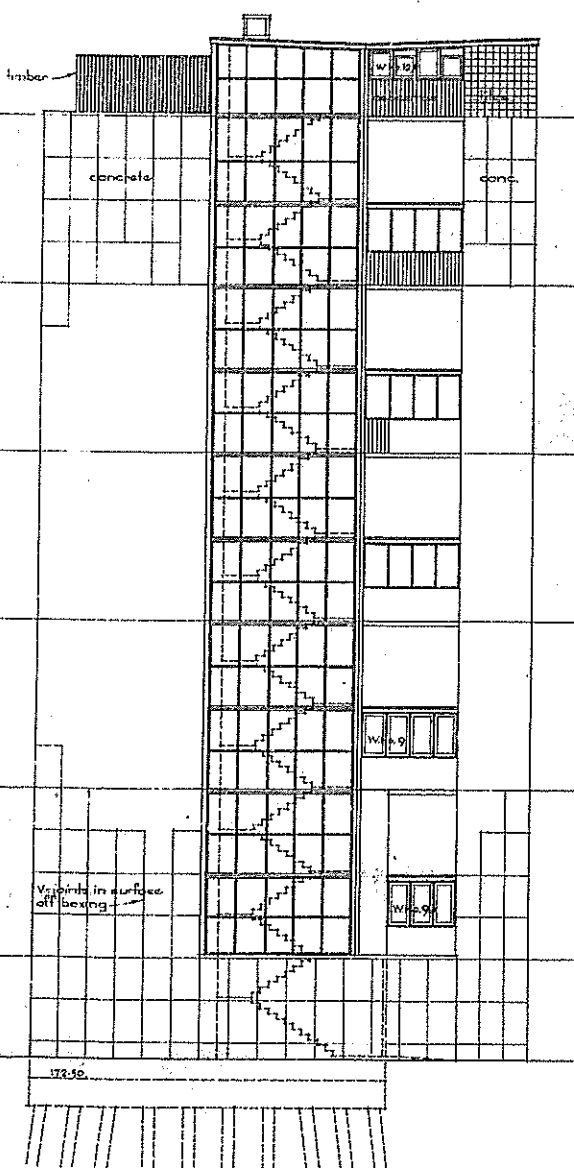
WEST · ELEVATION

Note: This sheet is to be read in conjunction with the carcass drawings

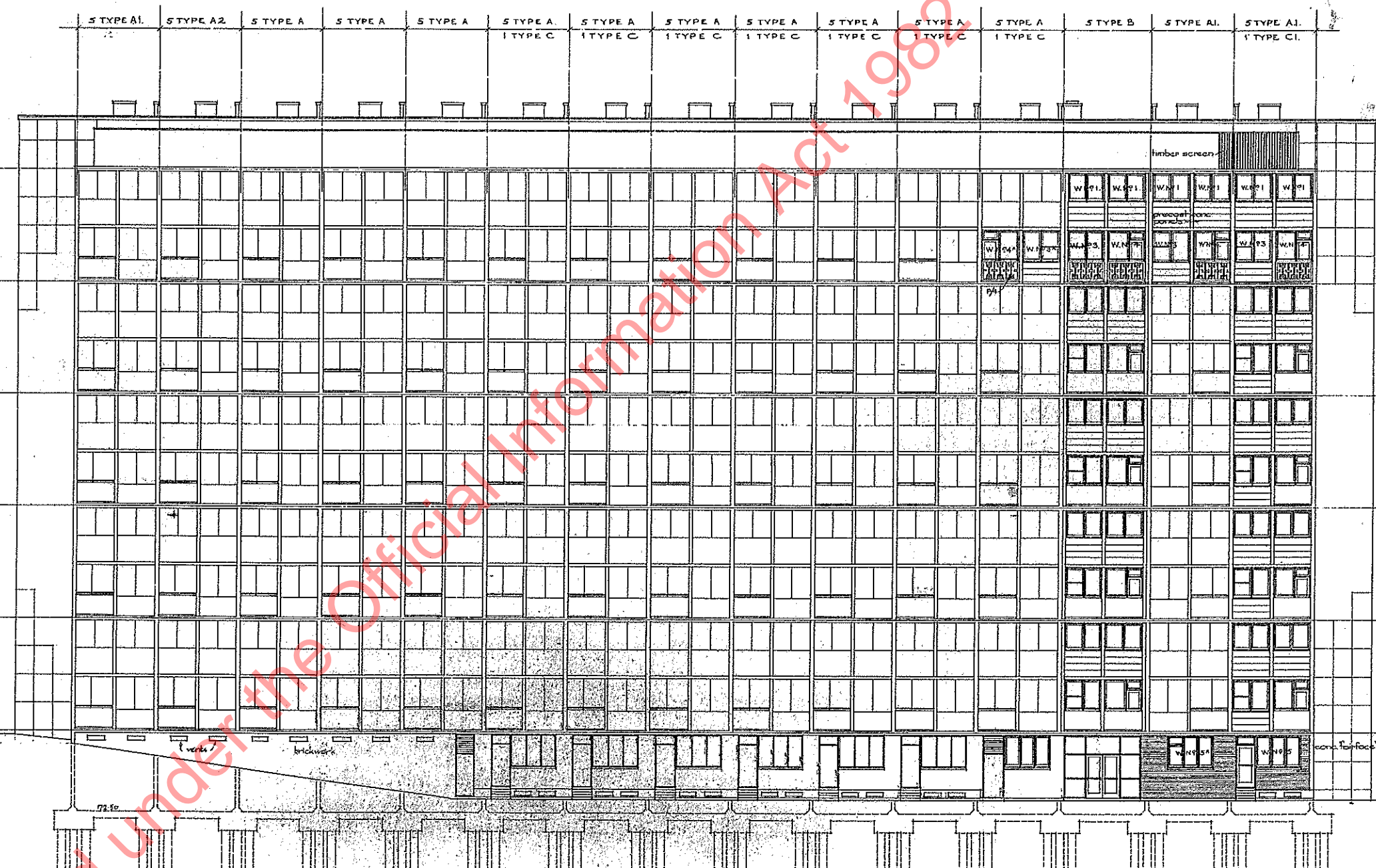
MULTI-STORY · FLATS · WELLINGTON

ELEVATIONS

DEPT. OF WORKS CIVIL DIVISION	SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"	GA6094
DESIGNED BY: H.B.E.	WORKS NO.	
DRAWN BY: WILSON	CHECKED BY: H.E.	SHEET NO. 6
DATE: July 1968	DATE: July 1968	IN SET NO. 62



NORTH · ELEVATION



EAST · ELEVATION

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Note. This sheet is to be read in conjunction with the cornice drawings.

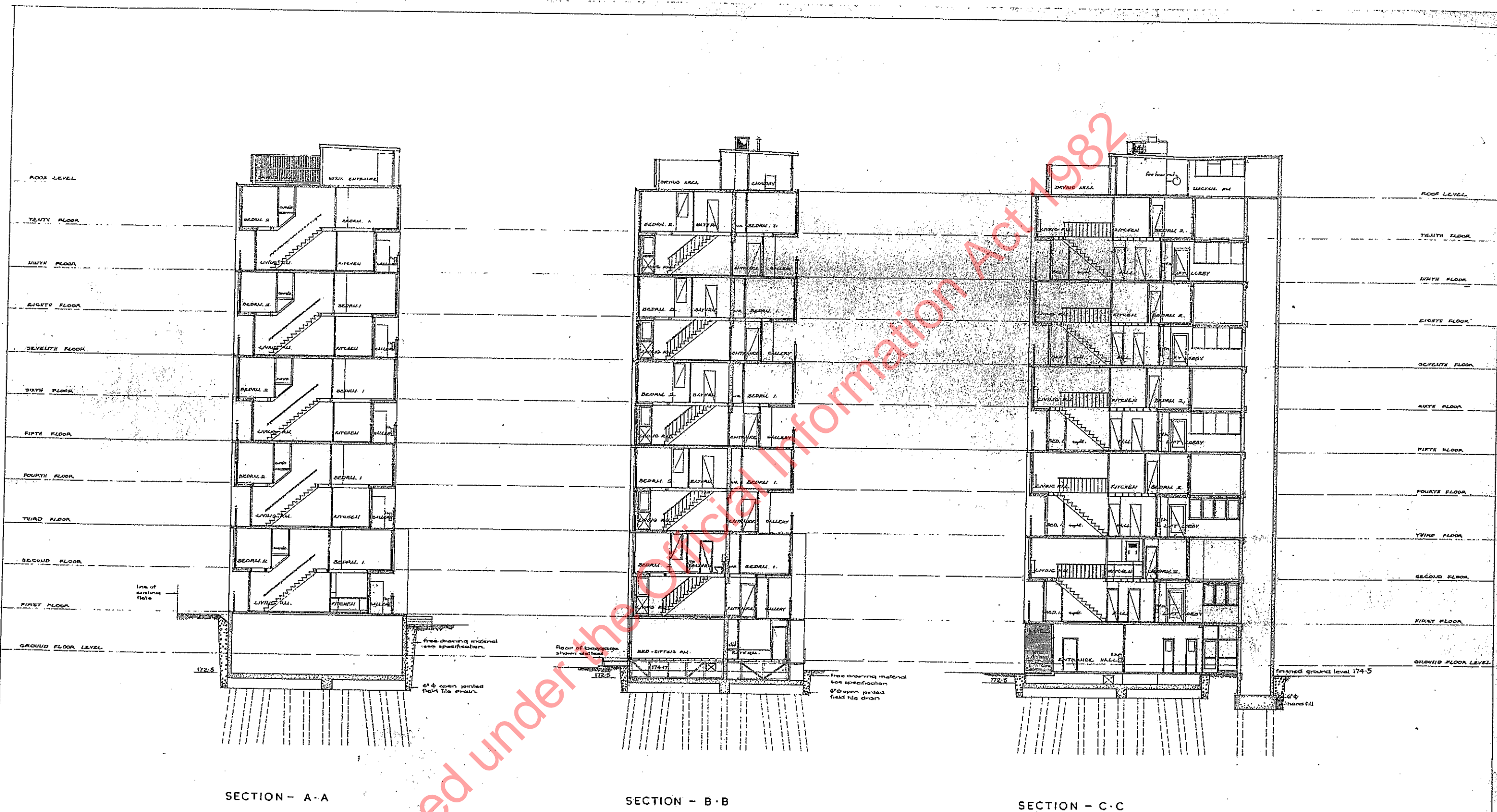
MULTI-STORY · FLATS · WELLINGTON
ELEVATIONS

1/8" = 1'-0"

H.S.F.
P.E.N.
C.F.
J.C.H. 1954

6094

5
62



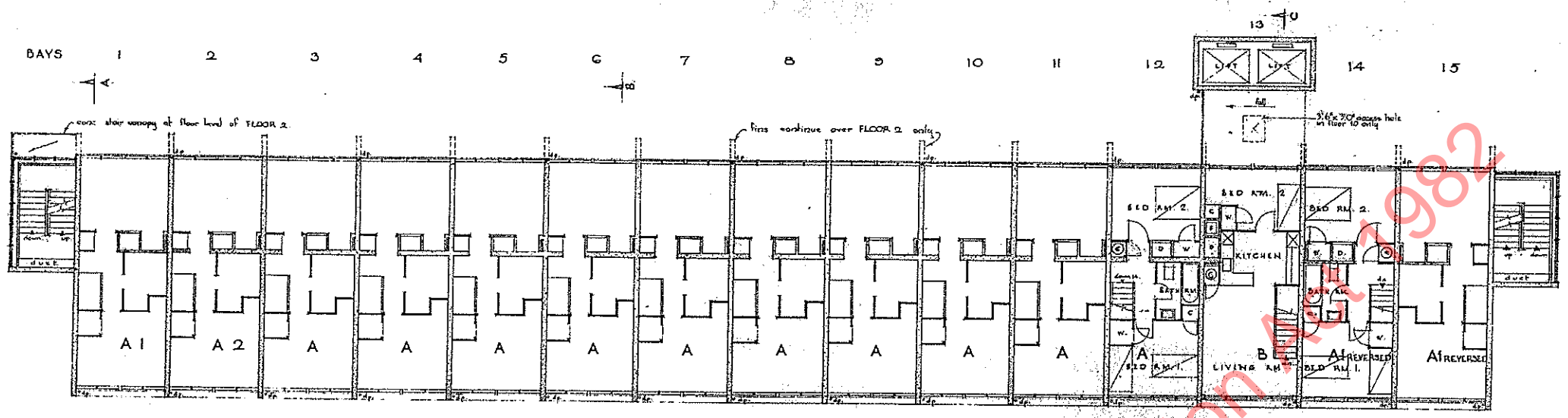
SECTION - A-A

SECTION - B-B

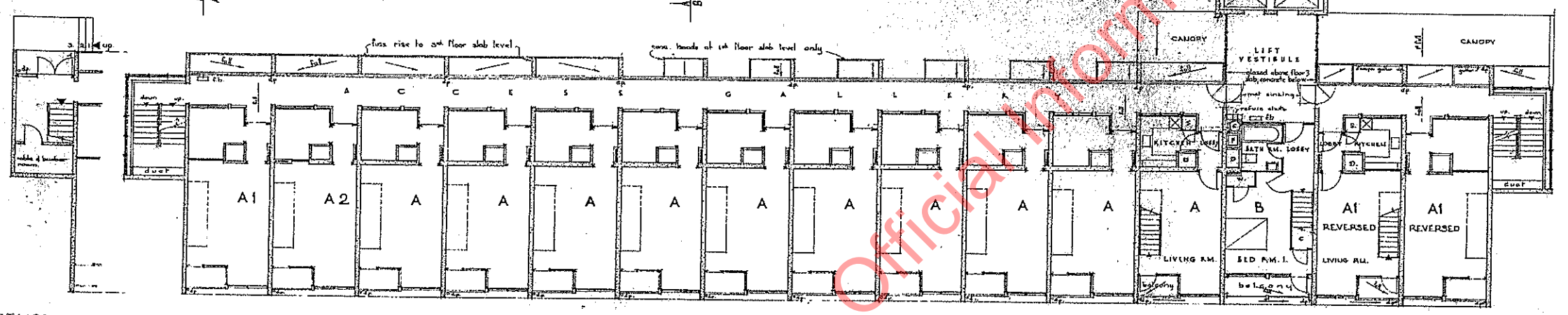
SECTION - C-C

Note: this sheet is to be read in conjunction with the 'carcase' drawings.

MULTI-STOREY FLATS WELLINGTON			
CROSS SECTIONS			
MINISTRY OF WORKS ARCHITECTURAL DIVISION	SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"	GA.6094	
F. GORDON WILSON P.A.R.I.A.	DRAWN BY: B.S.W.	WORKS No.	
GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT WELLINGTON	CHECKED BY: J.A.S.	SHEET No. 4	
	APPROVED BY: W	IN SET OF 62	
	DATE: AUGUST 1954		

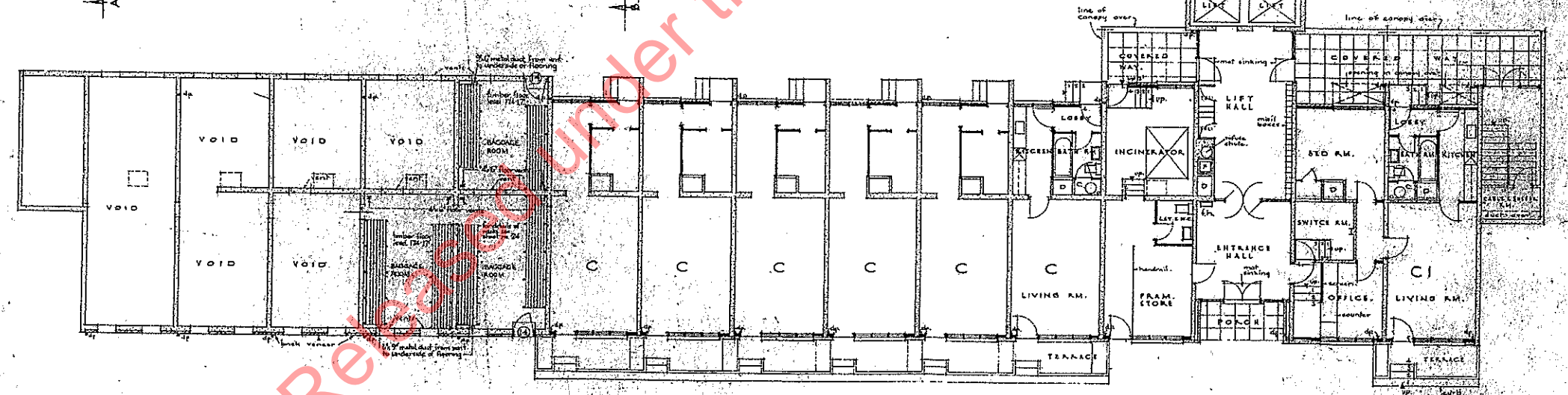


FLOORS 2, 4, 6, 8, 10.



