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International working party for
documentation and conservation

of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

New International Selection
Full Documentation Fiche 2003

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composed by national/regional working party of: New Zealand

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



depicted item: Greys Avenue Flats
source: Photograph by Lauren Speer
date: 15 January 2014

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1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

1.1 Data for identification

current name: Greys Avenue Flats

former/original/variant name: Lower Greys Avenue Flats

number(s) and name(s) of street(s): 95 – 113 Greys Avenue

town: Auckland

province/state: Auckland

post code: 1010

country: New Zealand

lot: Lot 1 DP 36096 and Part Allotment 52-54 Section 28
Allotment 56 and Part Allotment 57 Section 28
Part Allotment 55 Section 28

national topographical grid reference: n/a

current typology: <edium- to high-rise public housing (rental flats, known in New Zealand as state rental flats)

former/original/variant typology: As current

comments on typology: The building was purpose-built in the 1940s to provide state rental flats in Auckland as part of the state housing scheme developed by the Labour Government in the previous decade.

1.2 Status of protection

protected by: The building is listed with Heritage New Zealand (formerly New Zealand Historic Places Trust) as well as scheduled by the Auckland Council in both the operative Auckland City District Plan - Central Area Section, and the proposed Auckland Unitary Plan 2013 (to be operative in approximately 2015/16).

grade: Category 2 Historic Place (HNZ); Category A (in both district plans)

date: 26 November 1981 (Heritage New Zealand listing); 2005 (operative Auckland City Central Area Section District Plan); and 2013 (proposed Auckland Unitary Plan)

valid for: whole building, including the exterior and interior, and site (in the Heritage New Zealand listing and both district plans)

remarks: Heritage New Zealand List: List Number 583; Scheduled as a Category 2 historic place.¹

Auckland City District Plan – Central Area Section: Schedule Number: 048; Scheduled for the building's significant style, architect, design, interior, social context, location, and intactness heritage values; interior protection has been noted with supplementary comments in the plan outlining interior restrictions and provisions to change; site protection has been noted with supplementary comments in the plan outlining site restrictions and provisions to change.²

¹ Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 'Greys Avenue Flats', *The List*, Accessed May 21, 2015, <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/583>

² Auckland Council, 'Appendix 1: Schedule of Buildings, Heritage Properties, Places, Monuments and Objects of Special Value and those subject to Heritage Orders', *Auckland City Council District Plan Operative 2005 – Central*

Auckland Proposed Unitary Plan: Schedule Number: 01964; Scheduled for the building's historical significance and physical attributes.³

1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s): Upper Greys Avenue Flats (1955-58) including the Housing New Zealand Corporation offices, Parkside Mews (1970s), Myers Park (1914-15), Myers Kindergarten (1916), Parklane Apartments (1920s), United Building Society Building (1970s), Chamber of Commerce, Auckland Civic Building (1954-66) and Auckland Civic Centre.

visual relations: The Greys Avenue Flats comprise four modernist medium-rise apartment blocks. The four blocks step down with the descending topography of tree-lined Greys Avenue towards the Civic Centre.⁴ The buildings create a strong street presence with their minimal set-back and immediate relationship with the streetscape and its prominent trees. The flats are located on the west side of Greys Avenue and look across to several other apartment buildings on the east side including the Parkside Mews and Parklane Apartments. A pedestrian access way to Myers Park and the landmark mirror glass United Building Society Building are also on the east side of the street. Shouldering the Greys Avenue blocks of flats to the south are the 1958 Upper Greys Avenue Flats, a ten-storey block. To the north of the blocks of flats are the Chamber of Commerce and Wilson carparking buildings. The Auckland Civic Centre is also nearby, at the most northern and lowest end of Greys Avenue.

functional relations: The Greys Avenue Flats were one of six medium- and high-density blocks of state rental flats built by New Zealand's Labour Government during its 1935 to 1949 term. Central government built about 30,000 state rental houses during the same period. The first of these higher density buildings was the two- and three-storey Centennial Flats in Berhampore, Wellington (1939-40), followed by the ten-storey Dixon Street Flats (1940-44), the McLean Flats (1943-44) and the Hanson Street Flats (1943-44), all in Wellington, and in Auckland, the Greys Avenue Flats and Symonds Street Flats (both 1945-47). There was some resistance to this building type in Auckland, hence the later date of the two Auckland schemes compared with the four Wellington ones. All six buildings were important within the development of New Zealand's modern architecture.

other relations: While the Greys Avenue Flats and the Symonds Street Flats are both located in central Auckland, the Greys Avenue Flats are west of the CBD and the Symonds Street Flats are east of the CBD. There is, therefore, no visual connection between the two buildings and their sites.

