Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project

VILLA D'ESTE

Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015

LOCATION:

Street and Number: 341-351 Heretaunga Street West
City/ Town: Hastings
Region: Hawke's Bay

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lot 157 Deeds Plan 29 and Lot 5 Deposited Plan 4760
Certificate of Title (including Registry): CT HB58/152, Hawke's Bay Registry

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

Villa d'Este is a good example of a building in the Spanish Mission style, evident most particularly in the semi-circular arched arcade of the first floor, also in the arched openings of the other first floor windows. It could also be described as Stripped Classical, since it has plain wall surfaces and vestiges of subtle Classical detailing in the capitals of the attached columns and in the cornice and cornice moulding. It is an assured design, well balanced, and it provides much of visual interest in the composition and detail. The front and rear balconies provide outdoor space, so important for living in apartments in the central business district of the town.

It has a strong townscape presence in the line of buildings on the north side of Heretaunga Street West. This is due mainly to the patterns and rhythms, and the light and shade, of the first floor arcade, which is a prominent formal composition in the street. In addition, the scale of the building and its materials make it compatible with adjacent structures.

Cultural Value:

As a well-known and patronised inner-city retail building, and a home to generations of apartment tenants, Villa d'Este is something of a local institution. The 70 plus years of association with the fashion shop of Elizabeth Horne is a particularly significant one.

Historic Value:

Ville d'Este is a building of some historical value, derived partly from its continuous use as retail premises and apartments, and in particular the long tenure of fashion boutique Elizabeth Horne. The long-standing association of that business with this building, lifts its significance as it is unusual for a tenanted inner-city building to retain the same use for such a long time. The building has historic interest for the period straddling the Hawke's Bay earthquake – the period when the building was built, partially destroyed and then rebuilt. The building's brief association with radio station pioneers Lockyer's Electrical is also of some historical interest. The building is the work of Davies, Garnett and Phillips, one of the most influential architectural associations in Hastings' history.

Technological Value:

The building has some technical significance as a pre-earthquake concrete building, one that suffered serious damage in the earthquake, yet was able to be reconstructed while retaining much of the original fabric. Small structural design alterations (as well as changes to stylistic features) were made in the reconstruction.

HISTORY:

Villa d'Este was built as flats and retail outlets in 1929 for Hastings barrister James Kirk and designed by architect Albert Garnett. The building was presumably named for the celebrated house and gardens built at Tivoli, near Rome, by Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este (1509-1572). Pope Julius appointed Cardinal d'Este as Governor of Tivoli and gave him the villa as a gift. He had the entire property reconstructed to the plans of Pirro Ligorio. The house and the gardens are together considered a masterpiece of Renaissance

design and are listed as a World Heritage Site.[1] The reason for Kirk giving his building this name is not known.

The building was badly damaged in the Hawke's Bay earthquake and had to be partly rebuilt. Although some sources say the building was demolished, the plans make clear that this was not the case. The building survived but the façade had badly cracked and was removed.[2] There is also one reference on the plans to the removal of existing windows to allow new concrete to be poured.[3] The original design was, understandably, augmented with extra strengthening. This time the design was attributed to Davies, Garnett & Phillips, who were collaborating in the aftermath of the earthquake.[4] Davies, Garnett and Phillips were each successful architects in their own right before joining up together to aid in the huge task of rebuilding the town centre. Perhaps their best known collaboration was the Wesley Methodist Church (1932).

James Kirk remained the owner of the building until his death in 1945. It was then transferred to solicitor Albert Lawry and Horace Kirk, a company director, who were presumably the executors of James Kirk's will. After Lawry's death Horace Kirk became the sole owner. He sold the property to P.A.W Properties Ltd in 1965. Four years later it was bought by Allan Jones, a farmer. In 1980 it was bought by Arthur Smith, described as a businessman, and his wife Coral. Following their deaths in 2003, the property was passed to Jon Philip Smith and Jon Bower Smith.[5]