STAIRS - FLOOR 1

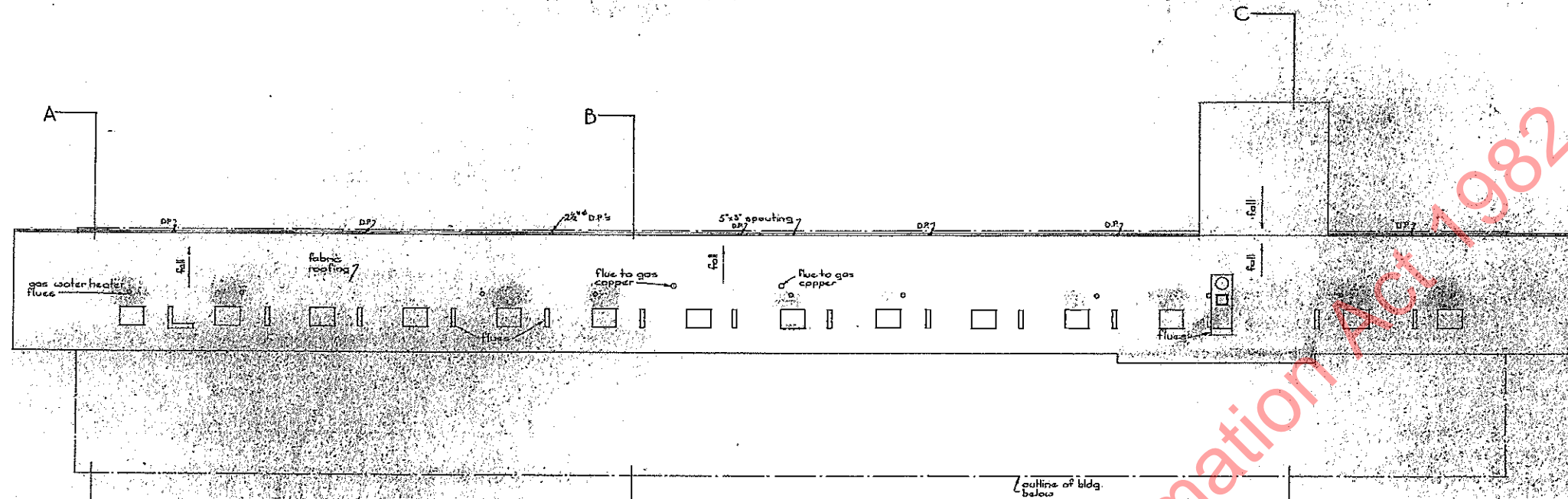
FLOORS 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.



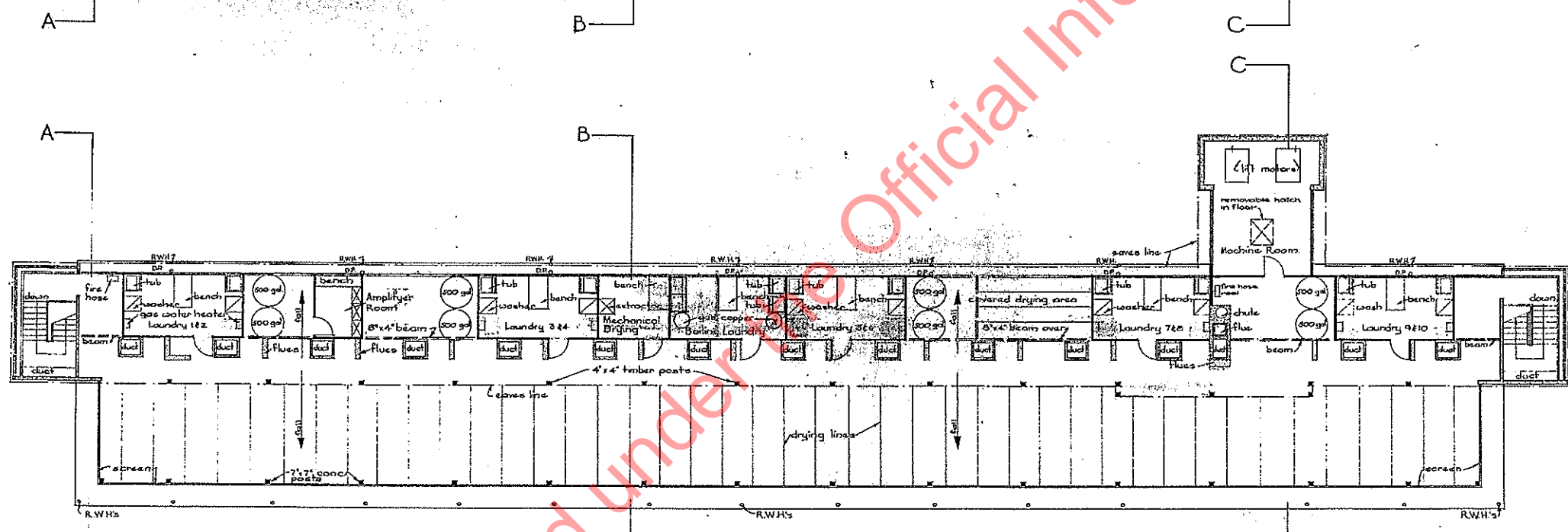
GROUND FLOOR

Note: This sheet is to be read in conjunction with the general drawings.

MINISTRY OF WORKS ARCHITECTURAL DIVISION		SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"	GA. 6034
F. GORDON WILSON P.R.A. GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT WELLINGTON		DRAWN BY: M.L.W. C.P.T. TRACED BY: M.L.W. CHECKED BY: R.S.W. APPROVED BY: J.K. DATE: 2 AUGUST 1952	
MULTI-STORY FLATS, WELLINGTON			WORKS No. SHEET No. 2 IN SET OF 22
FLOOR PLANS			



ROOF PLAN OF LAUNDRIES



ROOF PLAN

Note: This sheet to be read in conjunction with carcass drawings.

MULTI-STOREY FLATS - WELLINGTON

PLAN OF LAUNDRIES

ARCHITECTURAL DIVISION GORDON WILSON ENGINEER WELLINGTON	DRAWN BY: W.S.W. CHECKED BY: J.L. DATE: JULY 1954	GA 6094 WORKS N. 3 62
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List Entry Record

List Number: 9783

Site Reference: P170465



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Name: McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats

Other Names:	Name	Year From	Year To
	Gordon Wilson Memorial Flats		
	The Terrace State Flats		
	McLean State Flats		
	Gordon Wilson Memorial Flats		

Location: 320A and 320 The Terrace, Te Aro, Wellington 6011

List Entry Legal Description: Lot 2 DP 363050 (RT 256860) and Lot 1 DP 363050 (RT 256859), Wellington Land District.

Local Authority: Wellington City

Summary: The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats, on The Terrace in Wellington, were built in 1943-44 and 1957-59 respectively to provide state rental housing in central Wellington. This pair of buildings has outstanding historical significance because of their association with the state housing programme that was initiated by the first Labour government in 1935 and then continued under subsequent administrations. They are an expression of the culture of central government provision of social welfare as it evolved through the twentieth century. The Gordon Wilson Flats is the country's sole remaining example of 1950s high-rise state housing and is therefore uniquely placed to demonstrate that chapter of New Zealand's response to the need for housing. The buildings have special architectural significance because they are representative of the embedding of Modernist architecture as a characteristic approach in New Zealand's mid-twentieth century public architecture, and together reflect the evolution in style before and after World War Two. They are highly esteemed by members of the architectural heritage community. Gordon Wilson Flats has technological significance for the early use of the building as a seismic monitoring site, and its novel piling system. The buildings are also local landmarks in relation to their streetscape on the edge of the central city and for their relationship to the nearby Dixon Street Flats.

Designed by the Department of Housing Construction (later known as the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works), the flats were expected to appeal to central city workers, whether they were unmarried middle-aged women or the heads of small families. Having acquired the McLean estate in early 1943, the government undertook the construction of the McLean Flats under war-time provisions. The second stage of development, which was always intended for the site, was delayed for over a decade, by which time the scale and design of what became known as the Gordon Wilson Flats had been reduced and updated.

Named in honour of the highly influential former Government Architect who oversaw the design of both apartment buildings as well as New Zealand's state housing programme from the 1930s, the Gordon Wilson Flats are typical of the rectilinear character of post-war 'International Style' Modernism; by contrast the McLean Flats are more sculptural in appearance reflecting the influence of European Modernism of the interwar period. The buildings stand at right angles to one another. The McLean Flats is close to the roadway, six storeys high and accommodates 18 apartments; the Gordon Wilson Flats is set back against the rear of the site, is 11 storeys high and accommodates 12 bed-sitting rooms on the ground floor with 75 maisonettes above.

The flats were vacated, due to resident safety and building durability concerns, in the early 2010s; they were subsequently purchased by Victoria University of Wellington. The university sought to have the Gordon Wilson Flats removed

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List Entry Record

List Number: 9783

Site Reference: P170465



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

from the heritage schedule of the Wellington District Plan in 2015 but this application was subsequently declined by the Environment Court; this pivotal 2017 decision confirmed the building's significant heritage values due to a strong show of support from the architectural and social heritage community. In July 2020 the university announced plans to redevelop the site; concept plans show the retention of the McLean Flats for use as post-graduate student office space and new buildings on the site of the Gordon Wilson Flats.

List Entry Status: Listed

List Entry Type: Historic Place Category 1

List Number: 9783

Date Entered: 18 February 2021

Extent of List Entry: Extent includes the land described as Lot 2 DP 363050 (RT 256860) and Lot 1 DP 363050 (RT 256859), Wellington Land District, and the buildings known as the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats thereon. (Refer to map in Appendix 1 of the List entry report for further information).

Chattels

District Plan Listing: District Plan Gordon Wilson Flats: SCHEDULED in Operative Wellington District Plan, 17 October 2019, Heritage List: Buildings, Map Ref. No.16, symbol ref. 299 [record updated 18 Feb 2021].

NZAA Site Number: R27/270

Maori Interest: No Significant Association Identified

Heritage NZ Office: Central Regional Office

Other Information: Please note that entry on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero identifies only the heritage values of the property concerned, and should not be construed as advice on the state of the property, or as a comment of its soundness or safety, including in regard to earthquake risk, safety in the event of fire, or insanitary conditions. Archaeological sites are protected by the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, regardless of whether they are entered on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero or not. Archaeological sites include 'places associated with pre-1900 human activity, where there may be evidence relating to the history of New Zealand'. This List entry report should not be read as a statement on whether or not the archaeological provisions of the Act apply to the property (s) concerned. Please contact your local Heritage New Zealand office for archaeological advice. A fully referenced New Zealand Heritage List report is available on request from the Central Regional Office of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

General Nature of Wahi Tapu:

Section 66(1) & 66(3) Assessment:	Section 23(1)	Architectural
	Section 23(1)	Historical
	Section 23(1)	Technological
	Section 23(2)	a
	Section 23(2)	b
	Section 23(2)	e

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List Entry Record

List Number: 9783

Site Reference: P170465



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Section 23(2)	g
Section 23(2)	h
Section 23(2)	j
Section 23(2)	k

Section 66(1) Detail:

Historical Significance or Value

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats have historical significance for their association with the programme of state housing provision which became a mainstay of mid-twentieth century government policy, initiated by the first Labour government in 1935. Although not prevalent in the context of the state housing building programme, these types of high-density residential buildings demonstrate the Department of Housing Construction's interest in a range of residential options to meet differing housing needs in various locations around the country, and in this instance as a response to Wellington's population growth. The Gordon Wilson Flats is now the only remaining example of a state block of high-rise flats from the 1950s, and represents a turning point in the government's experimentation with this typology of housing. This type of building paved the way for subsequent local government housing developments in New Zealand's larger cities, altering ideas and expectations about what constituted inner-city living.

The McLean Flats have a commemorative aspect in that the name references the previous landowners and a family with notable historic associations with the city and the nation. Likewise, the Gordon Wilson Flats was named in honour of the long-standing and important Government Architect.

Architectural Significance or Value

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are significant examples of New Zealand Modernist architecture, which is evident in the external treatment, plan form and functionalism of both buildings. The buildings retain high levels of authenticity and integrity, with only minor alterations to the exterior and interior of each building; most notably the enclosure of the open porches on the north elevation of the McLean Flats. While McLean Flats follows the 1930s European Modernist approach evident in the Berhampore Flats and the Dixon Street Flats, Gordon Wilson Flats, as would be expected given its 1950s pedigree, adopts the rectilinear simplicity of International Style Modernism of the post-war era, its maisonette configuration plainly readable in its facade. Both buildings clearly embody the progressive idealism of the government's housing department as well as the government's official architectural style at mid-century, and together demonstrate that they were informed by the latest thinking in European Modernism. They are held in esteem by members of New Zealand's architectural heritage community because they exemplify the progressive policies and design practices of central government in supplying social housing in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Technological Significance or Value

Gordon Wilson Flats have technological significance as the site of innovative and important seismic data collection equipment and testing, which provided information on building performance in the quest for developing better ways of construction in earthquake-prone New Zealand. The Gordon Wilson Flats' piling system has technological significance because it was reportedly the first use in New Zealand of the technique of fixing piles to bedrock, by pre-drilling holes to varying lengths to fill with reinforcement, aggregate and then with wet mixed sand and cement, to deal with the challenges of a hillside site in a seismic location.

Section 66(3) Detail:

(a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of



New Zealand history

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats reflect the important history of social housing provision in New Zealand, an aspect that has influenced our culture and identity. The two buildings authentically represent central government's experimental approach to housing design throughout the twentieth century, both in terms of style, plan form and building technology, and schemes of increased density. The Gordon Wilson Flats, in particular, is the only remaining example in New Zealand of late 1950s high-rise state housing, and as such is of outstanding significance for its ability to reflect that chapter in New Zealand's history. It is also thought to have been New Zealand's first comprehensively instrumented building, an innovation championed at the time of being of national importance for its potential to inform the country's seismic engineering industry.

(b) The association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are directly associated with the principles and philosophy of the social welfare state as it was developed by the first Labour government and continued post-war by the first National government as they responded to housing and materials shortages. They directly represent the Department of Housing Construction's adoption of mid-century Modernist architectural principles, under the direction of influential architect Gordon Wilson, who became the Government Architect and was later commemorated in the naming of one of the buildings. Wilson and Fred Newman (architect of the McLean Flats) both served as heads of the Housing department, and both had a particular appreciation for the relationship between Modern architecture and progressive political and social ideals. McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats have special significance as representatives of the important culture of state housing in New Zealand and as physical expressions from different decades of the longstanding and competing ideas about what good quality housing looks like.

(e) The community association with, or public esteem for the place

The Gordon Wilson Flats are highly esteemed by members of the architectural heritage community, represented by the Architectural Centre, DOCOMOMO NZ and others, as repeatedly demonstrated through submission and hearing processes, articles, presentations and other advocacy for the building's retention. The 2017 Environment Court decision, which confirmed the Gordon Wilson Flats' heritage significance as successfully presented by many experts from this community, was pivotal in raising public awareness of the building's heritage values and promoting wider appreciation of Modernist architecture.

(g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats demonstrate contemporary earthquake-resistant construction methods and materials. The Gordon Wilson Flats are particularly notable for the piling system used to mitigate the challenges of the site (fixing piles to bedrock was reportedly a New Zealand first, subsequently widely adopted), and the installation of strain gauges and accelerographs in the building to provide information about regional earthquakes and their impact on building performance.

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are both exemplars of the influence of distinct veins of Modernism on twentieth-century New Zealand architecture. With the McLean Flats, the solidity of the smooth, planar wall surfaces contrasting with voids created by the window openings, and originally the open porches, coupled with the distinctive façade curve further emphasised by cantilevered brise-soleils are characteristics of the elegant Modernist architectural ideals first explored in New Zealand in the 1930s. In contrast, the scale and architectural articulation of the Gordon Wilson Flats situates it as a benchmark Modern work in New Zealand as it evolved following World War Two. Its prominent, rational, gridded front elevation facing out over the city, against the backdrop of lush bush, was as important a monument of mid-century International Style Modernism in the Wellington cityscape as the new commercial edifices rising in the CBD, such as Massey House. The contrast of

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the transparency of the glazed stairwell on the south end and the striking form of the nearly independent lift shaft on the north demonstrate not just a capable handling of Modernism, but a sophisticated and creative expression of the design mode.

(h) The symbolic or commemorative value of the place

Both buildings have some commemorative value that is embodied in their names. The McLean Flats commemorate the site's previous landowners and acknowledge the McLean family's contribution to New Zealand history. The Gordon Wilson Flats has special commemorative significance as a relatively rare memorial to an architect, being named in honour of the Government Architect who oversaw the design of both buildings and served a key role in public service for over twenty years, shaping New Zealand's state housing design since the 1930s. As high-density housing was a special interest of Gordon Wilson's, the Gordon Wilson Flats are a particularly apt building to be named in his honour.

(j) The importance of identifying rare types of historic places

The majority of social housing residences built by the New Zealand government since the first boom period of the 1930s have been in the form of single-unit detached houses, with forays into duplex or medium-density complexes. High-density tower blocks of flats account for a very small percentage of the overall number of state houses constructed, and were only ever built in our major cities. The Gordon Wilson Flats has special heritage values as the only remaining example of late-1950s high-rise state housing design in New Zealand. It is a rare physical-historical link to an uncommon aspect of the government's response to the policies, economics, design philosophies and social concerns of the 1950s.

(k) The extent to which the place forms part of a wider historical and cultural area

In tandem with the nearby Dixon Street Flats, the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are part of a historical and cultural area in inner-city Wellington that demonstrates the philosophy and implementation of mid-twentieth century state housing development in the capital city. The relationship of the buildings with examples of high- and medium-density social housing built by Wellington City Council in the near vicinity is also important as this context allows analysis of the ways that local government extended the exploration of housing models begun by central government.

Summary of Significance or Values

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats have special architectural and outstanding historical significance as two distinct examples of multi-storey state housing rental flats within a complex built by central government in the middle of the twentieth century. The situation of the two buildings from different decades on one site clearly represents the evolution of the European Modernist architectural approach adopted by the Department of Housing Construction in the 1940s and 1950s, united in their design by Gordon Wilson's oversight of government architectural design between 1936 and 1959. The buildings both have associations with architects who had a major impact on the design of social housing: Frederick Newman, who led the housing department in the 1960s, and Gordon Wilson, who is considered one of the country's most prominent, talented and influential architects. The Gordon Wilson Flats is a fitting memorial to Wilson and his outstanding contribution to New Zealand architecture, reflecting his particular interest in high-density housing and inner-city living as a way to address urban sprawl and ensure economical use of high-value land. The Gordon Wilson Flats has been the focus of considerable public debate about the heritage values of Modernist buildings over the last decade. It has galvanised the architectural community to publicly promote the values of Modernist architecture and demonstrate their esteem for the Gordon Wilson Flats as New Zealand's only remaining example of the government's particular 1950s response to housing issues, and the technological and architectural values of that period that it embodies.

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List Entry Record

List Number: 9783

Site Reference: P170465



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Statement of Wahi Tapu:

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HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero – Report for a Historic Place
McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats, WELLINGTON
(List No. 9783, Category 1)



[Blyss Wagstaff, 6 July 2020, Heritage New Zealand]

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Disclaimer

Please note that entry on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero identifies only the heritage values of the property concerned, and should not be construed as advice on the state of the property, or as a comment of its soundness or safety, including in regard to earthquake risk, safety in the event of fire, or insanitary conditions.

