

Not everyone is happy with the Taranaki Cathedral vicarage relocation

Move infuriates neighbour

Community



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A householder who will lose his sea views when New Plymouth's historic vicarage is moved has criticised the district council for exempting the project from its building rules.

Wayne O'Keefe lives over the road from Taranaki Cathedral Church of St Mary and will lose out when its vicarage, built in 1899, is moved about 20 metres nearer the sea as part of the \$15 million cathedral restoration project.

The move, which will make way for a car park as part of the redevelopment of the site, should come under current district plan rules, O'Keefe said.

"The [New Plymouth District] council say 'we don't protect your view', but you do because the rule is you can't build over 7.2 metres."

The council agreed the building breached the height restrictions, but said it had an exemption.

"The council is deciding who has to follow the rules and who doesn't, O'Keefe said.

"If we were allowed to go over 7.2 metres I would be putting another storey on my house, simple, then whatever they're doing won't affect me.

"But I'm not allowed to put another storey on my house because that's against the district plan, but these guys can."

Moving and restoring the vicarage is part of a redevelopment project that will include earthquake strengthening the cathedral and a new contemporary building Te Whare Hononga (the house that binds).

St Mary's is the oldest stone church in the country and everyone wants it restored, O'Keefe said, but moving the vicarage is changing the whole property and "should come under the current district plan."

He first heard about the proposal last December when someone from St Mary's asked him to give his approval, which he would not do.

After talking about the project with council officers he was told he didn't have to put his concerns in writing as he would be informed when "consent was applied for and that I would be given opportunity to put forward my view for consideration."

That did not happen, said

Wayne O'Keefe says the St Mary's building project, with the vicarage behind him, does not comply with the District Plan.

SIMON O'CONNOR/STUFF



The Taranaki Cathedral site plan showing the new location of the vicarage.



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Wayne O'Keefe

O'Keefe, who is unhappy with the council's responses to him.

"I've talked to the neighbours, they absolutely can't believe it."

O'Keefe is also worried about parking as commuters park on Robe and Fulford Streets and there is nowhere for the expected 50,000

visitors a year to leave vehicles.

NPDC Chief Operating Officer Kelvin Wright said, in an emailed statement, that the development included a 19-space car park on the site of the existing vicarage building.

The vicarage was over height, but the applicant had applied for an exemption from the district plan, which had been approved, as allowed for in the rules, Wright said.

"The building will be relocated less than 20 metres from its current position and, as it's part of the existing character and appearance, will look very similar."

The chimneys will be removed for safety reasons, and will be rebuilt with lightweight materials once the move is complete, he said.

"The original bricks will be retained and reused wherever

possible. This is allowed for in the rules covering heritage buildings."

With this kind of application, there is no legal need to get specific feedback from neighbours, he said.

"Furthermore the written approval of the hapu with mana whenua over the site was provided with the application."

Cathedral Remediation and Design Manager Jenny Goddard said, also in an emailed statement, that the vicarage was being moved so people could go between it and the other buildings more easily.

"As well as the practical benefits, having the buildings close to each other and linking them together with a courtyard speaks to their common purpose and vision."

After the vicarage is moved, the site will be used for off-street parking.

"If the vicarage wasn't moved, the carpark would need to go where the vicarage lawns are now. Giving a car park prominence in front of a heritage building and on such beautiful grounds just could not be considered."

The size and placement of car parking was one of the issues worked through with NPDC as part of the Resource Consent process, Goddard said.