Listing of occupants of Villa d'Este is not a definitive exercise, at least for the first two decades of the building's existence, as it is not certain what street numbers applied to the building.[6] The numbering also changed over the decades. There were originally four shops on the ground floor although the configuration of the first floor is more difficult to follow. Directories indicate that there were at least three flats.[7] Mary Garden was one of the early shop tenants, moving into the building some time after setting up her business 'Mary Garden Creations', a dress shop, in 1926.[8]

In 1940, Wises Directory lists seven names, some of whom were clearly flat tenants, although they are not explicitly described as such. I & C Galbraith, milliners, F.E. Culy, furniture dealer, Norman Kelly, furrier, Ms E Fergusson, hairdresser, Kate Dalley, draper and William Scott, traveller were listed. Also listed was Elizabeth Horne, a mantle (a short, sleeveless cloak) manufacturer and retailer. Elizabeth Horn(e) had purchased Mary Garden's business in 1935, having worked for her for a number of years. Elizabeth also lived in one of the upstairs flats until she built her own home.[9] Today Elizabeth Horne is Hawke's Bay's oldest women's fashion shop and still an occupant of Villa d'Este.

By the mid-1940s Villa d'Este was appearing in the name of one business - Villa d'Este Salon, at No.333. Galbraiths was also in evidence, along with J.E. Fregley, draper, Lockyer's Electrical Ltd, Vogue Lingerie and Ms Ferguson-Smith. Lockyer's, a name that

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_d'Este
[2] Michael Fowler, *From Disaster to Recovery: The Hastings CBD 1931-35*, Havelock North, Michael Fowler Publishing, 2007, pp.170-171. The façade was pulled down by Alf Watkins's steam traction engine, see photograph in Appendix 4.
[3] Elevations and plans, 'Reconditioning of Buildings in Heretaunga Street for J.R. Kirk Esq.', Hastings District Council building file, copy held on New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12013-436.
[4] 'Heritage of Hastings: a guide to the Earthquake Heritage of Central Hastings' leaflet, n.p; Wright, pp. 471, 473-474.
[5] Summary of building ownership from CT HB 58/152, Land Information New Zealand, Hastings
[6] The first entry correlating with the existing street numbers (341-351 Heretaunga Street West) comes in 1930, before the reconstruction, and lists the Electric Battery Co., grocer Phil Tritt and the Cycle and Sports Depot. However, these are the last entries before the Nelson Street intersection and the occupants in question were actually in the buildings on the corner.
[7] *Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, H Wises & Co, Dunedin, Eastbourne Street, Eastbourne Street East, Russell Street, 1959/60, names three flat occupants.
[8] Fowler, p.170
[9] Fowler, p.171

has also survived in Hawke's Bay retailing, owned and ran a radio station in Hastings in 1930s, until (like all private radio stations) it was nationalised by the government.[10]

The Villa d'Este Flats were first mentioned in street directories about this time and in 1950-51 the tenants were Mrs M. Wilmot, an upholsterer and F.H. Reid, an orchardist. (At other times, three names were listed.) In 1959-60, the Villa d'Este Salon, occupied the building along with Alexander Martin Ltd, jewellers, Vogue (Hastings), Elizabeth Horne and Lockyer's (who remained in the building until at least the 1970s), and the flat tenants.[11] Di Stewart and Associates stated that an early occupant was Mary Gardiner, the 'first manufacturer of women's clothing'.[12]

More recent tenants include Red Copper Takeaways, West End Takeaways, EMI Records, Wrightson Real Estate, Duckworths, Cut Above hairdressers, and Boardzone.[13] The current tenants are Miller's Fashion Club (341) and Elizabeth Horne (351).

There have been numerous alterations to the building's interior, mainly for retailing purposes. Consents for known work were issued in 1967, 1976, 1980, 1982, 1997 and 2001.[14] A façade enhancement grant was made to the owners in 1994 and the building was repainted that year.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: Albert Garnett (1929); Davies, Garnett and Phillips (1932) (Harold Davies, Albert Garnett, Eric Phillips)

Date of construction: 1929; 1932

Construction details: The building is an in-situ concrete framed structure; foundations and exterior walls are concrete, some 225mm (9 inches) thick, while partitions are shown on the original drawings as brick; the rear wall was cavity brick. This is typical construction technology for the time. The roof is timber-framed and hipped in form.