Archaeological sites are protected by the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, regardless of whether they are entered on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero or not. Archaeological sites include 'places associated with pre-1900 human activity, where there may be evidence relating to the history of New Zealand'. This List entry report should not be read as a statement on whether or not the archaeological provisions of the Act apply to the property (s) concerned. Please contact your local Heritage New Zealand office for archaeological advice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide evidence to support the inclusion of the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats in the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero as a Category 1 historic place.

Summary

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats, on The Terrace in Wellington, were built in 1943-44 and 1957-59 respectively to provide state rental housing in central Wellington. This pair of buildings has outstanding historical significance because of their association with the state housing programme that was initiated by the first Labour government in 1935 and then continued under subsequent administrations. They are an expression of the culture of central government provision of social welfare as it evolved through the twentieth century. The Gordon Wilson Flats is the country's sole remaining example of 1950s high-rise state housing and is therefore uniquely placed to demonstrate that chapter of New Zealand's response to the need for housing. The buildings have special architectural significance because they are representative of the embedding of Modernist architecture as a characteristic approach in New Zealand's mid-twentieth century public architecture, and together reflect the evolution in style before and after World War Two. They are highly esteemed by members of the architectural heritage community. Gordon Wilson Flats has technological significance for the early use of the building as a seismic monitoring site, and its novel piling system. The buildings are also local landmarks in relation to their streetscape on the edge of the central city and for their relationship to the nearby Dixon Street Flats.

Designed by the Department of Housing Construction (later known as the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works), the flats were expected to appeal to central city workers, whether they were unmarried middle-aged women or the heads of small families. Having acquired the McLean estate in early 1943, the government undertook the construction of the McLean Flats under war-time provisions. The second stage of development, which was always intended for the site, was delayed for over a decade, by which time the scale and design of what became known as the Gordon Wilson Flats had been reduced and updated.

Named in honour of the highly influential former Government Architect who oversaw the design of both apartment buildings as well as New Zealand's state housing programme from the 1930s, the Gordon Wilson Flats are typical of the rectilinear character of post-war 'International Style' Modernism; by contrast the McLean Flats are more sculptural in appearance reflecting the influence of

European Modernism of the interwar period. The buildings stand at right angles to one another. The McLean Flats is close to the roadway, six storeys high and accommodates 18 apartments; the Gordon Wilson Flats is set back against the rear of the site, is 11 storeys high and accommodates 12 bed-sitting rooms on the ground floor with 75 maisonettes above.

The flats were vacated, due to resident safety and building durability concerns, in the early 2010s; they were subsequently purchased by Victoria University of Wellington. The university sought to have the Gordon Wilson Flats removed from the heritage schedule of the Wellington District Plan in 2015 but this application was subsequently declined by the Environment Court; this pivotal 2017 decision confirmed the building's significant heritage values due to a strong show of support from the architectural and social heritage community. In July 2020 the university announced plans to redevelop the site; concept plans show the retention of the McLean Flats for use as post-graduate student office space and new buildings on the site of the Gordon Wilson Flats.

1. IDENTIFICATION¹

1.1. Name of Place

Name

McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats

Other Names

McLean State Flats; The Terrace State Flats; Gordon Wilson Memorial Flats

1.2. Location Information

Address

320A and 320 The Terrace

Te Aro

WELLINGTON

Wellington

Additional Location Information

E1748250; N5427637 (NZTM)

¹ This section is supplemented by visual aids in Appendix 1 of the report.

Local Authority
Wellington City Council

1.3. Legal Description

Lot 2 DP 363050 (RT 256860) and Lot 1 DP 363050 (RT 256859), Wellington Land District.

1.4. Extent of List Entry

Extent includes the land described as Lot 2 DP 363050 (RT 256860) and Lot 1 DP 363050 (RT 256859), Wellington Land District, and the buildings known as the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats thereon. (Refer to map in Appendix 1 of the List entry report for further information).

1.5. Eligibility

There is sufficient information included in this report to identify this place. This place is physically eligible for consideration as a historic place. It consists of buildings that are fixed to land which lies within the territorial limits of New Zealand.

1.6. Existing Heritage Recognition

Local Authority and Regional Authority Plan Scheduling

Gordon Wilson Flats: Scheduled in Operative Wellington District Plan, 17 October 2019, Heritage List: Buildings, map ref. 16, symbol ref. 299.²

Demolition is a restricted discretionary activity.

New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme

This site has been recorded by the New Zealand Archaeological Association. The reference is NZAA R27/270.

Other Heritage Recognition

Gordon Wilson Flats: DOCOMOMO New International Selection (2017).³

² 'Gordon Wilson Flats', Wellington City Council, <http://www.wellingtoncityheritage.org.nz/buildings/151-300/299-gordon-wilson-flats-320-the-terrace?q=>; accessed 2 August 2020

³ 'Gordon Wilson Flats', DOCOMOMO, <http://www.docomomo.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/Gordon-Wilson-Flats-DOCOMOMO-full->

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1. Historical Information

Legendary voyager Kupe is said to have explored the length of the west coast of the North Island and named geographical features in Wellington harbour.⁴ Following permanent settlement, the rangatira Tara, son of Whātonga and the eponymous ancestor of Ngāi Tara, settled at the harbour, which came to be known as Te Whanganui-a-Tara (the great harbour of Tara).⁵ In the seventeenth century Ngāti Ira of Hawke's Bay joined Ngāi Tara; Ngāti Kahungunu, Rangitāne, Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Māmoe also settled in the region. Later, in the 1820s and early 1830s, Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Mutunga and Ngāti Tama moved to Wellington from Taranaki. When the colonial settlement of Wellington commenced in 1839 land acquisition by the New Zealand Company, and then the Crown, alienated land from its Māori owners. Place names, such as Te Aro, convey the cultural landscape on which the modern city has developed.⁶

Town Sections 440 and 441 in Woolcombe Street, the future site of McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats, were granted to Robert Strang (section 440) and R. and J.M. Stokes (section 441) in 1853 and 1856 respectively, although both properties had been settled by 1842.⁷ Robert Stokes built a house called 'St Ruadhan' and the Strang family named theirs 'Dalmuir Hill'.⁸

Donald McLean (1820-77) married Robert Strang's daughter Susan at 'Dalmuir Hill' in 1851, subsequently becoming the property's owner. McLean acquired 'St Ruadhan' in 1895.⁹ McLean's son Douglas (aka Douglas Maclean, 1852-1929) inherited both properties from his father and 'St Ruadhan' became his town house when he was not in residence on his farm 'Maraekakaho' in Hawke's Bay.¹⁰ Douglas McLean, knighted in 1927, was a Member of

[fiche-2017_Low_res.pdf](#); accessed 2 August 2020

⁴ Rāwiri Taonui, 'Ngā waewae tapu – Māori exploration - Wairarapa and Wellington', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/nga-waewae-tapu-maori-exploration/page-8>, accessed 31 July 2020

⁵ Matene Love, *Te Ara o Ngā Tuna: the Path of our Ancestors*, <http://www.wcl.govt.nz/maori/wellington/TeAra1.html>; accessed 21 February 2020

⁶ Chris Maclean, 'Wellington region - Early Māori history', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/wellington-region/page-5>, accessed 31 July 2020; Morris Love, 'Te Āti Awa of Wellington', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/te-ati-awa-of-wellington>, accessed 31 July 2020

⁷ Woolcombe Street was also known as Wellington Terrace by the late 1870s, although the name Woolcombe persisted until it was officially changed to The Terrace in 1937. *Evening Post*, 23 May 1927, p. 8; 6 October 1928, p. 17 and 6 August 1937, p. 3

⁸ *Evening Post*, 6 October 1928, p. 17 and 6 September 1938, p. 7. See also *New Zealand Times*, 26 September 1874, p. 7

⁹ *Wellington Independent*, 30 August 1851, p. 1

¹⁰ *Nelson Evening Mail*, 9 February 1929, p. 6; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 25 February 1908, p. 2

Parliament and noted animal breeder.¹¹ The contents of McLean's two Wellington houses were put up for auction in August 1941, following the death of his wife Lady Florence in 1940. Eventually both dwellings were demolished to make way for the site's redevelopment by the government.¹²

State housing flats

The first Labour government initiated a programme of state housing construction after it was elected in 1935. There had been previous government housing schemes, such as under the Workers' Dwelling Act of 1905 and by the Railways Department for staff. However, the first Labour government's programme represented state housing's 'first boom period'.¹³ Houses and, to a lesser extent, flats were built throughout New Zealand to increase both the nation's housing stock and the quality. Although the English cottage style was the dominant mode for the design of early state houses, the impact of Modernism was also felt in some single-family and duplex dwellings and it was to provide the basis for the government's apartment buildings, beginning with the Berhampore (Centennial) Flats in 1939-40.¹⁴

After a brief initial period when private architects provided designs, the Department of Housing Construction (DHC) undertook the planning of state houses and flats and oversaw their construction. Architects within the DHC, led by chief architect Francis Gordon Wilson (1900-59) between 1936 and 1948, were interested in the aesthetic and societal potential of European Modernist architecture to create high quality living environments that made a positive contribution to urban form.¹⁵ Modernism was also attractive to architects and builders because its emphasis on planar form over applied ornament was an economical response to contemporary material and labour shortages.¹⁶

Although it was thought that 'in a country such as New Zealand ... the detached house is the ideal', apartment buildings and blocks of flats were erected by the government because they could achieve higher residential densities than single-family state houses, accommodate the shortages brought about by the Second World War, and also, in some settings, facilitate

¹¹ It was reported by city historian Louis Ward that the McLeans' holdings were the 'only remaining town acres existent in Wellington in 1929'. Ward, Louis E., *Early Wellington*, Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, Auckland, 1928, p. 322

¹² *Evening Post*, 31 July 1941, p. 16

¹³ 'The state steps in and out', NZHistory, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/we-call-it-home/the-state-steps-in-and-out>, updated 21-Jul-2014

¹⁴ Julia Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command: A History and Analysis of State Rental Flats in New Zealand, 1935-49', MArch thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1997

¹⁵ Julia Gatley, 'Wilson, Francis Gordon', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 2000, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/wilson-francis-gordon>, accessed 19 May 2020

¹⁶ Julia Gatley, 'For Modern Living – Government Blocks of Flats', John Wilson, ed., *Zeal and Crusade – The Modern Movement in Wellington*, Te Waihora Press, Christchurch, 1996, p. 55

urban renewal through slum clearance.¹⁷ Notwithstanding these advantages, the early multi-storey blocks of state flats were more expensive to build per unit than single-family state houses; as a result tenants of the flats were charged a higher rental.¹⁸ Through newspaper advertisements and opinion pieces, the Labour government worked to counter the prevailing negative public opinion that equated the term 'flats' with 'a tall barracks-like structure with poor accommodation and poor appearance'.¹⁹

Tenancy of state housing accommodation was achieved by applying to the State Advances Corporation. Typically only a small number of applicants specified a preference for a flat over a house.²⁰ It was generally assumed that the flats would house childless couples and single people, but the provision of two-bedroom units clearly signalled they were intended for family occupancy.²¹ Priority access to state housing, including flats, was given to ex-servicemen and women even before the war had ended.²²

The DHC, which had been established in 1936, was renamed the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works (MOW) in 1943. By 1949, when it lost power, the Labour government had built a total of 13 blocks of flats in Auckland and Wellington; five of these were multi-storey buildings.²³ This accounted for around 1.5 per cent of the total number of state residences constructed.²⁴ Medium-density blocks of flats were also built in a number of urban centres around the country in the late 1950s; an example of this typology was the Rolleston Street Flats of 1955 in Mount Cook, Wellington.²⁵

¹⁷ C. Firth, with illustrations selected by Gordon F Wilson, *State Housing in New Zealand*, Ministry of Works, Wellington, 1949, p. 33. By early 1949, 480 state rental flats had been built in contrast to 28,399 state houses; Julia Gatley, 'Going Up Rather Than Out – State Rental Flats in New Zealand 1935-1949', Brookes, Barbara, ed., *At Home in New Zealand – History, Houses, People*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000, pp. 144-146, fn 2-3. See also, Ben Schrader, 'A prominent marker of an alternative vision: the Gordon Wilson Flats', August 2017, <https://bayheritage.co.nz/2017/08/17/a-prominent-marker-of-an-alternative-vision-the-gordon-wilson-flats/>, accessed 31 July 2020; Schrader, Ben, *We Call it Home – A History of State Housing in New Zealand*, Reed Publishing Limited, Wellington, 2005, pp. 102-107.

¹⁸ Gatley 'Going Up', p. 152

¹⁹ Gatley 'Going Up', p. 147; quotation is from Firth, 1949, p. 34

²⁰ It was reported in early March 1943 that the government had received around 600 applications for flats in Wellington and the Hutt Valley out of a total of 7396 applications that were then described by Prime Minister Fraser as being currently unsatisfied. *Evening Post*, 2 March 1943, p. 4. See also *New Zealand Herald*, 3 March 1943, p. 4

²¹ Gatley 'Going Up', p. 147

²² *ibid.*, p. 150; 'State Advances Corporation of New Zealand report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 1944, *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944, Session I, B-13, pp. 5-6

²³ Multi-storey flats built were the Dixon Street Flats, McLean Flats, Hanson Street Flats, all in Wellington, and the Symonds Street and Lower Greys Avenue Flats in Auckland. Gatley, 'Going Up', pp. 141-42. The Gordon Wilson Flats and Auckland's Upper Greys Avenue Flats were high-rise apartment buildings built under the first National government. 'Greys Avenue Flats', *Home & Building*, 1 June 1959, pp. 62-64, 66-67, 93 & 95; Gatley, 'Going Up', p. 153

²⁴ Gatley, 'Going Up', p. 140

²⁵ Kenneth John Davis, "'A liberal turn of mind": the architectural work of F. Gordon Wilson, 1936-1959, A cultural analysis', B. Arch. research report, Victoria University of Wellington, 1987, pp. 69, 76. The flats at 21 Rolleston Street, Mt Cook, were demolished in 2020. Kainga Ora, 'What's planned and timelines', updated 29 September 2020, URL: <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/developments-and-programmes/what-were-building/mount-cook-wellington/whats-planned-and-timelines/>, accessed 3 November 2020

Meanwhile a National Housing Conference held in 1953 reframed government housing policy to some extent, placing a greater emphasis upon private provision of affordable houses for purchase by families. The Group Housing Scheme was the primary vehicle developed by the first National government to increase single-family home numbers, but 'encouragement [was] also being given to the building of blocks of residential flats'.²⁶ High-density housing was seen by the government at this time as a step 'to arrest the urban sprawl' and 'stop abnormal use of first-class land close to built-up areas'.²⁷ To that end it was reported in 1955 that '[t]he Government is proceeding with the building of large blocks of multi-story flats in Wellington and Auckland, each to contain 80 two-level two-bedroom maisonette flats, and smaller blocks in other cities both for rental and sale'.²⁸ After the completion of the Gordon Wilson Flats and Auckland's Upper Greys Avenue Flats in the late 1950s, central government abandoned such high-density housing models, favouring instead single-family and medium-density, low-rise residential forms. Nevertheless high-density social housing developments were still being built in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, by local, rather than central, government.²⁹

McLean Flats

The concentration of state rental flat construction in Wellington is an expression of the growth of the capital city in the mid-twentieth century within an environment in which building sites were limited by both the topography and historic development of the inner suburbs.

Named in honour of the previous landowners, the McLean (State) Flats were erected in 1943-44 by the first Labour government. Minister of Housing Robert Semple announced in February 1943 that the McLean estate on The Terrace had been purchased by the government for housing purposes; construction of the first block of what was to be a staged work programme was under way by late April 1943.³⁰ The government had been criticised for

²⁶ *The New Zealand Official Year-Book 1955*; https://www3.stats.govt.nz/New_Zealand_Official_Yearbooks/1955/NZOYB_1955.html, accessed 31 July 2020. See also, Ferguson, Gael, *Building the New Zealand Dream*, Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1994, p. 193

²⁷ The first quote in this sentence is from Housing Minister Dean Eyre, 'State awake to need for flats', *Auckland Star*, 10 August 1957, p.3; and the second quote is from Commissioner of Works F.M. Hanson, 'Urgent need for more flats to counter sprawl problems', *Auckland Star*, 9 August 1957, p.5. References provided in Pers comm. Ben Schrader (Vice-chair, Historic Places Wellington) to Heritage New Zealand, 'Re: proposed listing of McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats', 12 October 2020

²⁸ *The New Zealand Official Year-Book 1955*. See also, Ferguson, Gael, *Building the New Zealand Dream*, Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1994, p. 193

²⁹ See for example the Arlington Housing complex in Te Aro, Wellington (1964-76). Julia Gatley (ed.), *Long Live the Modern – New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2008, pp. 202-3

³⁰ *Evening Post* 3 February 1943, p. 3; 28 April 1943, p. 3; 5 May 1943, p. 3. See also *Press* 4 February 1943, p. 4; *Gisborne Herald*, 4 February 1943, p. 4; *Manawatu Standard*, 29 April 1943, p. 5 and *Otaki Mail*, 30 April 1943, p. 1

the exclusive provision of one-bedroom units in the Dixon Street Flats (1940-44), so of the McLean Flats' 18 flats five were two-bedroom units.³¹

The lead architect for the project was Frederick Newman (1900-1964), although Ernst Anton Plischke was involved in preparing the original design concept for the site.³² Born in Vienna as Frederick Neumann, Newman came to New Zealand as a refugee in 1939 and gained work in various government departments, starting with the DHC. McLean Flats may have been the first major project he completed, in a career which later saw him appointed the Ministry of Work's Housing Architect, and a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects.³³ Like other émigré architects, Newman imported European experience and the Modernist approach and principles to architecture.³⁴ Newman brought strong socialist ideals to his design work, contributing through government housing projects to the realisation of 'New Zealand as a field for ideological experimentation'.³⁵ As Housing Architect from 1956 a particular focus of Newman's was to 'provide socially responsive proposals for medium- and high-density rental accommodation'; designs for the Star Flats and various duplex and multi-unit flats, and also a change in appearance of state houses, date from his tenure.³⁶