2. History of building(s) etc.

2.1 Chronology

Area Section, Accessed January 13, 2014, pp. 9, 22, 30,

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/central/pdfs/appendix01.pdf>

³ Auckland Council, 'Appendix 9: Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places', *Proposed Auckland Council Unitary Plan – Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places – Part 1: Historic Heritage Places*, Accessed January 13, 2014, p. 91,

<http://unitaryplan.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Images/September%202013%20version/Appendices%20PDF/Appendix%2009/Appendix%209%20-%20Schedule%20of%20significant%20historic%20heritage%20places%2020130913%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴ London Plane trees line both sides of Greys Avenue and have been protected by the Auckland City Council. See Schedule of Trees for the Auckland City Council registration 217, Auckland Council, 'Appendix 2: Schedule of Trees', *Auckland City Council District Plan Operative 2005 – Central Area Section*, Accessed January 15, 2014, p. 3, <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/central/pdfs/appendix02.pdf>

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commission or competition date: In the 1930s, the Auckland City Council pursued a slum clearance programme in Greys Avenue. The council joined forces with the Labour Government in May 1941, agreeing that state rental flats should be built on the cleared land. The site at 95-113 Greys Avenue was purchased on 5 August 1941 and the two remaining houses on it were cleared as part of this programme.⁵

design period(s): Conceptual drawings were started late in 1941, after the site had been acquired
 Contract drawings: August and September 1944

start of site work: Tenders called: June 1945
 Building construction: 1945 – June 1947

completion/inauguration: The building was opened in a joint ceremony with the Symonds Street Flats on 13 September 1947 by the then Housing Minister, Bob Semple.⁶

2.2 Summary of development

commission brief: Following its election to power in 1935, New Zealand's first Labour Government decided to establish a Department of Housing Construction to develop state housing schemes up and down the country.⁷ There was an extreme shortage of housing nationwide, but particularly in the urban areas of Greater Auckland and Greater Wellington, which comprised 80% of the nation's shortage.⁸ The state housing schemes were devised to provide predominantly single-storey housing units in suburban areas. However, the chief architect of the Department of Housing Construction, Francis Gordon Wilson, and the Minister of Housing, John A. Lee, agreed upon the advantages of including multi-unit blocks of flats in the state housing programme for the inner-city areas of both Auckland and Wellington.⁹ The pioneer block of flats was the Centennial Flats in Berhampore, Wellington (1939-1940), designed by Gordon Wilson.¹⁰

In Auckland, existing housing shortages were compounded by increasing urbanisation and, in the latter stages of World War II, the return of defence forces personnel. For example, the population grew by over 25,000 people between 1940 and September 1944. Some commentators recognised that state housing on the periphery of the city was contributing to urban sprawl. Thus, the Department of Housing Construction developed state rental housing schemes for inner-city sites in Symonds Street and Greys Avenue. The higher density proposed for both sites was resisted by the Auckland Branch Office of the State Advances Corporation as staff believed that detached housing was a more suitable housing

⁵ Julia Gatley, 'Shabby and Shambling: Decadent Housing in Greys Avenue', in Christine McCarthy (ed.), *From Over-Sweet Cake to Wholemeal Bread: The Home & Building Years: New Zealand Architecture in the 1940s* (Wellington: Centre for Building Performance, Victoria University of Wellington, 2008), p. 51.

⁶ 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, pp. 212-222; Lewis Martin, *Built for Us: The Work of Government and Colonial Architects, 1860's to 1960's* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004), p. 174.

⁷ Julia Gatley, 'Going Up Rather Than Out: State Rental Flats in New Zealand, 1935-1949', in Barbara Brookes (ed.), *At Home in New Zealand: Houses History People* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2000), p. 140.

⁸ Julia Gatley, 'Early Flats in Auckland', *New Zealand Historic Places Trust Journal*, May 1995, p. 13.

⁹ Martin, *Built for Us*, p. 166.

¹⁰ Gatley, 'Early Flats in Auckland', p. 13.

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typology for Auckland residents.¹¹ The DHC persevered and, with a contribution of £25,000 from the Auckland City Council, purchased the two-acre Greys Avenue site for £33,250 on 5 August 1941.¹²

design brief: The building's design took its lead from the blocks of state rental flats already built in Wellington, especially the Dixon Street Flats (1941-44). Concept drawings began after the site's purchase in 1941 and these were followed by the contract drawings three years later in August and September 1944. Resistance from the Auckland Branch Office of the State Advances Corporation and members of the public prolonged the project's realisation.¹³ The design was developed, comprising 468 flats within 15 blocks to be completed through a three-stage construction process on both sides of Greys Avenue. The first stage consisted of 50 units within four blocks on the lower north-west side of Greys Avenue.¹⁴ This is the building that we see today. Note: during this period, in 1943, the Ministry of Works was created and the Department of Housing Construction became the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works.

building/construction: The tendering process began in June 1945 for the construction of the initial 50 units of Block 1. Four bids were received. The lowest tender received was that of the Fletcher Construction Company for £100,578.00, which was accepted and the contract duly awarded to this firm. Construction commenced later that year. The four blocks included in the first stage development were completed in two separate phases, each phase completing two blocks.¹⁵

completed situation: The Greys Avenue Flats stage one building was officially opened in a joint ceremony with the Symonds Street Flats on the 13 September 1947 by the then Housing Minister, Bob Semple.¹⁶