Description: Villa d'Este is a two-storey concrete building, almost square in plan. The ground floor is divided into four deep retail spaces, each with a narrow street frontage, these now having been modernised. Above the verandah, the façade is a well articulated composition in the Spanish Mission style. Its main feature is a central section made up of an arcade of four semi-circular arches; the attached columns between the arches are in a delicate Stripped Classical style. It is interesting to note that the design of 1929 shows decorated Corinthian column capitals, which were rebuilt in 1932 in the very plain Doric style that one sees today; the cornice mouldings were simplified too, while the cornice itself has delicately incised Classical decoration. These subtle changes perhaps made Villa d'Este more in tune with the style of buildings then under construction in the post-earthquake period.

A balcony is formed by the exterior wall behind, being set back from the arcade, and the concrete floor being cantilevered forward out over the verandah roof. A wrought iron balustrade provides decorative interest to this central part of the façade. The bays to either side, set slightly back, each have a set of three narrow window openings.

[10] www.radioheritage.net/Story93.asp
[11] Unless otherwise stated, names of occupants are taken from *Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, 1930-1959/60.
[12] Hastings CBD Heritage Study Item Identification Sheet, register item no. 31, New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12013-436
[13] These businesses were tenants during the 1980s and 90s. From consent records New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12013-436 or Hastings District Council file.
[14] See various consent documents on New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12013-436 or Hastings District Council file.

Access to the first floor of the building is via a stair in the middle of the street frontage; it gives access to four apartments, one in each corner. These were quite generously laid out, each with a living room, two bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom (toilet, bath and wash hand basin). The front units had access to the balcony overlooking Heretaunga Street West, and there was a back balcony too, very plain but providing outdoor space to the two back units. Bedrooms without an exterior wall are lit from a large central skylight.

In the original design, the shops each had a small one-bedroom flat at the rear, with kitchen facilities in the living room, and small bathroom; these spaces have long since been converted for office space or staff rooms. A dividing wall has been removed to make one large shop from the two central shops.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance
Front elevation	Aesthetic, architectural
Structure	Technical

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

CT HB 58/152, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Land District.

Elevations and plans, 'Reconditioning of Buildings in Heretaunga Street for J.R. Kirk Esq.', Hastings: Hastings District Council.

Fowler, Michael, *From Disaster to Recovery: The Hastings CBD 1931-35*, Havelock North: Michael Fowler Publishing, 2007.

Hastings District Council building file.

'Heritage of Hastings: a guide to the Earthquake Heritage of Hastings', (leaflet) Hastings: Hastings District Council.

New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12013-436

'Obituary – Albert Garnett', *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 27 February 1956.

Shaw P. and Hallett P. 1991, *Spanish Mission Hastings: Styles of Five Decades*, Napier: Cosmos

Stewart, Di and Associates, *Hastings Central Business District Heritage Study, Volume II – Heritage Register*, Hastings: Hastings District Council, 1997.

Wise's New Zealand post office directory, H Wises & Co, Dunedin, Eastbourne Street, Eastbourne Street East, Russell Street, vols 1916 to 1959-60.

Wright, Matthew, *Town and Country: the history of Hastings and District,* Hastings: Hastings District Council, 2001.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