The McLean Flats were built under war-time provisions for essential works. In 1943 it was expected that the building would provide temporary dormitory accommodation for Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) members before becoming state rental accommodation.³⁷ In the event the WAAF's and WAAC's were housed elsewhere, although one of the two historic houses on the site was briefly used as a mess before being converted into two temporary flats for use by large families; this building was later demolished to make way for the Gordon Wilson Flats.³⁸

³¹ 'Housing – Erection of flats - The Terrace (McLean Flats', SAC1-242, National Archives, Wellington; Gatley 'Going Up', p. 151

³² Andrew Leach identifies Fred Newman as being responsible for the bulk of the McLean Flats drawings. Andrew Leach, 'Public Service: Social Factors in the Architecture of F.H. Newman', *The Journal of New Zealand Studies*, No. 1 (2002), p. 114, <https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/inzs/article/view/83>, accessed 2 August 2020. Ernst Plischke prepared drawings such as that published by the *Evening Post* in 1943, that show Newman made revisions to the McLean block such as widening the curved rooms that project out towards The Terrace on the building's eastern side. Plischke is not recorded as having claimed The Terrace project as his own. 'A start has been made on the erection of a State block of 95 flats on a portion of the estate of the late Sir R.D.D. McLean, the Terrace...', *Evening Post*, 5 May 1943; Pers comm. Dr Robin Skinner to Heritage New Zealand, 'Submission on the Heritage List proposal for the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga List No 9783, Category 1)', n.d. (received 13 October 2020), p.2

³³ Newman was designing the Symonds Street Flats from 1942, but this was not completed until 1947. Leach, 'Public Service: Social factors in the architecture of F.H. Newman', p.114, pp.123-124; Lewis E. Martin, *Built for Us: the work of Government and Colonial Architects 1860s to 1960s*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2004, p. 161

³⁴ *ibid*, pp. 110, 113-114; Gatley, *Long Live the Modern*, p. 4

³⁵ In 1938, John A. Lee, Under-Secretary to the Minister of Finance and responsible for Housing between 1936-1939, published *Socialism in New Zealand*, which indicated the 'international perception of New Zealand as a socialist country operating under a democratic government model.' Newman owned a first edition of this book and 'took seriously his own responsibility to uphold values of social morality and equity within New Zealand society.' Leach, 'Public Service: Social factors in the architecture of F.H. Newman', pp. 114-116

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 124

³⁷ Gatley 'For Modern Living', p. 56

³⁸ *Evening Post* 19 May 1944, p. 4

The McLean Flats were built by W. Angus Limited from reinforced concrete with 'special attention to earthquake resistance'.³⁹ Two earthquakes centred near Masterton that occurred on 24 June and 2 August of 1942 caused extensive damage in Wellington and were a reminder of the need for earthquake-resistant construction in the city.⁴⁰ The 1929 Murchison and 1931 Hawkes' Bay earthquakes had already led to changes to the law in regard to earthquake-resistant construction, which was embodied in the 1935 building code.⁴¹

By September 1944 the flats were almost ready for occupation. Among the early residents of the McLean Flats was Helen Heketa, the mother of Private John Heketa of the 28th Māori Battalion who died in Italy on 23 September 1944.⁴² Mrs Heketa also appears to have been the widow of an ex-serviceman and, therefore, was likely to have been on the priority list for state housing.⁴³

McLean Flats featured in the 1946 film *Housing in New Zealand* as representing 'the forms of future cities – tall, white buildings rising out of the past'.⁴⁴ The film documents the desperate need for housing at the time, complicated by difficulties obtaining construction materials due to post-war shortages. McLean Flats was used as an example of state housing which catered to those who wanted, or needed, to be in the hustle and bustle of the city; but it was also acknowledged that this was not everyone's ideal. The flats were also illustrated in Cedric Firth's 1949 booklet *State Housing in New Zealand*, for which Gordon Wilson chose the illustrations, although the text makes no mention of the building.

Gordon Wilson Flats

The second, somewhat delayed, stage of development undertaken on the former McLean estate involved the erection of the Gordon Wilson Flats.⁴⁵ Although a high-rise scheme of similar scale for the site had been published in the *Evening Post* in 1943, the design was

³⁹ *Evening Post*, 28 April 1943, p. 3. W Angus Ltd (est. 1924) undertook reconstruction work after the 1931 Hawkes' Bay earthquake and later gained a number of government contracts, including the Chief Post Office in Whanganui (1939-40) and the lower level works for the Beehive in Wellington (1969-72). See Figure 5.

⁴⁰ Eileen McSaveney, 'Historic earthquakes - The 1942 Wairarapa earthquakes', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/historic-earthquakes/page-9>, accessed 19 May 2020

⁴¹ Eileen McSaveney, 'Earthquakes - Building for earthquake resistance'. See also, Belton-Brown, Greg, 'Revolution or Evolution? The Response of the Law to Earthquakes in New Zealand 1848-1948', *Canterbury Law Review*, Vol. 18, 2012, pp. 213-231

⁴² <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C25707?n=john%20heketa&ordinal=0&from=%2Fwar-memorial%2Fonline-cenotaph%2Fsearch>

⁴³ Helen Heketa's husband was Tarakitai (Tai) Heketa, who was a member of the 6th Māori Battalion in the First World War. He died in London in 1921. 'Tarakitai Heketa', Cenotaph, <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C74527?n=heketa&w=World%20War%20I%2C%201914-1918&ordinal=0&from=%2Fwar-memorial%2Fonline-cenotaph%2Fsearch>, accessed 5 August 2020; 'Deaths', *Evening Post*, 20 September 1921, p. 1

⁴⁴ *Housing in New Zealand*, part 2 (1946), Archives New Zealand, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mbgu8fluKug>, accessed 3 August 2020

⁴⁵ See Figure 1

finalised during the term of the first National government (1949-57), by which time wartime building restrictions had been lifted but concern about the negative impacts of suburban sprawl was increasing.⁴⁶

The Gordon Wilson Flats are a redesign of the block originally planned to extend the McLean Flats.⁴⁷ Plans dated May 1947 show the intention at that time was to build a curved link containing six flats between the rear of the McLean Flats and a new L-shaped block containing 52 flats in total. This did not eventuate and by 1954 the design had been reduced to a single narrow building, with major similarities to the block being designed in tandem for the Upper Grey's Avenue site in Auckland.⁴⁸

The project had resumed in 1953, and working drawings for stage two of the Terrace Flats were signed off by Gordon Wilson, now the Government Architect, in August 1954; the local district office then undertook the detailed design work for the building.⁴⁹ MOW architect Jack Wight appears to have been responsible for the technical design.⁵⁰ Wellington District Architect for the MOW with oversight of the project was John Blake-Kelly, who later served as the Government Architect; MOW Clerk of Works was R. Patterson. Private contractors Downer & Company Limited (est. 1933), and McKenzie Thomson Hoskins Limited were awarded the contract; foreman of works was W. Christensen.⁵¹

The piling system used in the Gordon Wilson Flats was reportedly a New Zealand first; the challenging hillside site and the presence of fill necessitated piling to rock, with the longest

⁴⁶ Although Ernst Plischke has been credited with input into the design of the Gordon Wilson Flats, Gordon Wilson was ultimately responsible for the design of both of the buildings erected on the McLean estate. Plischke resigned from the public service in 1947, many years before the design of the Gordon Wilson Flats was finalised and construction commenced. His influence was in earlier concept sketches, such as that published in the *Evening Post* on 5 May 1943. Gatley 'Going Up' p. 153; 'A start has been made on the erection of a State block of 95 flats on a portion of the estate of the late Sir R.D.D. McLean, the Terrace...', *Evening Post*, 5 May 1943; Linda Tyler, 'Plischke, Ernst Anton', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 2000, updated November, 2007, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5p31/plischke-ernst-anton>, accessed 2 August 2020

⁴⁷ Gatley 'For Modern Living', p. 59

⁴⁸ The leg of the new block was to have extended on an oblique angle towards the rear of the site with an entrance hall and lift hall at the meeting of the three sections of the Terrace Flats as a whole. In March 1954 Wellington City Council (WCC) had notified the MOW that it intended to build a new highway through the back of the government's housing site. By this date what was to become the Gordon Wilson Flats had been reduced to a single narrow building that was independent of the McLean Flats, although close to its north-west corner. W.C.C. City Engineer's Department files, 6/1149, 1948-1981, Wellington City Council Archives, 00009-6/1149. The building's similarities with the Upper Greys Avenue Flats are discussed in Julia Gatley and Gina Hochstein, 'Like Gordon Wilson, Minus the Heritage Protection: Auckland's Upper Grey's Avenue Flats, 1954-1959', *Historiographies of Technology & Architecture: Proceedings of the 35th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand*, Wellington, 4-7 July 2018, URL https://www.sahanz.net/wp-content/uploads/SAHANZ_18_Gatley_Corrected2020.pdf, accessed 22 October 2020

⁴⁹ 'Gordon Wilson Flats', Wellington City Council; Dr Robin Skinner, 'Submission on the Heritage List proposal for the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga List No 9783, Category 1)', p.2

⁵⁰ Dr Robin Skinner, 'Submission on the Heritage List proposal for the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga List No 9783, Category 1)', p.3; 'Multi Unit Flats - the Terrace,' file note, 19 July 1957. 'Housing - flats: official opening general' AEFM 19224 W1552 HD1W1552, 19, file 1/19/0 pt 2, Archives New Zealand, Wellington

⁵¹ 'Gordon Wilson Flats' Heritage Assessment, Archifact Limited, 2015, p. 10, https://wellington.govt.nz/~media/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/district-plan/changes/active-changes-variations/files/plan_change_81/a3_2.pdf?la=en, accessed 5 August 2020

piles being 14.6 metres in length.⁵² Pre-drilled holes were filled with reinforcement and aggregate and then filled with wet mixed sand and cement, left to set for a few months.⁵³ The maisonette design was adopted because of advantages such as the timber flooring between the two levels of the maisonettes reducing the overall load of the building on its foundations.⁵⁴

Construction delays meant that the foundation stone was not laid by Dean Eyre, Minister of Housing, until 6 August 1957. The Labour government returned to power in December of the same year. Gordon Wilson died suddenly in February 1959, and before the flats were finally opened in mid-1959 a decision was made to name them in his honour.⁵⁵ The total cost of the build was given as £372,000 in July 1959.⁵⁶

Open days held in the first week of April 1959 were poorly attended and those who inspected the units complained that there was inadequate storage, no room for a refrigerator or a washing machine in the kitchen, and that the open staircase in the living room would make the maisonettes draughty and hard to heat.⁵⁷ In the same month screening was undertaken of the 644 applications received for the 86 units available in the building (a flat for the caretaker was in addition to this number).⁵⁸ While it had been determined by mid-May who was to be offered each of the twelve bedsits, there were initially only 30 approvals for the two-bedroom maisonettes. With a relaxation of both the maximum income threshold and requirements around sufficiency of income to cover the rent, a total of 45 approvals had been reached by the end of the month. Although a ballot was signalled as a possibility to select tenants if the building was heavily oversubscribed it does not appear that one was ever held, although by the end of 1959 there was a waiting list.⁵⁹

⁵² 'Test Pile of Novel Type', *Evening Post*, 4 March 1955, cited in 'Gordon Wilson Flats: 320 The Terrace, Te Aro, Wellington – Heritage Assessment for Victoria University of Wellington, July 2020', Archifact Limited, 2020, p. 41

⁵³ 'Gordon Wilson Flats', Wellington City Council

⁵⁴ Descriptive report titled 'Gordon Wilson Flats The Terrace, Wellington', submitted to NZ Institute of Architects by FM Hanson, Commissioner of Works, letter dated 13 January 1960, 'Accommodation: McLean Estate Multi-Storey Flats, The Terrace, Wellington', AAQB-W3950-889-Box520, Archives New Zealand, Wellington; 'Annual Report of the Director Housing Construction: Report for the Year Ending 31 March 1954', *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1954, DI, pp.49-50

⁵⁵ Government press release by Mr Fox, Minister of Housing, dated 8 April 1959, SAC1-Box 245, Archives New Zealand, Wellington; 'National Loss – death of Mr F Gordon Wilson, Government Architect', *Home & Building*, 1 April 1959, p. 21

⁵⁶ Letter from LCE Malt, District Commissioner of Works, to the Commissioner of Works, dated 22 July 1959, 'Government Buildings: Residential Accommodation: F Gordon Wilson Flats, The Terrace', AATE-W3388-Box 29, Archives New Zealand, Wellington

⁵⁷ See SAC1-Box 245, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. See Figure 4.

⁵⁸ Fill, Barbara and Murray, Russell, 'Heritage Assessment – Gordon Wilson Flats, 320 The Terrace, Wellington' for Housing New Zealand Corporation, May 2010, p. 9. Before the building had been completed the proposed caretaker's flat on the ground floor, next to the office supplied for him, was converted into two bedsits.

⁵⁹ State Advances Corporation memos dated 13 May 1959, 22 May 1959 and 26 May 1959, SAC1-Box 245, Archives New Zealand, Wellington; Schrader, 'A prominent marker of an alternative vision: the Gordon Wilson Flats'

After some delays finishing the building to the government's satisfaction, the flats were released to the State Advances Corporation for occupancy by tenants from 5 June 1959; the caretaker Gerald Higson had earlier uplifted keys for Flat 103 on 9 May.⁶⁰ Contrary to the prevailing notion that social housing was built for low-income individuals and families, rents were higher than usual for these state housing units on the basis of the cost of construction and future maintenance requirements, and the accommodation was aimed at workers and middle-income earners.⁶¹ The government felt that the location of the flats would be attractive to prospective tenants and facilitate savings for them in travel time and expenditure.⁶²

Foundation tenants photographed by the *Evening Post* as they were moving into the flats in mid-June 1959 included Mrs C. Glennie, a widow with two teenage daughters who originally hailed from Scotland, and Mr and Mrs W. Shaw and their two young sons. The bedsits were originally allocated to single working women over 45 years of age and two-bedroom maisonettes were assigned to families, some led by single mothers.⁶³ Urban historian Ben Schrader notes that 'numerous single men had applied for the bedsitter flats even though they were ineligible and many couples had applied for the maisonettes in the view of marrying after finding suitable accommodation...the occupational profile of tenants was diverse and included: milkmen, bakers, [a] plumber, clerks and civil servants.'⁶⁴ Schrader considers that this offers 'a rare and fascinating perspective on how a socially diverse mix of tenants lived alongside each other and negotiated social relations in a high-density environment'.⁶⁵ In later years some tenants complained about the noise from neighbours' children, but there were few demands for transfers. Many tenants were particularly appreciative of having their own bathrooms, after years of shared facilities in rooming-houses.⁶⁶

Gas water heating was initially installed to demonstrate supply advantages at a time when security of supply for electricity was under increasing pressure.⁶⁷ The system resulted in higher construction costs and was replaced in two stages (1962 and 1968) by electricity when

⁶⁰ R Patterson, Building Inspector, memo 94/3/10/3, 'Government Buildings: Residential Accommodation: F Gordon Wilson Flats, The Terrace', AATE-W3388-Box 29, Archives New Zealand, Wellington

⁶¹ Julia Gatley and Gina Hochstein, 'Like Gordon Wilson, Minus the Heritage Protection: Auckland's Upper Grey's Avenue Flats, 1954-1959', np (pdf document p.9)

⁶² *Evening Post*, 18 March 1959

⁶³ See SAC1-Box 245, ArchivesNew Zealand, Wellington.

⁶⁴ Schrader, 'A prominent marker of an alternative vision: the Gordon Wilson Flats'

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

the gas heaters' ignition mechanism and flues did not meet the required performance standards and were causing health concerns.⁶⁸

The Gordon Wilson Flats was the first building in New Zealand to be comprehensively instrumented for seismic engineering research.⁶⁹ Seismic monitoring equipment—strain gauges and strong-motion accelerographs—was installed by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) at the time of the building's construction; the strain gauges likely still remain in the foundations.⁷⁰ The equipment was a precursor to the accelerographs installed in a range of building types by the DSIR from 1963 onwards. These instruments provided useful information and field experience for DSIR scientists, as well as being of interest to the leader of Japan's institutes of seismic research in high-rise construction, Toshihiko Hisada.⁷¹ Scientific papers were published with reference to the data collected in the building and the development for commercial sale, both nationally and internationally, of the M.O.2 Accelerograph by DSIR staff in the mid-1960s could be considered an outcome of the programme of scientific seismic measurement.⁷² The strong motion accelerograph provided information pertaining to building performance in the event of an earthquake and thus created a New Zealand-specific data set for engineers wanting to assess 'earthquake resistance in large structures' during earthquakes.⁷³ As the DSIR director of the research stated:

⁶⁸ A petition signed by twelve tenants requesting replacement of the gas water heaters was presented to the Director of the State Advances Corporation in July 1964 but the matter took some years to resolve. Gas heaters in the living room of each flat were disconnected in October 1959, following two explosions caused by failure of the safety valve, and then modified before being replaced. The Sapphire gas heater in Flat 414 on the 7th floor exploded on 17 August 1959. The tenant, Mrs NFM Lowe, received facial injuries as a result. Letter from JV Jebson, Director of Housing, to the General Manager of the State Advances Corporation, date 10 May 1962, 'Accommodation: McLean Estate Multi-Storey Flats, The Terrace, Wellington', AAQB-W3950-889-Box520, Archives New Zealand, Wellington; 'Housing Management – Pensioner flats, Gordon Wilson, The Terrace', SAC1W11956-48, Archives New Zealand, Wellington; AH Peat, Mechanical Inspector, letter dated 21 August 1959 to Mr Hamlyn and Memo from PM Hanson, Commissioner of Works to the District Commissioner of Works, dated 19 October 1959, 'Government Buildings: Residential Accommodation: F Gordon Wilson Flats, The Terrace', AATE-W3388-Box 29, Archives New Zealand, Wellington

⁶⁹ Christine McCarthy, 'Shaking Gordon Wilson Flats: early seismic engineering research in New Zealand', *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers – Engineering History and Heritage*, 172(4), p.157. McCarthy (p. 154) notes one earlier building, the Otahuhu Substation (1950-51), as being the first to have had strain gauges embedded in its concrete.

