

Cottage's future debated

New Plymouth's historic Albuhera Cottage, Brown St, could be relocated at Tawhiti Museum, South Taranaki.

Proposed removal of the cottage from its city site was the subject of a New Plymouth City Council town planning hearing today.

The hearing committee comprising Hugh Moss (chairman), Ida Gaskin and Muriel Livingston reserved its decision pending the applicants supplying a revised plan of what they plan to do on site.

The Cottage is graded C by the Historic Places Trust. The 1860s era cottage was used as living quarters for members of the 57th regiment (West Middlesex) who fought in the land wars.

Cottage owners Peter and Cecily White-Robinson live next door at No 2. While they want to see the cottage saved, they need the No 4 site to build on.

They are offering to give the cottage away, and Tawhiti Museum near Hawera is the front-runner for it so far, Mr White-Robinson said.

But he needs the council's agreement in principle to have it removed.

An earlier application suggested the cottage may be demolished if it could not be relocated. This is not so, he said.

New Plymouth Historical Society objected to the demolition suggestion, but could not see why the cottage could not be moved.

Many New Plymouth people do not know the cottage exists or that they have access to it, he said.

Mrs Livingston suggested it could be used for that purpose — an information-centre for it and other places, buildings and structures of historical significance.

Evidence for the applicants says the cottage is

rotting in parts, would need large amounts of money spent to upgrade it, and if kept on the site, would devalue the property.

Relocation at the museum would preserve its architecture and military history in a central location for visitors.

Council town planning officer Ian Dudding said in a report while the cottage does not have great historic significance, it is an example of early colonial structures and relates to local history.

He claimed it would have less significance if moved.

It has been a noted historic place in the city's district scheme for some years and there is little reason to justify taking it off, he says.

The White-Robinsons want to put two units with garages and a separate double garage on the site.

If they are not prepared to retain ownership and preserve the cottage, he recommends the council negotiate the lease of the land.

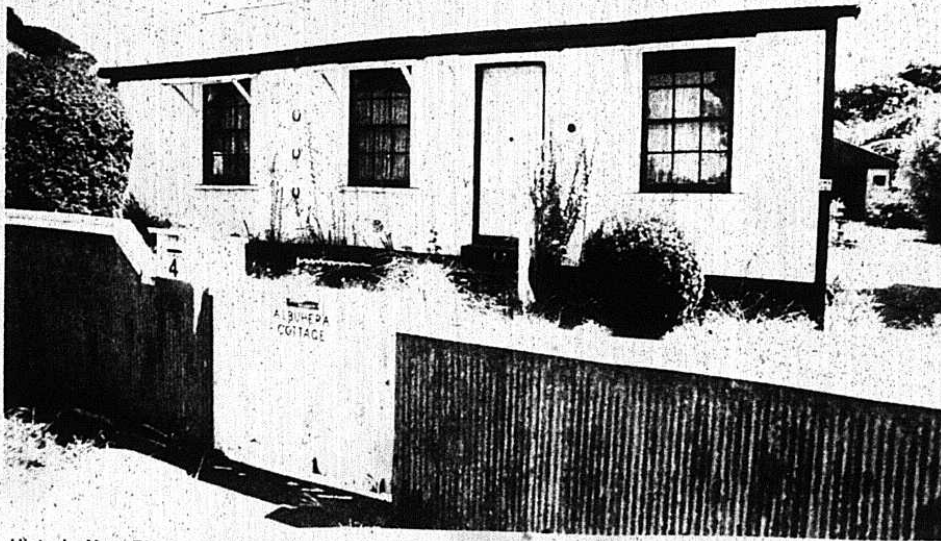
He also recommends the council be prepared to grant any reasonable request for relaxation of bulk and location requirements to allow the proposed units to be built on the balance of the section.

This would have to be subject to consents from adjoining owners.

One unit would certainly fit on the section and if the second was put on timber poles at the rear of the section, it would also fit, he says.

Taranaki museum director Ron Lambert applauded Mr Dudding's attempt to retain the cottage in the city.

He added, on behalf of the historical society, while it was preferable to retain buildings on their original sites, preservation of the building was paramount.



Historic New Plymouth place Albuhera Cottage, Brown St, may be relocated at Tawhiti Museum, near Hawera for restoration.

Gap between parties narrows

NZN News Bureau
Good news for National is contained in the latest Eyewitness Heylen poll results but it is not as bad as it could have been for Labour.

The poll, held on January 31, shows the gap between the two parties has narrowed to 6 percentage points, with National improving 3 points to 45.5% and Labour dropping 2 points to 51.6%.

That returns the parties to the relative positions they held last November.

Opposition Leader Jim Bolger still trails both Prime Minister David Lange and his own front bench colleague Sir Robert Muldoon as preferred Prime Minister, wanted by 9% of the 900 person sample.

Mr Lange received a 28% rating in the preferred Prime Minister stakes, and

comment on the latest poll results this morning, but both men can take some comfort from the results.

In a month that saw big increases in the number of unemployed and the consumer price index announced, as well as the continuing embarrassment of the Maori loan affair, the Government was happy the erosion of its support had not been more, Beehive sources indicated.

At the same time the Opposition is pleased to be closing the gap while claiming at the same time that the Eyewitness Heylen poll does not give a true indication of the mood of the electorate.

One Opposition pundit said not too much attention was paid to the poll because of an urban bias in the sampling.

While the poll may show Labour holding its own, the situation in the vital provincial marginal seats

But one area of worry for National must be Mr Bolger's continued low performance in the preferred Prime Minister poll.

The latest result must be particularly concerning considering the poll was taken the day after Mr Bolger delivered his state of the nation address, which received wide media coverage.

More than two years after leadership of the National Party ended, Sir Robert Muldoon is still the National politician most people would like to see as Prime Minister.

Opposition sources downplayed Mr Bolger's lack of improvement, saying Leaders of the Opposition had traditionally trailed Prime Ministers in the preferred Prime Minister polls up until election day.

In other poll results, approval of the way the Government is doing its job fell in all five areas surveyed.

the handling of unemployment, down 3%, 24% of interest rates, down 9%, and 34% on farming, down 1%.

The overall assessment of the Government's performance dropped 8% to 42%.

Mr Lange received an endorsement from 47% of the people surveyed for the way he is handling his job, and Mr Bolger had 35% approval for the way he is handling his job.

(Editorial: Page 2)

Pirates speed loot away