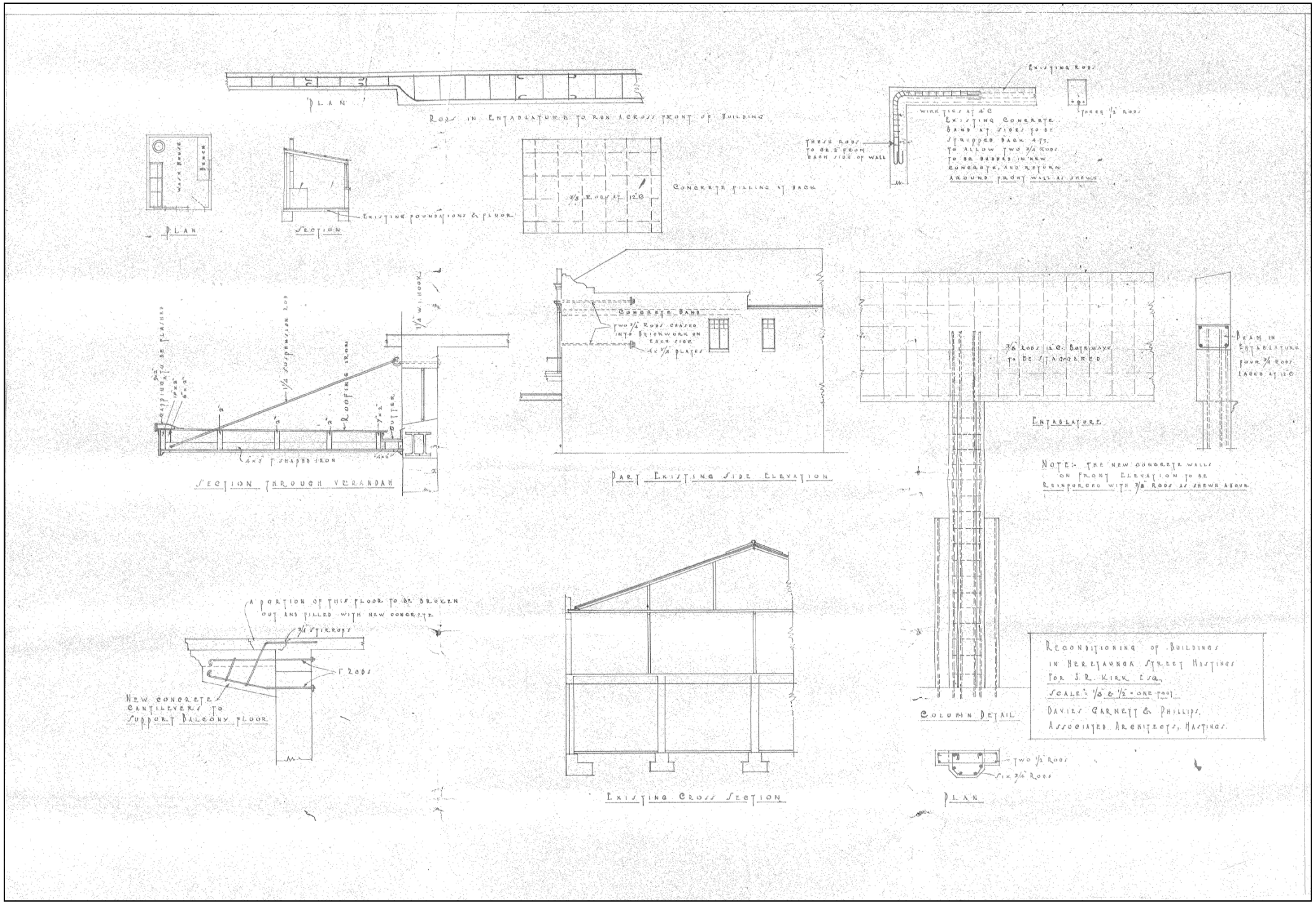
NZHPT Register: Villa d'Este is a Category II historic place (Register No. 1103).