⁷⁰ R.I. Skinner, W.R. Stephenson and R.T. Hefford, 'Strong Motion Earthquake Recording in New Zealand', *Bulletin of the N.Z. Society of Earthquake Engineers*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1971, pp. 31-42. See various letters and memos held in SAC1-Box 245, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. A request to provide a flat for the staff member who would undertake monitoring of the equipment was declined. The accelerographs were removed sometime between 1971 and 1979. Christine McCarthy, 'Shaking Gordon Wilson Flats: early seismic engineering research in New Zealand', p. 155, 158

⁷¹ Skinner, R.I., Stephenson, W.R. and Hefford, R.T., 'Strong Motion Earthquake Recording in New Zealand', p. 32. Letter from CF Candy, Designing Engineer, to Dr Hisada, Head of the structural division of the Building Research Institute in the Ministry of Construction, Tokyo, Japan, dated 13 September 1965, 'Accommodation: McLean Estate Multi-Storey Flats, The Terrace, Wellington', AAQB-W3950-889-Box520, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. Toshihiko Hisada was the director of the Japanese Ministry of Construction's Building Research Institute, the chairman of the High-Rise Building Structure Examination Board, and the chairman of the Japan National Committee of Earthquake Engineering. Christine McCarthy, 'Shaking Gordon Wilson Flats: early seismic engineering research in New Zealand', pp.156-57

⁷² Bunce, G.K., 'Field experience section – Earthquake Recording Instrument: The Type M.O.2 Strong Motion Accelerograph', *Bulletin of the N.Z. Society of Earthquake Engineers*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1969, pp. 308-328

⁷³ Bunce, 'Field experience section – Earthquake Recording Instrument: The Type M.O.2 Strong Motion Accelerograph', pp. 308, 325, 327-28. See also, R. Shepherd and J.H. Wood, 'The Dynamic Design of Earthquake Resistant Structures', *New Zealand Engineering*, Vol. 18, No. 4, April 1963, pp. 111-71; with follow up discussion in the Vol. 19, No. 5, May 1964 journal, pp. 183-87. As at 1 July 1969 accelerographs were installed, or proposed for installation, at 13 locations around New Zealand; the Gordon Wilson Flats was not one of those sites

‘There is no question of the value of the results that can accrue from this very long-term undertaking. The loss to New Zealand from a large earthquake is gigantic. We are using the Terrace Flats not to find how the Terrace Flats would behave for their own sake but to find how to make all future buildings in New Zealand safe against earthquakes.’⁷⁴

Engineering research continued in 1964 when the Gordon Wilson Flats was subjected to forced-vibration testing. This is thought to have been the first building in New Zealand in which this physical testing – vital as a comparison with laboratory tests – occurred.⁷⁵

Described by architectural historian Nikolas Pevsner as ‘particularly interesting’, the Gordon Wilson Flats featured in the *Architectural Review* in October 1959 as part of Pevsner’s review of commonwealth architecture. Pevsner had visited New Zealand in 1958 and was hosted by the Architectural Centre during his stay in Wellington.⁷⁶ In February 1961 the Wellington District Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects featured the Gordon Wilson Flats in their journal.⁷⁷ A photograph of the building in the 1975 history of the MOW was used to illustrate high density housing provision by the state.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, by the late 1950s the government’s focus had already shifted away from vertical flats towards low-rise medium-density housing (blocks no higher than three storeys), with these accounting for 54 percent of all units built in 1960.⁷⁹ A decade later the design focus had swung further towards single units, with only 11.9 percent being multi-units.⁸⁰ After the Gordon Wilson Flats and Upper Greys Avenue Flats, the construction of high-rise blocks of state flats stalled for 60 years, although with more New Zealanders now considering medium and high-density inner city living as a desirable option, and increased concerns

because it was installed with an earlier type of accelerograph.

⁷⁴ Christine McCarthy, ‘Shaking Gordon Wilson Flats: early seismic engineering research in New Zealand’, p.157

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.153-161

⁷⁶ Cited by K Davis in his B. Arch. research report, 1987, p. 69. See also, Gately, Julia and Walker, Paul, *Vertical Living: The Architectural Centre and the Remaking of Wellington*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2014. The *Dominion* reported in its obituary for Gordon Wilson published on 24 February 1959 that Pevsner ‘described Mr Wilson as “a very enlightened man who has carried out work on quite a big scale and helped many younger architects to progress in their chosen sphere.”’ The Architectural Centre is a Wellington-based group of architects and those interested in the city’s architecture and urban environment. It was founded in 1946 and has historically been involved in heritage advocacy.

⁷⁷ ‘The Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington – The Work of the Architectural Division, Ministry of works’, *The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, Vol. 28, No. 1, February 1961, pp. 1-8. This unattributed article used the descriptive text supplied by the government; AAQB-W3950-889-Box520, Archives New Zealand. The branch had previously provided an article about the Hazelcourt Flats in the November 1960 issue of the journal.

⁷⁸ Noonan, Rosslyn J., *By Design: A brief history of the Public Works Department Ministry of Works 1870-1970*, Wellington, 1975, p. 220

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220

⁸⁰ Ferguson, *Building the New Zealand Dream*, p. 194

about urban sprawl, in 2020 Kāinga Ora (Housing New Zealand Corporation) is again employing this urban design solution on the Upper Greys Avenue site.⁸¹

Recent history of the flats

After decades of residential use, the McLean and Gordon Wilson Flats were vacated in 2011 and 2012 respectively after the buildings were identified as being potentially earthquake-prone and in need of remedial work; the façade of Gordon Wilson Flats was deemed particularly unsafe.⁸² Residents were given a week to move out; some expressed their distress and sentimental attachment to the place ('This is my castle, I love it here'), while others noted issues with anti-social tenants and a lack of building maintenance.⁸³ The Gordon Wilson Flats were purchased by Victoria University of Wellington from Kāinga Ora in 2014; purchase of the McLean Flats by the university took place in 2019.⁸⁴ In June 2018 building consent for redevelopment of the McLean Flats, including seismic strengthening, refurbishment of the existing units and a three-storey extension, was lodged with Wellington City Council (WCC) but not yet actioned.⁸⁵

Since late 2015 the heritage status of the Gordon Wilson Flats and the university's desire to redevelop the site as a whole to create a pedestrian link between the city centre and its Kelburn campus has been under discussion, and subject to a planning hearing in 2015 and Environment Court proceedings in 2016-2017. The latter was led by the Architectural Centre, who successfully argued that Gordon Wilson Flats' significant heritage values merited its inclusion in the Wellington City District plan heritage schedule.⁸⁶ Expert advocates described the building as being 'a prominent marker of an alternative vision'; 'a remarkable example of a heroic period of modern architecture in New Zealand'; and 'the most developed form of its type...thus an architectural milestone in New Zealand.'⁸⁷

⁸¹ Kāinga Ora, 'Icon to deliver groundbreaking Kāinga Ora complex in central Auckland', 10 August 2020, <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/news/icon-to-deliver-groundbreaking-kainga-ora-complex-in-central-auckland/>, accessed 24 August 2020

⁸² 'Gordon Wilson Flats', Wellington City Council

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ 'Wellington social housing redevelopment scrapped and sold to Victoria University', Stuff, 14 Jun 2014, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/113478644/wellington-social-housing-redevelopment-scrapped-and-sold-to-victoria-university>, accessed 5 August 2020

⁸⁵ Wellington City Council Archives, 00078-394139

⁸⁶ 'Gordon Wilson Flats', Architectural Centre, <https://architecture.org.nz/gordon-wilson-flats/>, accessed 5 August 2020; Decision No: [2017] NZEnvC 116, 9 August 2017, URL: <https://environmentcourt.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/2017-NZEnvC-116-The-Architectural-Centre-v-Wellington-City-Council.pdf>, accessed 23 October 2020

⁸⁷ Schrader, 'A prominent marker of an alternative vision: the Gordon Wilson Flats'; 'Statement of Evidence by Linda Tyler, in the matter of Plan Change 81: Re-zoning 320 The Terrace and de-listing the Gordon Wilson Flats', 7 December 2015, https://wellington.govt.nz/~media/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/district-plan/changes/active-changes-variations/files/plan_change_81/linda-tyler-expert-evidence-gordon-wilson-flats-7-dec-2015.pdf?la=en; 'Statement of Evidence of Jeremy Salmond, Architect, in the matter of Plan Change 81: Re-zoning 320 The Terrace and de-listing the Gordon Wilson Flats', https://wellington.govt.nz/~media/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/district-plan/changes/active-changes-variations/files/plan_change_81/jeremy-salmond-evidence.pdf?la=en

Despite this endorsement of the building's significance by the Environment Court, arguments for and against the building's architectural quality and heritage values have continued to be put forward in the public domain, highlighting in part conflicting views about the merits of Modernist architecture in terms of its aesthetic and functional qualities.⁸⁸ In July 2020 Victoria University announced plans to refurbish the McLean Flats and demolish the Gordon Wilson Flats to make way for new teaching and research facilities and create an entrance plaza for the campus that overlooks the site.⁸⁹

Associated List Entries

Dixon Street Flats, Wellington (List No. 7395)

2.2. Physical Information

*Setting*⁹⁰

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are located on a large property, comprising two contiguous land parcels, on the west side of The Terrace, just north of its intersection with Ghuznee Street. Beyond the town belt hillside that forms the western boundary of the site is the main/Kelburn campus of Victoria University of Wellington. The commercial centre of Wellington is to the north and north-east of the site; to the south is the residential suburb of Aro Valley. The streetscape in the vicinity of the flats is primarily residential in nature; the landmark Dixon Street Flats (List No. 7395, Category 1 historic place) are located about 300 metres away to the north-east.

The contextual values of the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats arise from their height and location set against the town belt on the western fringe of the central city. The topography of Wellington lends itself to extended views across the city, to and from Wellington Harbour. The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats offer views of the city from their primary rooms and have a contextual relationship with the nearby Dixon Street Flats.

⁸⁸ For example, 'Ugly or not, Modernist architecture reflected the desire for a better society', *Dominion Post*, 27 August 2020, URL: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/comment/122547343/ugly-or-not-modernist-architecture-reflected-the-desire-for-a-better-society>, accessed 27 August 2020; 'Strong community opposition expected over plan to demolish heritage-listed Gordon Wilson Flats', *Stuff*, 29 July 2020, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/122267683/strong-community-opposition-expected-over-plans-to-demolish-heritagelisted-gordon-wilson-flats>, accessed 3 August 2020. See also Daube, Reuben, Jacobson, Cherie and Martin, Olivia, 'Gordon Wilson Flats, The Terrace', *Museum and Heritage Studies*, Victoria University of Wellington, 2018, <https://discover.stqry.com/v/modernism-in-wellington/s/a9058e4f-4dd8-4e62-b100-75439e6d158a>, accessed 3 August 2020; and the Architectural Centre's series of 41 submissions on the topic 'My favourite modernist building', <https://architecture.org.nz/2017/03/02/my-favourite-modernist-building-...-index/>.

⁸⁹ *Stuff*, 27 July 2020, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/122257632/victoria-university-plans-to-demolish-heritagelisted-gordon-wilson-flats-to-create-new-front-door>, accessed 2 August 2020

⁹⁰ All thumbnail images in this section were taken by Blyss Wagstaff, Heritage New Zealand, 6-7 July 2020



The buildings are prominent within the streetscape at the southern end of The Terrace, and visible from various points around the city such as Mt Victoria and Roseneath. The scale of Gordon Wilson Flats in the wider cityscape is somewhat mitigated by its siting back against the hillside.

McLean Flats - Exterior



The McLean Flats stand close to the road boundary of the property; it is a six-storey building with a rectangular footprint and flat roof. The principal, north and east-facing, elevations meet at a rounded corner; a rank of five oriel windows with cantilevered hoods overhang the principal entry to the building, which is sheltered by

the corner bay and a slab roofed porch.⁹¹ Timber-framed casement windows are arranged in groups; on the north elevation what were once in-line balconies with window boxes are now bays of slightly rounded oriel windows. Galleries providing access to the upper level flats are at the rear (south elevation) of the building. The principal stairwell for the building is located at its south-east corner. There is a flat-roofed laundry shed on the roof, which is also fitted with clotheslines.

McLean Flats – Interiors

The building accommodates eighteen flats, which are dispersed across six levels in accordance with the sloping terrain of the site. There is one flat on the ground floor, two on the first floor, three on the second, and four on each of the third, fourth and fifth floors.

⁹¹ See Figure 10

Only the ground floor flat is a bedsit, with the remainder having one or two bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, living room and sunroom. The mid-block and western flats have one-bedroom, while the flats at the east end of the building have two bedrooms and a separate combined kitchen-dining room set within the curved space created by the corner oriel window. All bathrooms provide enough space to accommodate a laundry tub and washing machine; the kitchens are U-shaped in plan with wall-mounted and under-counter cupboards. The enclosed balconies on the north elevation now have the appearance of a sunroom adjacent to the living room. Casement windows in the bedroom directly behind the sunroom bring light into that space from the latter. There are rubbish chute access hatches on each floor beside the concrete steps in the stair tower. Additional egress from the building is provided by an external timber stair at the west end of the building. Except for preparations for renovations in some flats, the majority remain intact.



Gordon Wilson Flats - Exterior



The Gordon Wilson Flats stand against the hill at the rear of the site; it is an eleven-storey building with a rectangular footprint and flat roof.⁹² The principal, east-facing, elevation has a uniform, grid pattern design that articulates the maisonette configuration of bedrooms above balconied living rooms; this treatment was considered to be expressive of the 'cellular character of the building'.⁹³ The east elevation is not perfectly symmetrical as the bay over the main entry to the building has balconies that extend the full width of the flat within. This subtle difference in façade

⁹² See Figures 2-3

⁹³ 'The Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington – The Work of the Architectural Division, Ministry of Works', *The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, Vol. 28, No. 1, February 1961, p. 2. See Figure 12

modulation corresponds with the position of the lift tower towards the northern end of the building and reflects an alternate layout for the flats within this bay, wherein the kitchen is accessed from the living room, rather than the entrance hall, which is the arrangement in all the other flats above the ground floor, bedsit level. The perimeter is fenced off to protect from the hazards of the site, including the risk from falling chunks of the concrete façade, evident on the ground surrounding the building.

The thin slab form of the Gordon Wilson Flats means that the width of the building accommodates a single flat, allowing daylight to enter all of the principal spaces within each unit. The north-south axis of the building provides for afternoon sun entering the access galleries and second bedroom above, whilst morning sun and expansive views of the city centre and Wellington harbour are available from the principal bedroom and living room on the east elevation.



At the rear of the building (west elevation) access galleries run the length of the building, alternating levels with the external wall of the second bedroom within. Short slab buttresses extend from the ground up to third floor level to provide additional stiffening; on the ground floor these elements partially shelter

the steps providing rear entry to the bedsits. Glazed external stairwells are located at both ends of the building (north and south elevations).⁹⁴ There is a flat-roofed laundry shed on the roof, which is also fitted with clotheslines. Two elevators located within a lift tower at the rear of the building (west elevation, near the northern end) provide access to the galleries and the roof deck.

Gordon Wilson Flats – Interior

Twelve bedsitting rooms on the ground floor and 75 two-storey, two-bedroom 64 square-metre maisonette flats on the remaining floors provided 87 units in total.⁹⁵ The main entry to

⁹⁴ See Figure 11

⁹⁵ See Gordon Wilson Flats VR Experience, School of Architecture, Victoria University of Wellington: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=111&v=sfVw8TFc5nU&feature=emb_title, accessed 3 August 2020; Jacobsen, Cherie, 'Building Legacies? Review of *Immersive Legacies: 320 The Terrace*, Wellington Museum, 19 October until 3 November 2019, posted by

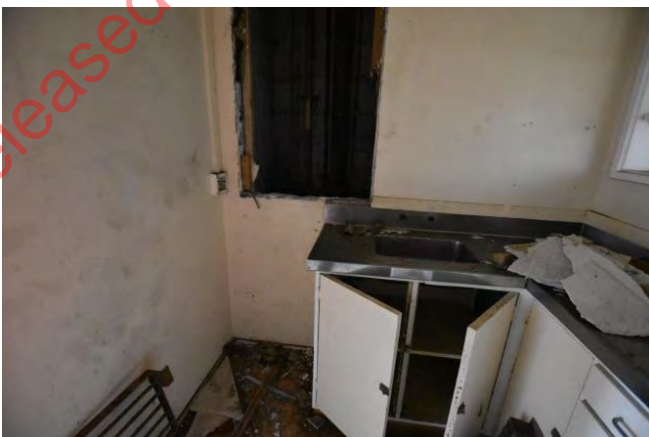
the building provides access to the lift tower and accommodates mailboxes, two telephone cabinets and access to a custodian's office. The foundation stone of the building is located within the tiled entrance porch.



Five of the maisonettes, adjacent to the lift tower, are of the double-bedroom and single-bedroom type, with the remainder accommodating two double-bedrooms. An internal 'spine' wall provides longitudinal stiffening of the structure; this can be seen in the 'riser' services duct between

the bedrooms on the upper level of the maisonettes.

Beside the entrance to each of the maisonettes is a fire ladder positioned to provide safe egress from the second bedroom in each unit via a hatch set into the floor. With the exception of the flats adjacent to the lift tower, the entrance door provides access to a short hall off which open the west-facing kitchen and east-facing living room. Stairs to the second floor rise directly from the living room, which has a door in the east wall providing access to the balcony. The bathroom on the upper level is positioned between the two bedrooms, both of which have built-in storage. The bedsits on the ground floor have front and rear entries, with a galley kitchen and bathroom positioned beside the back (west) door.



The building has suffered considerably from vandalism since its closure. Much of the interior metal work (riser pipes, hot water cylinders and general plumbing, kitchen benches) has been stripped out, although kitchen cabinetry and bathroom fixtures remain in place, albeit damaged in some flats.

Broken windows have allowed weather and pigeons to enter some units. Others remain dry, tidy and intact, with occasional reminders of the people who used to live there.

Comparative analysis

The primary heritage values of the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats relate to their place in the history of social housing provision since 1935 and their Modernist architectural pedigree as multi-storey apartment buildings.