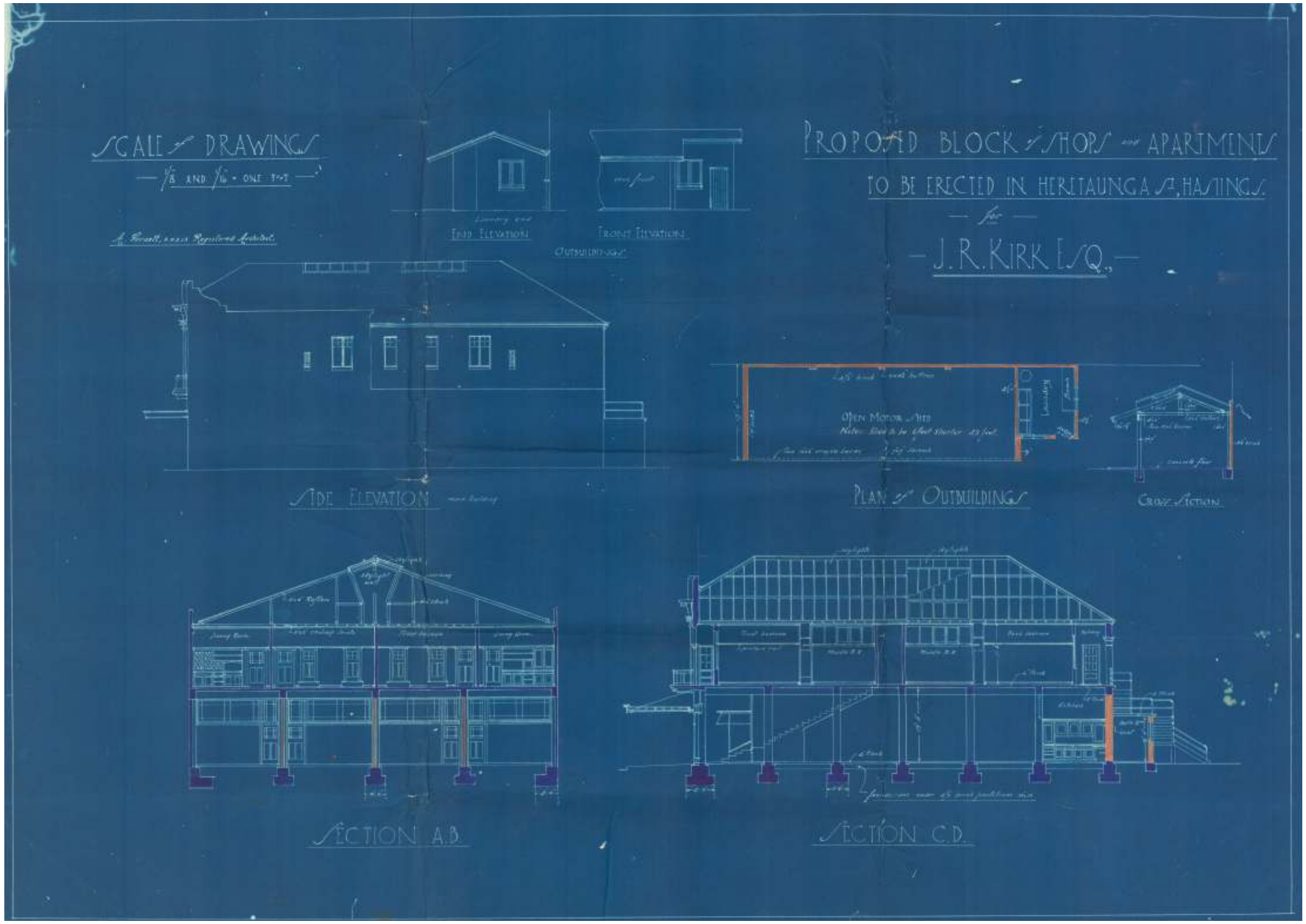
District Plan Listing: Listed as a Category II historic place in the Operative Hastings District Plan (Plan declared operative 10th June 2003)