Gordon Wilson was chief architect of the government housing department during what historian Roslyn Noonan calls 'its most successful period', as nearly 35,000 state dwellings were built.⁹⁶ Wilson is described as having had 'a strong influence on all the work of the architectural office... Gordon would do the rounds each morning, leaving behind him black pencil marks over drawings and many irate architects.'⁹⁷ Noonan states that during his subsequent tenure as Government Architect, a period described as when 'office buildings, schools, hospitals, post offices, flats and hotels flowed from the Ministry of Works, free of inhibitions and expressing the best thoughts of contemporary design'... '[Wilson] was more concerned with public buildings than housing with the exception of high-density flats which were his special interest.'⁹⁸ Wilson, who was made a fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1951 and an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1954, saw his role as including the education of public opinion on good design.

After World War Two the government's architectural department was strongly committed to International Style Modernism. The monolithic tower block form of the Gordon Wilson Flats, with its ancestry in the Dixon Street Flats, corresponded with contemporaneous design of public buildings from the Government Architect's office, as well as private commercial high-rise developments. Bledisloe House, in Auckland (completed 1959), and the School of Dentistry at Otago University (1959, List No. 7618) were both designed by the Ministry of Works around the same time as the Gordon Wilson and Upper Greys Avenue Flats, and share the narrow, multi-storey form, gridded façade and semi-detached lift tower. Gordon Wilson Flats shows the increasing emphasis on fully glazed elevations as New Zealand Modernism

⁹⁶ Noonan, *By Design: A brief history of the Public Works Department Ministry of Works 1870-1970*, p. 223; statistics calculated from Firth, 1949, pp. 67-71, which gives the number of state rental houses erected between 1937-1949 as being 33,766 and the number of multi-unit dwellings erected between 1936-1948 as being 10 multi-unit blocks totalling 376 dwellings, with five more blocks totalling 574 dwellings under construction.

⁹⁷ Gatley, 'Wilson, Francis Gordon'

⁹⁸ Noonan, 1975, p.223

progressed towards the full glass curtain-wall, first realised in commercial developments such as Plischke and Firth's 1952 Massey House (List No. 7661).

Although Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation in Marseille, France (1947-52) and the London County Council's Loughborough Estate (Sir Leslie Martin, 1954-57) in Brixton, England have been mentioned by others as specifically inspiring the design of the Gordon Wilson Flats, it is probably more accurate to characterise both the McLean Flats and the Gordon Wilson Flats as New Zealand examples of mid-century high-density social housing designed using a Modernist approach.⁹⁹

There are currently three state housing blocks of flats entered on the New Zealand Heritage List/ Rārangī Kōrero (the List): the Berhampore Flats (List No. 7432, Category 1 historic place) and the Dixon Street Flats (List No. 7395, Category 1 historic place) in Wellington and the (Lower) Greys Avenue Flats (List No. 583, Category 2 historic place) in Auckland. The Berhampore Flats are considered to have outstanding heritage value as the 'inaugural multi-unit scheme in a vast State housing scheme that was dominated by detached and semi-detached houses and flats'¹⁰⁰; the Dixon Street Flats are equally highly regarded as they are 'considered to be the archetype of Modernist apartment blocks in New Zealand'.¹⁰¹ Auckland's Symonds Street Flats (1942-47) and Wellington's Hanson Street Flats (1943-44) date from the same time period as the McLean Flats.

The McLean and Gordon Wilson Flats can be said to represent a continuation of the policies and practices set in train by the Berhampore and Dixon Street Flats. The most relevant high-density state-housing comparators are the Lower and Upper Greys Avenue Flats, which were also part of a larger high-density government scheme interrupted by the war.¹⁰² The Upper Greys Avenue Flats (1957-58) can be considered a 'sibling' building to the Gordon Wilson Flats; the two were designed in tandem and comprise a narrow slab block of eleven storeys of mostly two-storey maisonettes.¹⁰³ With their taller, slimmer design, reduced mass and more extensive glazing and facades that revealed the maisonette configuration, both show the evolution in government design from the pre-war high-rise blocks of flats. With the demolition of the Upper Greys Avenue Flats in January 2020, the Gordon Wilson Flats are

⁹⁹ Davis, 1987, p. 69

¹⁰⁰ 'Berhampore Flats', Heritage New Zealand, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7432>, accessed 5 August 2020

¹⁰¹ 'Dixon Street Flats', Heritage New Zealand, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7395>, accessed 5 August 2020

¹⁰² 'Upper Greys Avenue flats', Heritage et AL, <http://heritageetal.blogspot.com/2014/03/upper-greys-avenue-flats.html>, accessed 5 August 2020

¹⁰³ Julia Gatley and Gina Hochstein, 'Like Gordon Wilson, Minus the Heritage Protection: Auckland's Upper Grey's Avenue Flats, 1954-1959'

now the sole remaining example of the state's 1950s investment in high-density high-rise state housing. Kāinga Ora is currently redeveloping the site of the Upper Greys Avenue Flats to provide 276 apartments in a multi-level high-rise building, indicating the continued usefulness of the typology in certain locations within the department's housing portfolio.¹⁰⁴

The Gordon Wilson Flats also represent a turning point in the New Zealand government's experiment with high density housing. For reasons of policy (National governments promoted private home ownership), finances (high-rise flats were not that cost effective to build), a change in the perception of 'problems' like urban sprawl, and the rise of car ownership and commuter culture, the central government pursuit of this form of housing ceased for 60 years after Gordon Wilson Flats and the Upper Greys Avenue Flats were built. This type of housing was still viewed by town planners as an alternative to inner city housing shortages, but the lead on this was taken up by local authorities and private developers. For example, the Freeman's Bay development undertaken by Auckland City Council in 1960-67 and over a dozen large-scale developments carried out by the WCC between 1955 and 1985 took over the provision of high-density rental flats from central government. WCC's Hanson Court Flats (1963-68), Central Park Flats (1964-70), Newtown Park Flats (1965-78), Arlington Apartments (1971-84), and Berkeley Dallard Apartments (1971/5-80) all include high-rise tower blocks.¹⁰⁵

A number of purpose-built flats recognised for their outstanding heritage significance were built as private residential developments. Courtville in Auckland (List Nos. 2624 and 4487, Category 1 historic places) is recognised for its very early date (1914-15 & 1919), architectural styling and townscape impact, whilst the Dorset Street Flats in Christchurch (1956-57, List No. 7804) are acclaimed as one of the 'most important domestic buildings built in New Zealand in the second half of the twentieth century'.¹⁰⁶ The Anscombe Flats (List No. 1333) and former Braemar Flats (List No. 1341) in Wellington, the Devonport Flats in New Plymouth (List No. 890), and the Berrisville Flats (List No. 554) and Cintra Flats (List No. 564) in Auckland, all Category 2 historic places, are architecturally designed examples of a residential typology that historically only ever found minority support within the overall housing supply in New Zealand, but which is growing in popularity as a solution to present

¹⁰⁴ Kainga Ora Homes and Communities, 'Working Together', <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/developments-and-programmes/what-were-building/greys-ave/working-together/>, accessed 1 July 2020

¹⁰⁵ Heritage Consultancy Services, 'Wellington City Council Housing Upgrade Project – Historic Heritage Assessment Project', Hamilton 30 June 2010. The George Porter Tower, the high-rise component of the Arlington development, was demolished in mid-2020.

¹⁰⁶ 'Dorset Street Flats', Heritage New Zealand, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7804>, accessed 5 August 2020.

housing needs.¹⁰⁷ The scale and form of the Gordon Wilson Flats was a forerunner to two privately constructed high-rise flats built further along The Terrace in the 1960s: the 13-storey Herbert Gardens, completed in 1965, and the 18-storey Jellicoe Towers, completed in 1968.

The two-level, maisonette plan form, which is a distinctive feature of the Gordon Wilson Flats (and the Upper Grey's Avenue Flats before they were demolished), is not common in New Zealand apartment buildings but can be found in Christchurch's Maisonettes in Bealey Avenue (1939-41), the Hazel Court Flats in Mt Victoria, Wellington (1954-56), and at Freeman's Bay.¹⁰⁸ Early criticism of the open stair leading to the upper floor of the maisonettes in the Gordon Wilson Flats offers one reason why the plan form was not more widely used for central and local government rental flats, although it was noted to be more economical.¹⁰⁹ Maisonette configuration is being considered anew in present housing developments, suggesting that its relatively rare employment in the Gordon Wilson Flats was somewhat progressive rather than being a dead-end design scheme.

The McLean Flats have a commemorative aspect in that the name references the previous landowners and a family with notable historic associations with the city and the nation. The Gordon Wilson (Memorial) Flats was named in Gordon Wilson's honour but not built as a memorial per se. The flats are similar to the Berhampore Centennial Flats in that respect. More comparable are the Anscombe Flats (List No. 1333) in Oriental Parade, which were designed and named by architect Edmund Anscombe in 1937.¹¹⁰ The Michael Fowler Centre and George Porter Tower (now demolished) are other Wellington buildings that reference notable local architects in their names. However the dedication of the Gordon Wilson Flats to the architect, who had a major influence on New Zealand's state housing scheme and a particular interest in Modernist multi-storey high-density apartment blocks of this type, is a particularly fitting commemoration.

¹⁰⁷ In the private housing market, over 80% of New Zealanders were resident in stand-alone houses in 2001, with another 10% living in a flat or townhouse joined to one other. Only 6% were resident in accommodation comprising three or more flats, townhouses or apartments joined together; a reduction from almost 8% in 1991. In 2001 1.2% of households were in privately-owned dwellings occupied buildings of three or more storeys: http://nzdotstat.stats.govt.nz/wbos/Index.aspx?_ga=2.229886680.55410007.1596402388-211300780.1596170261, accessed 3 August 2020

¹⁰⁸ 'Heritage item number 620', Heritage Assessment, Christchurch City Council, <https://districtplan.ccc.govt.nz/Images/DistrictPlanImages/Statement%20of%20Significance/Central%20City/HID%20620.pdf>; accessed 5 August 2020; 'Hazel Court Apartment Building and Garages', Wellington City Council, <http://wellingtoncityheritage.org.nz/buildings/301-450/426-hazel-court-apartment-building>, accessed 5 August 2020; 'History and Photos', Freemans Park, <https://freemanspark.co.nz/the-history-of-freemans-park/>, accessed 5 August 2020

¹⁰⁹ The timber framing within each maisonette design meant that only every second floor needed to be of reinforced concrete, and reduced the number of elevator stops and galleries by half. Julia Gatley and Gina Hochstein, 'Like Gordon Wilson, Minus the Heritage Protection: Auckland's Upper Grey's Avenue Flats, 1954-1959', p.194

¹¹⁰ 'Anscombe Flats', Wellington City Council, <http://wellingtoncityheritage.org.nz/buildings/151-300/241-anscombe-flats>, accessed 5 August 2020

Conclusion

The McLean Flats and the Gordon Wilson Flats are part of the lineage of mid-century government Modernist architecture, and government-provided rental housing in New Zealand, particularly in regard to the provision of high- and medium-density typologies in Auckland and Wellington. The McLean Flats represents a further stage in the development of a higher-density housing model that was initiated with the Berhampore Flats and continued with the Dixon Street Flats. The Gordon Wilson Flats, like the Upper Grey's Avenue Flats in Auckland, represent the post-war development of two existing state housing apartment sites with modified designs consistent with changing tastes in Modernist architecture brought about by construction delays. It made use of technological advances in building techniques to economise with construction costs, and its large scale and rectilinear facade, communicating the maisonette configuration, made a bold statement in presence. With the demolition of the Upper Greys Avenue Flats in January 2020 the Gordon Wilson Flats are now the only surviving example of a late 1950s high-rise in New Zealand's history of state housing provision.

Construction Professionals

Gordon Wilson (Architect)

Francis Gordon Wilson (1900-59) was born in Perth, Australia, and emigrated to New Zealand with his family in 1903. His father Frank was also an architect.¹¹¹ Wilson the younger, who was known as Gordon, served articles with Wellington architect William Page and then studied at the School of Architecture in Auckland. Wilson spent fourteen years in the office of leading inter-war architectural practice Gummer and Ford, in which stripped classicism moderated the emerging influence of European Modernism and seismic-resistant construction methods were devised using reinforced concrete.¹¹² In 1936 Wilson left the firm to take up the role of chief architect within the DHC, where he had ultimate responsibility for the design of the Berhampore, Dixon Street, and McLean Flats. Wilson was a founding member of the Architectural Centre in 1946 and contributed to the development of New Zealand architectural and town planning discourse through his publications and talks. Wilson became assistant government architect in 1948 and then held the position of government architect from 1952, in which role he had oversight of major projects including the Gordon Wilson Flats and Upper Greys Avenue Flats; departmental buildings the Bledisloe State

¹¹¹ Gatley, 'Wilson, Francis Gordon'. See also, Martin, Lewis E., *Built for Us – The Work of Government and Colonial Architects, 1860s to 1960s*, pp.178-179.

¹¹² Gatley, 'Going Up', p. 146

Building, and Bowen State Building; and the Otago University School of Dentistry and the School of Engineering Building at the University of Canterbury, until his untimely death on 23 February 1959.¹¹³

Fred Newman (Architect)

Frederick Newman (Friedrich Neumann, 1900-64) was one of a number of émigré architects employed by Wilson in the DHC.¹¹⁴ Born in Vienna, Austria and trained in Vienna and Paris, France Newman worked in Russia in the 1930s before emigrating to New Zealand in early 1939. He worked in a number of government ministries, including the DHC from 1939 until 1947, until his death. Newman was lead architect under Gordon Wilson when the McLean Flats were designed and built; he is also credited with the design of the Symonds Street Flats (1945-47) and was appointed Housing Architect to the Ministry of Works in 1956, during which he redesigned the appearance of state housing and produced designs for multi-unit flats such as Star Flats.¹¹⁵

Jack Wight (Architect)

Jack Fraser Wight (1920 - 1993) BArch, ANZIA was a sectional architect in the Architectural Division of the Ministry of Works, Head Office, in the 1950s with his first employment dating back to 1939. Wight appears to have been responsible for leading the technical design of the Gordon Wilson Memorial Flats.¹¹⁶

W Angus Limited (McLean Flats builder)

Downers and Company Limited (Gordon Wilson Flats builder)

McKenzie Thomson Hoskins Limited (Gordon Wilson Flats builder)

Construction Materials

McLean Flats: Reinforced concrete, timber, glass.

Gordon Wilson Flats: Reinforced fairface concrete shear walls, structural steel, vitreous enamelled metal balcony panels, brick, glass, timber joinery and flooring (tawa and rimu).¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Greenish, F.E., 'Obituary – Francis Gordon Wilson (F.), A.R.I.B.A.', *Journal of the NZIA*, Vol. 26, No. 2, March 1959, pp. 55-59

¹¹⁴ Peter Shaw, *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, Auckland, 1997, p. 143

¹¹⁵ Leach, 'Public Service: Social Factors in the Architecture of F.H. Newman', pp. 109-130

¹¹⁶ Multi Unit Flats - the Terrace,' file note, 19 July 1957, 'Housing - flats: official opening general' AEFM 19224 W1552 HD1W1552, 19, file 1/19/0 pt 2, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. Sectional architects were below the Assistant Government Architect and District Architect level, but were usually above 'Senior Architect' depending on their location and their placement on pay scales.

¹¹⁷ Letter from J. Blake-Kelly to Messrs Downer & Co. Limited re flooring timber, 29 July 1957, 'Accommodation: McLean Estate Multi-Storey Flats, The Terrace, Wellington', AAQB-W3950-889-Box520, Archives New Zealand, Wellington

Key Physical Dates

1943-44	Construction of McLean Flats (MF)
1948, 1954, 1964	Asphalt roof repairs (MF)
1957-59	Construction of Gordon Wilson Flats (GWF)
Early 1960s?	Modernisation of rooftop laundry; bathrooms upgraded; crib (retaining) wall at rear of site filled with concrete (GWF)
1966	Hot water heating system replaced (GWF)
1967	Television aerial affixed to roof (GWF)
(Post-1964)	Accelerograph equipment removed (GWF)
1978	Incinerator chimney replaced (GWF)
1994	Fire safety improvements undertaken (GWF)
(Pre-1995)	Balconies enclosed and flower boxes removed (MF)
2011	Repairs and maintenance; including replacement of stairwell windows, roof membrane and railings (GWF) ¹¹⁸

Uses

Accommodation [Complex of flats] (Former)

Vacant [Vacant]

2.3. Chattels

There are no chattels included in this List entry.

2.4. Sources

Sources Available and Accessed

A range of primary and secondary sources document the design and construction of the Gordon Wilson Flats, whereas material relating specifically to the McLean Flats is scarce.

There is a substantial body of source material relating to the development and implementation of the government's state housing scheme initiated in the mid-1930s, particularly Julia Gatley's body of work, and a number of heritage assessments of the Gordon Wilson Flats have been produced over the last five years as the future of the building has been the subject of planning and court hearings. A history of apartment buildings in New Zealand has yet to be written.

¹¹⁸ Wellington City Council Archives, 00078-22708

Further Reading

Davis, Kenneth John, "A liberal turn of mind": the architectural work of F. Gordon Wilson, 1936-1959, A cultural analysis', B. Arch. research report, Victoria University of Wellington, 1987.

Gatley, Julia, 'For Modern Living – Government Blocks of Flats', John Wilson, ed., *Zeal and Crusade – The Modern Movement in Wellington*, Te Waihora Press, Christchurch, 1996, pp. 53-60.

Gatley, Julia, 'Going Up Rather Than Out – State Rental Flats in New Zealand 1935-1949', Brookes, Barbara, ed., *At Home in New Zealand – History, Houses, People*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000, pp. 140-154.

Julia Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command: A History and Analysis of State Rental Flats in New Zealand, 1935-49', MArch thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1997

Gatley, Julia, 'The heritage identification of modern public housing: the New Zealand example', *The Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 15, No. 5, pp. 683-96; Routledge, London, 2010.

Schrader, Ben, *We Call it Home – A History of State Housing in New Zealand*, Reed Publishing Limited, Wellington, 2005.

3. SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT¹¹⁹

3.1. Section 66 (1) Assessment

This place has been assessed for, and found to possess, architectural, historical, and technological significance or value. It is considered that this place qualifies as part of New Zealand's historic and cultural heritage.

Architectural Significance or Value

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are significant examples of New Zealand Modernist architecture, which is evident in the external treatment, plan form and functionalism of both buildings. The buildings retain high levels of authenticity and integrity, with only minor alterations to the exterior and interior of each building; most notably the enclosure of the open porches on the north elevation of the McLean Flats. While McLean Flats follows the 1930s European Modernist approach evident in the Berhampore Flats and the Dixon Street Flats, Gordon Wilson Flats, as would be expected given its 1950s pedigree, adopts the rectilinear simplicity of International Style Modernism of the post-war era, its maisonette configuration plainly readable in its facade. Both buildings clearly embody the progressive idealism of the government's housing department as well as the government's official architectural style at mid-century, and together demonstrate that they were informed by the latest thinking in European Modernism. They are held in esteem by members of New Zealand's architectural heritage community because they exemplify the progressive policies and design practices of central government in supplying social housing in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Historical Significance or Value

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats have historical significance for their association with the programme of state housing provision which became a mainstay of mid-twentieth century government policy, initiated by the first Labour government in 1935. Although not prevalent in the context of the state housing building programme, these types of high-density residential buildings demonstrate the Department of Housing Construction's interest in a range of residential options to meet differing housing needs in various locations around the country, and in this instance as a response to Wellington's population growth. The Gordon Wilson Flats is now the only remaining example of a state block of high-rise flats

¹¹⁹ For the relevant sections of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 see Appendix 4: Significance Assessment Information.

from the 1950s, and represents a turning point in the government's experimentation with this typology of housing. This type of building paved the way for subsequent local government housing developments in New Zealand's larger cities, altering ideas and expectations about what constituted inner-city living.

The McLean Flats have a commemorative aspect in that the name references the previous landowners and a family with notable historic associations with the city and the nation. Likewise, the Gordon Wilson Flats was named in honour of the long-standing and important Government Architect.

Technological Significance or Value

Gordon Wilson Flats have technological significance as the site of innovative and important seismic data collection equipment and testing, which provided information on building performance in the quest for developing better ways of construction in earthquake-prone New Zealand. The Gordon Wilson Flats' piling system has technological significance because it was reportedly the first use in New Zealand of the technique of fixing piles to bedrock, by pre-drilling holes to varying lengths to fill with reinforcement, aggregate and then with wet mixed sand and cement, to deal with the challenges of a hillside site in a seismic location.

3.2. Section 66 (3) Assessment

This place was assessed against the Section 66(3) criteria and found to qualify under the following criteria a, b, e, g, h, j and k. The assessment concludes that this place should be listed as a Category 1 historic place.

- (a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats reflect the important history of social housing provision in New Zealand, an aspect that has influenced our culture and identity. The two buildings authentically represent central government's experimental approach to housing design throughout the twentieth century, both in terms of style, plan form and building technology, and schemes of increased density. The Gordon Wilson Flats, in particular, is the only remaining example in New Zealand of late 1950s high-rise state housing, and as such is of outstanding significance for its ability to reflect that chapter in New Zealand's history. It is also thought to have been New Zealand's first comprehensively instrumented building, an

innovation championed at the time of being of national importance for its potential to inform the country's seismic engineering industry.

(b) The association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are directly associated with the principles and philosophy of the social welfare state as it was developed by the first Labour government and continued post-war by the first National government as they responded to housing and materials shortages. They directly represent the Department of Housing Construction's adoption of mid-century Modernist architectural principles, under the direction of influential architect Gordon Wilson, who became the Government Architect and was later commemorated in the naming of one of the buildings. Wilson and Fred Newman (architect of the McLean Flats) both served as heads of the Housing department, and both had a particular appreciation for the relationship between Modern architecture and progressive political and social ideals. McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats have special significance as representatives of the important culture of state housing in New Zealand and as physical expressions from different decades of the longstanding and competing ideas about what good quality housing looks like.

(e) The community association with, or public esteem for the place

The Gordon Wilson Flats are highly esteemed by members of the architectural heritage community, represented by the Architectural Centre, DOCOMOMO NZ and others, as repeatedly demonstrated through submission and hearing processes, articles, presentations and other advocacy for the building's retention. The 2017 Environment Court decision, which confirmed the Gordon Wilson Flats' heritage significance as successfully presented by many experts from this community, was pivotal in raising public awareness of the building's heritage values and promoting wider appreciation of Modernist architecture.

(g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats demonstrate contemporary earthquake-resistant construction methods and materials. The Gordon Wilson Flats are particularly notable for the piling system used to mitigate the challenges of the site (fixing piles to bedrock was reportedly a New Zealand first, subsequently widely adopted), and the installation of strain gauges and accelerographs in the building to provide information about regional earthquakes and their impact on building performance.

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are both exemplars of the influence of distinct veins of Modernism on twentieth-century New Zealand architecture. With the McLean Flats, the solidity of the smooth, planar wall surfaces contrasting with voids created by the window openings, and originally the open porches, coupled with the distinctive façade curve further emphasised by cantilevered brise-soleils are characteristics of the elegant Modernist architectural ideals first explored in New Zealand in the 1930s. In contrast, the scale and architectural articulation of the Gordon Wilson Flats situates it as a benchmark Modern work in New Zealand as it evolved following World War Two. Its prominent, rational, gridded front elevation facing out over the city, against the backdrop of lush bush, was as important a monument of mid-century International Style Modernism in the Wellington cityscape as the new commercial edifices rising in the CBD, such as Massey House. The contrast of the transparency of the glazed stairwell on the south end and the striking form of the nearly independent lift shaft on the north demonstrate not just a capable handling of Modernism, but a sophisticated and creative expression of the design mode.

(h) The symbolic or commemorative value of the place

Both buildings have some commemorative value that is embodied in their names. The McLean Flats commemorate the site's previous landowners and acknowledge the McLean family's contribution to New Zealand history. The Gordon Wilson Flats has special commemorative significance as a relatively rare memorial to an architect, being named in honour of the Government Architect who oversaw the design of both buildings and served a key role in public service for over twenty years, shaping New Zealand's state housing design since the 1930s. As high-density housing was a special interest of Gordon Wilson's, the Gordon Wilson Flats are a particularly apt building to be named in his honour.

(j) The importance of identifying rare types of historic places

The majority of social housing residences built by the New Zealand government since the first boom period of the 1930s have been in the form of single-unit detached houses, with forays into duplex or medium-density complexes. High-density tower blocks of flats account for a very small percentage of the overall number of state houses constructed, and were only ever built in our major cities. The Gordon Wilson Flats has special heritage values as the only remaining example of late-1950s high-rise state housing design in New Zealand. It is a rare physical-historical link to an uncommon aspect of the government's response to the policies, economics, design philosophies and social concerns of the 1950s.

(k) The extent to which the place forms part of a wider historical and cultural area
In tandem with the nearby Dixon Street Flats, the McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats are part of a historical and cultural area in inner-city Wellington that demonstrates the philosophy and implementation of mid-twentieth century state housing development in the capital city. The relationship of the buildings with examples of high- and medium-density social housing built by Wellington City Council in the near vicinity is also important as this context allows analysis of the ways that local government extended the exploration of housing models begun by central government.

Summary of Significance or Values

The McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats have special architectural and outstanding historical significance as two distinct examples of multi-storey state housing rental flats within a complex built by central government in the middle of the twentieth century. The situation of the two buildings from different decades on one site clearly represents the evolution of the European Modernist architectural approach adopted by the Department of Housing Construction in the 1940s and 1950s, united in their design by Gordon Wilson's oversight of government architectural design between 1936 and 1959. The buildings both have associations with architects who had a major impact on the design of social housing: Frederick Newman, who led the housing department in the 1960s, and Gordon Wilson, who is considered one of the country's most prominent, talented and influential architects. The Gordon Wilson Flats is a fitting memorial to Wilson and his outstanding contribution to New Zealand architecture, reflecting his particular interest in high-density housing and inner-city living as a way to address urban sprawl and ensure economical use of high-value land. The Gordon Wilson Flats has been the focus of considerable public debate about the heritage values of Modernist buildings over the last decade. It has galvanised the architectural community to publicly promote the values of Modernist architecture and demonstrate their esteem for the Gordon Wilson Flats as New Zealand's only remaining example of the government's particular 1950s response to housing issues, and the technological and architectural values of that period that it embodies.

4. APPENDICES

4.1. Appendix 1: Visual Identification Aids

Location Maps

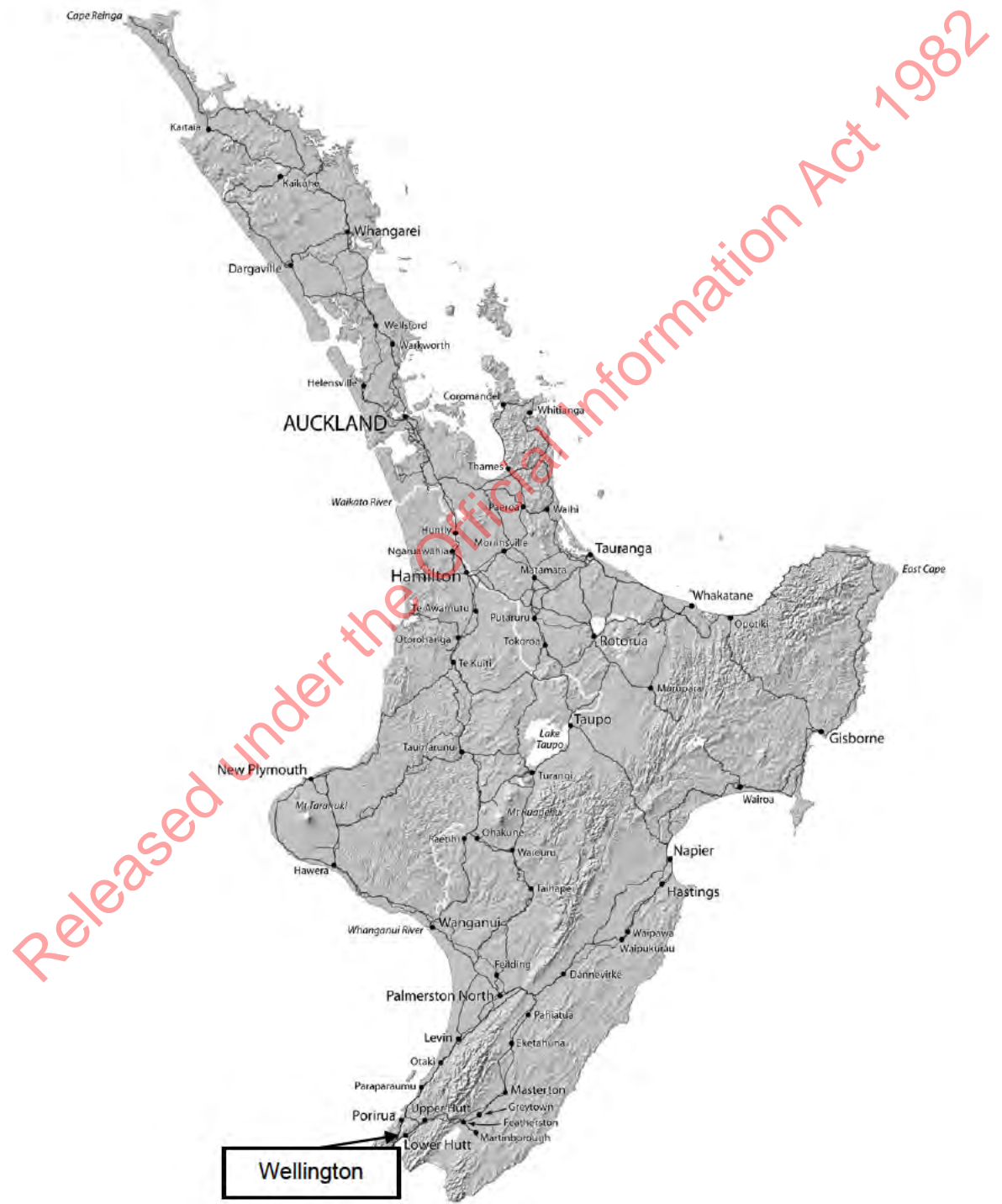




Image courtesy of Google Earth, accessed 5 August 2020. The location of McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats is indicated with the red arrow.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Map of Extent



Extent includes the land described as Lot 1 DP 363050 (RT 256859) and Lot 2 DP 363050 (RT 256860), Wellington Land District, and the buildings known as the McLean Flats and the Gordon Wilson Flats thereon.

Map courtesy of Wellington City Council. Extent indicated by yellow line.

Current Identifiers



RECORD OF TITLE
UNDER LAND TRANSFER ACT 2017
FREEHOLD
Search Copy



R. W. Muir
Registrar-General
of Land

Identifier **256859**
Land Registration District **Wellington**
Date Issued 16 October 2006

Prior References
WN217/295 WN329/168

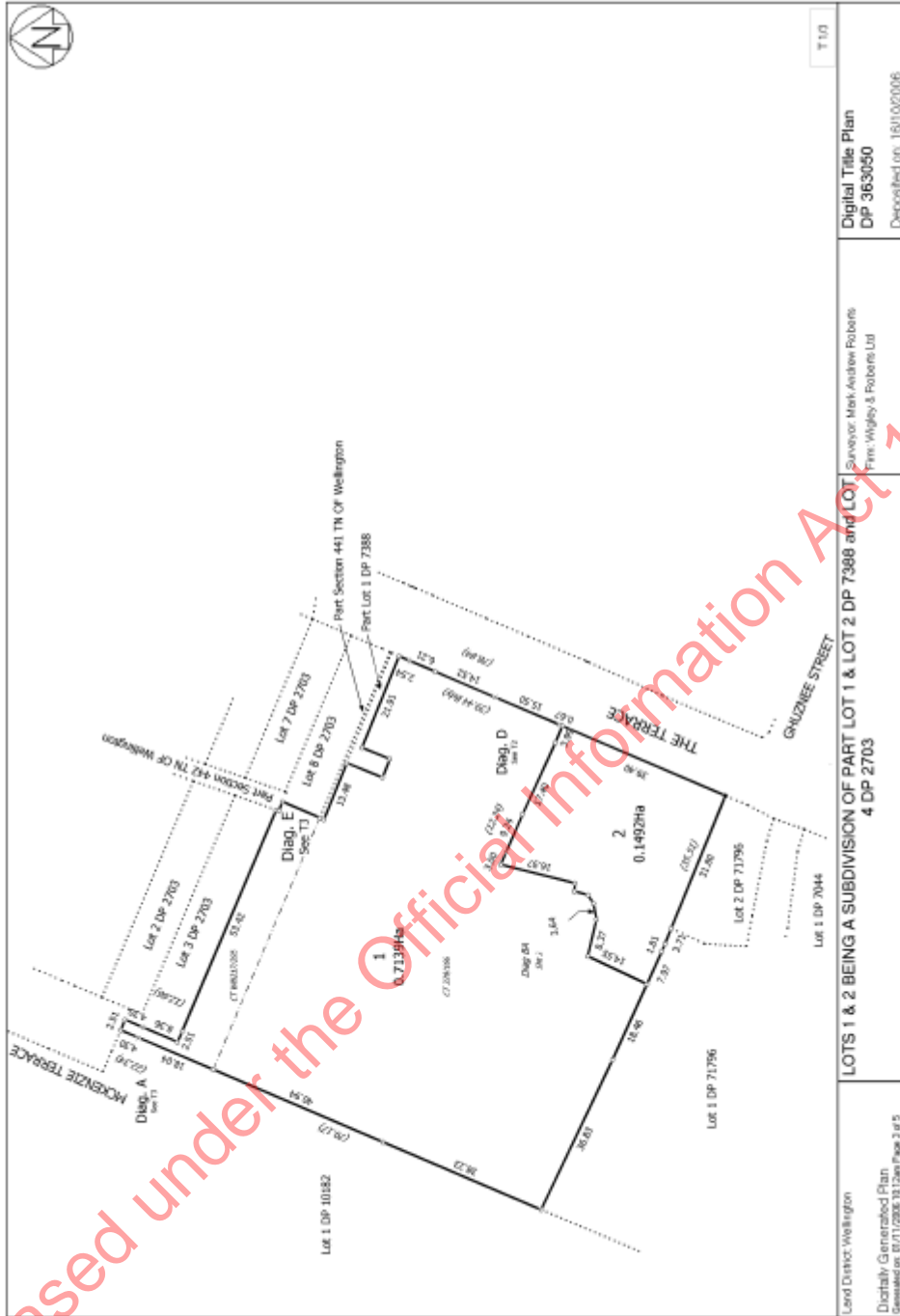
Estate Fee Simple
Area 7139 square metres more or less
Legal Description Lot 1 Deposited Plan 363050
Registered Owners
Victoria University of Wellington

Interests

Appurtenant hereto is a right of way (Affects part formerly in CT WN217/295)
Subject as to the said Right of way to conditions imposed by the Wellington City Council and set forth in an instrument deposited as Z201
Subject to a right (in gross) to lay and maintain an underground cable over part marked F on DP 363050 in favour of Capital Power Limited created by Transfer 216570 - 3.9.1932 at 11.08 am
541182 Partial Surrender of right of way - 17.10.1962 at 9.23 am
Subject to the Housing Act 1955
Subject to Part IVA Conservation Act 1987
Subject to Section 11 Crown Minerals Act 1991
Subject to a right of way and a right to drain water over part marked A, a pedestrian right of way over part marked B and a right to drain sewage and water over part marked C on DP 363050 created by Easement Instrument 7072198.2 - 16.10.2006 at 9:00 am
Appurtenant hereto is a right to drain water and convey gas created by Easement Instrument 7072198.2 - 16.10.2006 at 9:00 am
8327190.1 Certificate pursuant to section 115(2) of the Post Nicholson Block (Taranaki Whamui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika) Claims Settlement Act 2009 that the within land is RFR land as defined in section 92 and is subject to subpart 2 of Part 3 of the Act (which restricts disposal, including leasing of the land) - 29.10.2009 at 9:00 am
9860464.2 Encumbrance to Housing New Zealand Limited - 16.10.2014 at 10:09 am