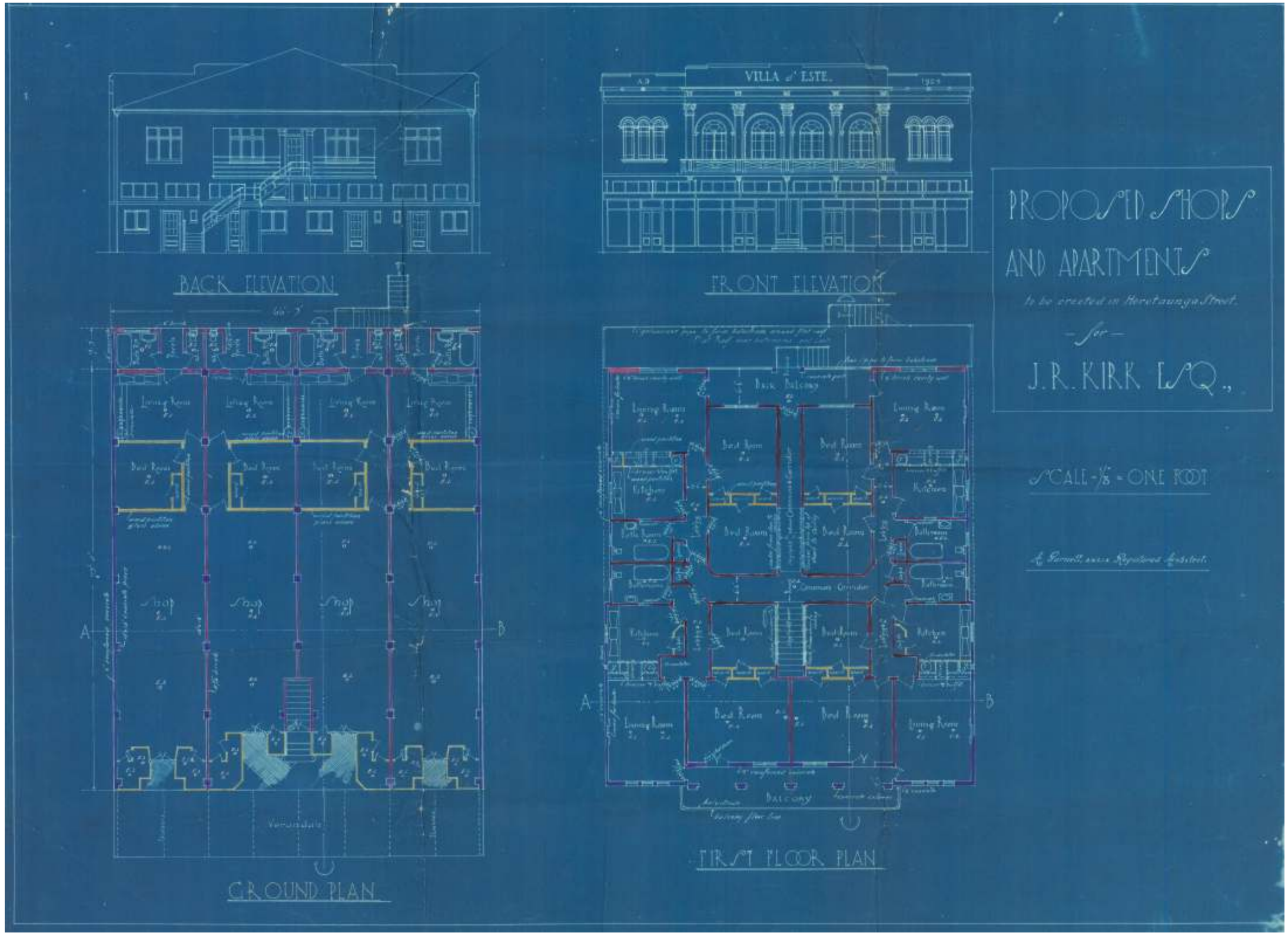
New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993: This site has been identified as a potential archaeological site under Section 2 of the New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993.

ARCHIVE PLAN(S):

Reconditioning of Buildings in HeretaungaSt West for J.R. Kirk, by Davies, Garnett & Phillips (Undated) (TRIM Refs: 25248#019 and 25248#020)




SCALE OF DRAWINGS
1/8 AND 1/16 = ONE FOOT
FRONT ELEVATION
PROPOSED BLOCK OF SHOPS AND APARTMENTS
TO BE ERECTED IN HERETAUNGA ST, HASTINGS
FOR
J. R. KIRK ESQ.
SIDE ELEVATION
OPEN MOTOR SHED
PLAN OF OUTBUILDINGS
CROSS SECTION
SECTION A.B
SECTION C.D.


VILLA d' ESTE.
BACK ELEVATION
FRONT ELEVATION
PROPOSED SHOPS
AND APARTMENTS
J.R. KIRK ESQ.,
SCALE - 1/8 - ONE FOOT
GROUND PLAN
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS

Marching band outside Villa d'Este (c. 1930-1940)

Villa d'Este following the 1931 Hawke's Bay Earthquake