Transaction ID 60960979
Client Reference 0wagzuff001

Search Copy Dated 09/07/20 1:23 pm, Page 1 of 4
Register Only



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Land District: Wellington Digitally Generated Plan Generated on: 18/11/2006 10:12am Page 3 of 5	LOTS 1 & 2 BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART LOT 1 & LOT 2 DP 7398 and LOT 4 DP 2703 Surveyor: Mark Andrew Robins Firm: Higley & Robins Ltd	Digital Title Plan DP 363050 Deposited on: 18/10/2006
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RECORD OF TITLE
UNDER LAND TRANSFER ACT 2017
FREEHOLD
Search Copy



R. W. Muir
Registrar-General
of Land

Identifier **256860**
Land Registration District **Wellington**
Date Issued 16 October 2006

Prior References
WN329/168

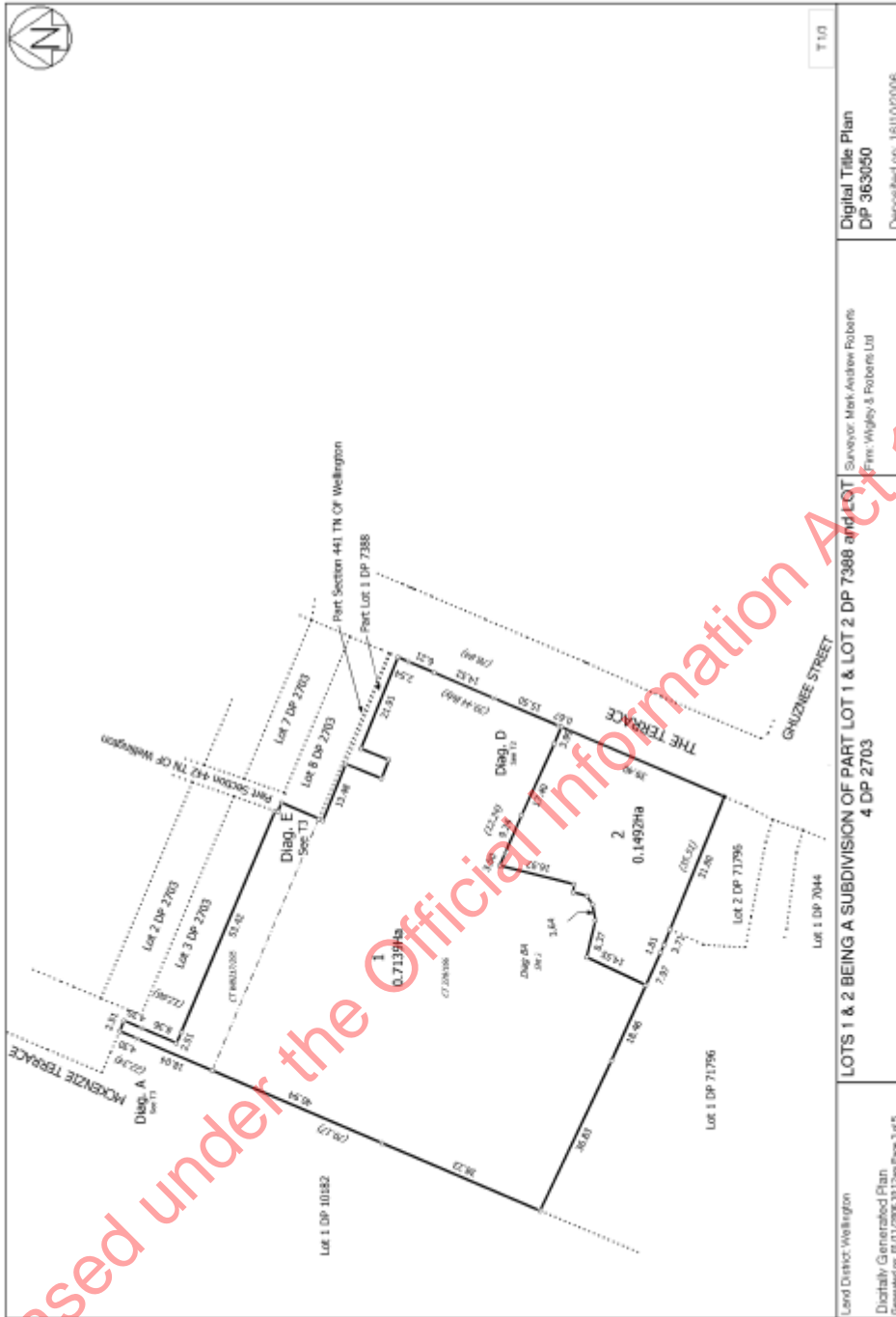
Estate Fee Simple
Area 1492 square metres more or less
Legal Description Lot 2 Deposited Plan 363050
Registered Owners
Victoria University of Wellington

Interests

216 Order in Council imposing Building Line Restriction
1880 Order in Council imposing a Building Line Restriction - 29.1.1941 at 3:00 pm
Subject to the Housing Act 1955
Subject to Part IVA Conservation Act 1987
Subject to Section 11 Crown Minerals Act 1991
Subject to a right to drain water and convey gas over parts marked D and E on DP 363050 created by Easement Instrument 7072198.2 - 16.10.2006 at 9:00 am
Appurtenant hereto is a right of way, a right to drain water and sewage and a pedestrian right of way created by Easement Instrument 7072198.2 - 16.10.2006 at 9:00 am
8327190.1 Certificate pursuant to section 115(2) of the Port Nicholson Block (Taranaki Whamui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika)
Claims Settlement Act 2009 that the within land is RFR land as defined in section 92 and is subject to subpart 2 of Part 3 of the Act (which restricts disposal, including leasing of the land) - 29.10.2009 at 9:00 am

Transaction ID 60961043
Client Reference 0waqstff001

Search Copy Dated 09/07/20 1:26 pm, Page 1 of 4
Register Only



T 1/0

Digital Title Plan
DP 363050
Deposited on: 16/10/2006

Surveyor: Mark Andrew Roberts
Firm: Wigley & Roberts Ltd

LOTS 1 & 2 BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART LOT 1 & LOT 2 DP 7388 and LOT 4 DP 2703

Land District: Wellington
Digitally Generated Plan
Generated on: 20/11/2006 10:12am Page 3 of 5

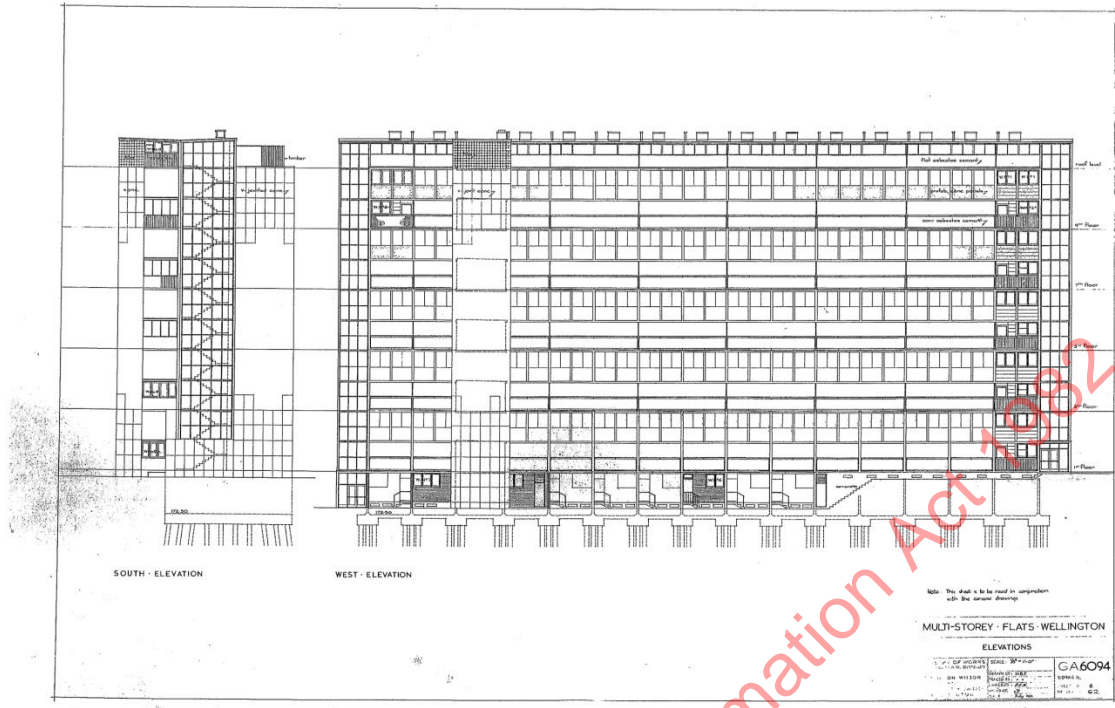


Figure 2: South and west elevations, Gordon Wilson Flats, sourced from Archifact report, Appendix 3.

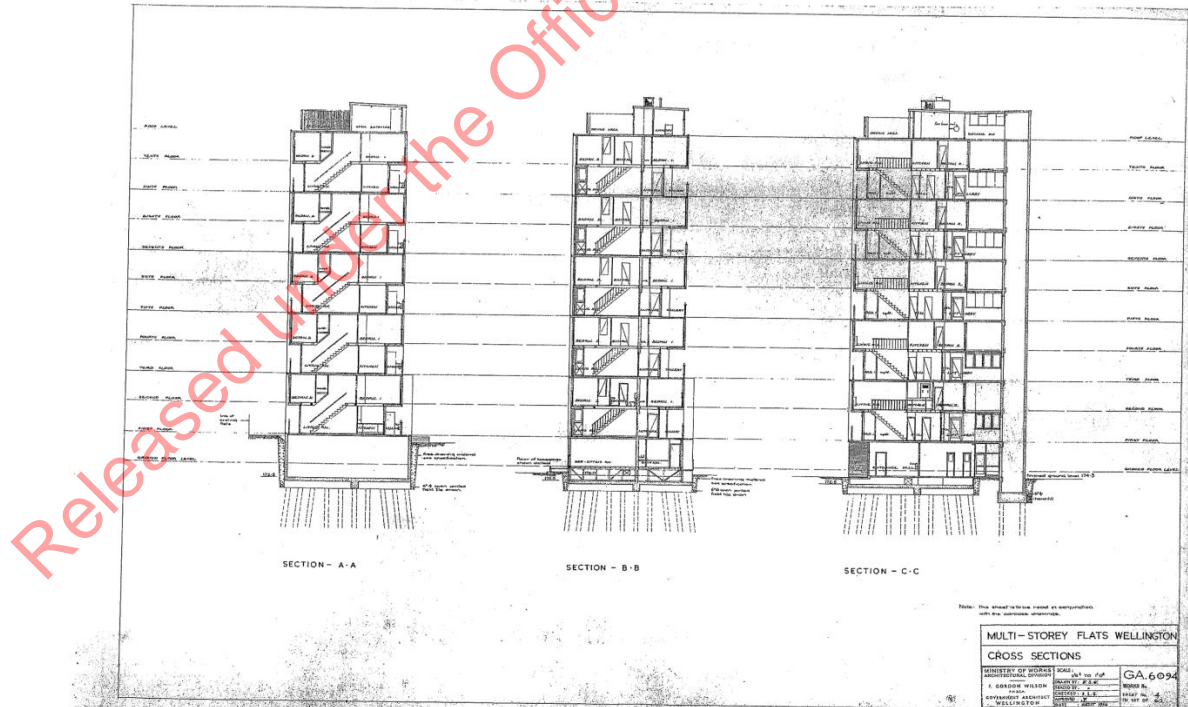


Figure 3: Sections, Gordon Wilson Flats; sourced from Archifact report, Appendix 3.

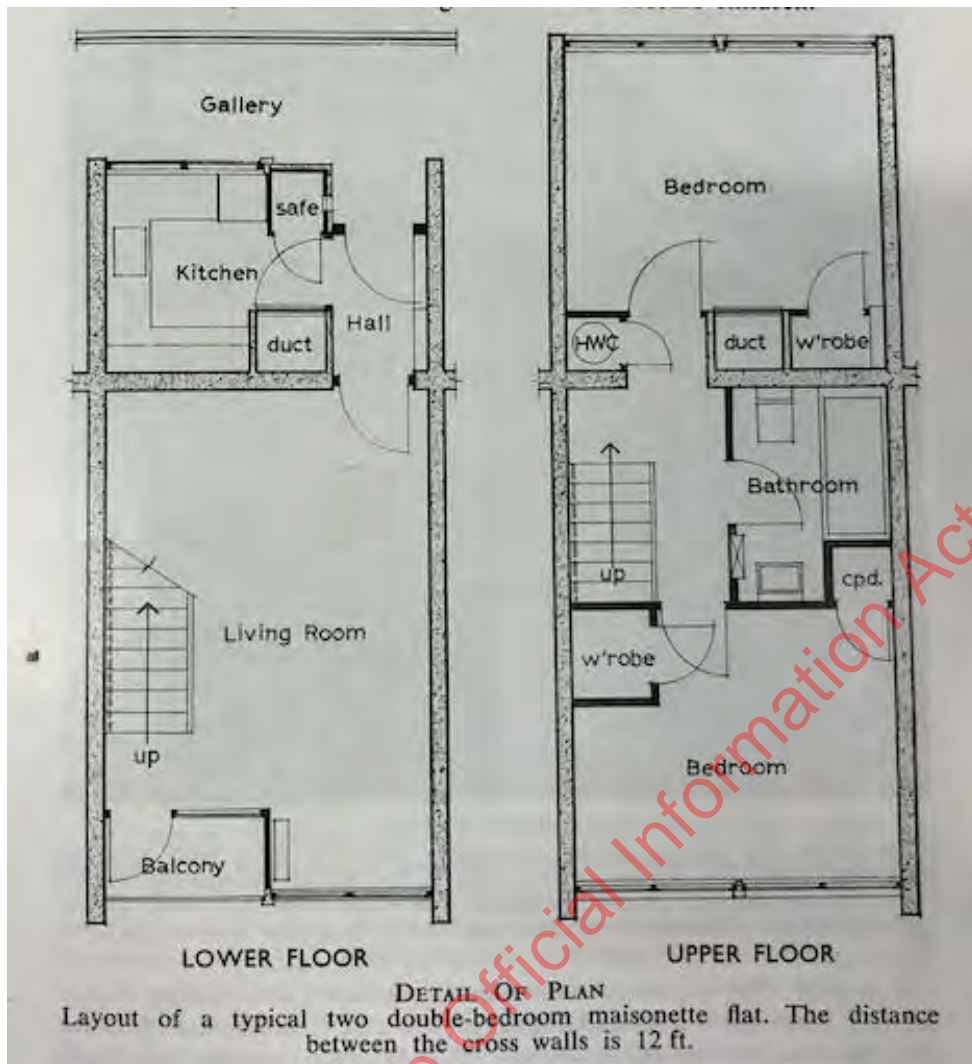


Figure 4: Floor plan of Gordon Wilson Flats maisonettes. Published in *Journal of the NZIA*, Vol. 28, February 1961, p. 3.

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Historical Photographs



Figure 5: McLean Flats with earthworks for Gordon Wilson Flats, 1955. EP/1955/2247-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Note that the image shows the McLean Flats prior to the enclosure of their north-facing balconies.



Figure 6: [Gordon Wilson Flats], Construction of lift tower, 1958. EP/1958/1539-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.



Figure 7: Gordon Wilson Flats under construction, 4 February 1958. EP-Industry-Housing-State-02, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.



Figure 8: Gordon Wilson Flats, and the Mclean Flats, had a multi-coloured paint scheme in the late 1970s, inspired by a Dulux paint chart (pers comm. Chris Cochran, a colleague in the MOW office at the time, to Heritage New Zealand 3 September 2020). The image is reproduced from *New Zealand Architect*, issue no 5 1978, p. 29

4.3. Appendix 3: Visual Aids to Physical Information

Current Plans

N/A

Current Photographs of Place

Photographs: Blyss Wagstaff, Heritage New Zealand, 6 July 2020



Figure 9: McLean Flats and Gordon Wilson Flats from driveway.



Figure 10: Detail of east elevation of McLean Flats.



Figure 11: Rear (west) elevation showing stairwell and lift tower at northern end.



Figure 12: East elevation of Gordon Wilson Flats from roof deck of McLean Flats.



Figure 13: Gordon Wilson Flats' rooftop laundry facilities.



Figure 14: The view from a bedroom in Gordon Wilson Flats; the Dixon Street Flats are visible in the distance.



Figure 15: The upstairs of one of the maisonettes.

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4.4. Appendix 4: Significance Assessment Information

Part 4 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

Chattels or object or class of chattels or objects (Section 65(6))

Under Section 65(6) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, an entry on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero relating to a historic place may include any chattel or object or class of chattels or objects –

- a) Situated in or on that place; and
- b) Considered by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga to contribute to the significance of that place; and
- c) Proposed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga for inclusion on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero.

Significance or value (Section 66(1))

Under Section 66(1) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga may enter any historic place or historic area on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero if the place possesses aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological, or traditional significance or value.

Category of historic place (Section 66(3))

Under Section 66(3) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga may assign Category 1 status or Category 2 status to any historic place, having regard to any of the following criteria:

- a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history
- b) The association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history
- c) The potential of the place to provide knowledge of New Zealand history
- d) The importance of the place to tangata whenua
- e) The community association with, or public esteem for, the place
- f) The potential of the place for public education
- g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place
- h) The symbolic or commemorative value of the place

- i) The importance of identifying historic places known to date from an early period of New Zealand settlement
- j) The importance of identifying rare types of historic places
- k) The extent to which the place forms part of a wider historical and cultural area

Additional criteria may be prescribed in regulations made under this Act for the purpose of assigning Category 1 or Category 2 status to a historic place, provided they are not inconsistent with the criteria set out in subsection (3)

Additional criteria may be prescribed in regulations made under this Act for entering historic places or historic areas of interest to Māori, wāhi tūpuna, wāhi tapu, or wāhi tapu areas on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero, provided they are not inconsistent with the criteria set out in subsection (3) or (5) or in regulations made under subsection (4).

NOTE: Category 1 historic places are 'places of special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage significance or value.' Category 2 historic places are 'places of historical or cultural heritage significance or value.'

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