Following the opening of the first stage, stage two of the scheme to include 60 units was ready to be constructed with the contract drawings completed and the tenders ready to be called. However, permission was declined: 'shortages in building materials into the late 1940's saw the government's building controller withhold permission for the subsequent stages to proceed'.¹⁷ The high costs of stage one construction in both Greys Avenue and Symonds Street were also a factor for this refusal. The second and third stages of the 1941 Greys Avenue Flats scheme were thus never realised.¹⁸

The Upper Greys Avenue site was however built upon during the period 1955 to 1958. The completed Upper Greys Avenue Flats replaced the original 1941 design with a newer design by Gordon Wilson to accommodate '70 two-bedroomed maisonettes and 16 bed-sits'.¹⁹

original situation or character of site: As mentioned previously, the Greys Avenue Flats arose out of a slum clearance scheme initiated by the Auckland City Council. The flats were built towards the northern end of Greys Avenue, close to Auckland's Chinatown. The area was commonly described as a 'slum'. The council acquired the land, demolished the buildings and rerouted streets, including the clearance of the north end of Greys Avenue and the east end of Cook Street, and the creation of Mayoral Drive to ensure the retention of an east-west link to replace that formerly provided by Cook

¹¹ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', pp. 197-200.

¹² Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 212.

¹³ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 200

¹⁴ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 213.

¹⁵ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 215.

¹⁶ Martin, *Built for Us*, p. 174.

¹⁷ Gatley, 'Going Up Rather than Out', p. 142.

¹⁸ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 216.

¹⁹ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 216.

Street.²⁰

2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner/patron: New Zealand Government, managed by Housing New Zealand Corporation

architect(s): Francis Gordon Wilson (Chief Architect of the Department of Housing Construction / Housing Division of the Ministry of Works)

landscape/garden designer(s): n/a

other designer(s): n/a

consulting engineer(s): n/a

building contractor(s): Fletcher Construction Company Ltd

Francis Gordon Wilson (1900-1959) was born in Perth, Australia. His family moved to Wellington when he was three years old and he attended Wellington's Terrace School and the Wellington Technical School. Gordon Wilson went on to study at the Auckland University College School of Architecture in 1920, while at the same time he worked for the firm of Hoggard, Prouse & Gummer from 1920 to 1921. Following this firm's disestablishment, the firm of Gummer & Ford was created in which Gordon Wilson worked from 1923 to 1936. In 1928 he became partner of this firm, which is known for such notable projects as the Auckland Railway Station, the National Art Gallery, the National War Memorial Carillion, Wellington Central Library, and the New Zealand Insurance Building.²¹

Gordon Wilson was appointed Chief Architect in the Department of Housing Construction / Housing Division of the Ministry of Works in 1936 and remained in the role until 1948, when he was promoted to assistant Government Architect. In 1952 Wilson was appointed Government Architect, a position he held until his death in 1959. In his role as Chief Architect of the Department/Division, Wilson is best known for the medium- and high-density buildings that embody the social ideals and reforms of the Labour Government combined with the international style of modern architecture. The state rental blocks of flats, notably the Centennial Flats in Berhampore, Wellington (1939-40), Dixon Street Flats, Wellington (1940-44) and Greys Avenue Flats, Auckland (1945-47) are the best examples of this work built under Gordon Wilson.

In his later years, Wilson was also involved with the New Zealand Institute of Architects and was chairman of the Wellington Branch from 1955 to 1956. He was actively involved in the National Historic Places Trust and the Association of New Zealand Art Societies and gained registration with the Royal Institute of British Architects. Today, Wilson is remembered for his 'outstanding contribution not only to New Zealand's building stock but also to the development of modern architecture in this country'.²²

2.4 Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

²⁰ Gatley, 'Shabby and Shambling', p. 51.

²¹ F. E. Greenish, 'Obituary: Francis Gordon Wilson (F.), A.R.I.B.A.', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, March 1959, p. 56.

²² Julia Gatley, 'Wilson, Francis Gordon', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Accessed January 15, 2014, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/wilson-francis-gordon>

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name(s): n/a

association:

event(s):

period:

2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

A comprehensive list of changes that have occurred to the Greys Avenue Flats, both externally and internally, is included in the conservation plan prepared by Dave Pearson Architects Limited in June 2006. As stated in the conservation plan, 'the exterior of the flats have undergone relatively few changes' and 'the interior of the blocks is also relatively unchanged'. The changes listed below are those that are the most important to the building.²³

type of change: Removal of all TV and radio antennae from the roof of the building

date(s): February 2006

circumstances/ reasons for change: to restore the building's appearance and update technology

effects of changes: The removal of all existing TV and radio antenna from the exterior of the four blocks and their replacement with a single MATV system has visually enhanced the appearance of the buildings and added to its heritage values. The elimination of this visual impairment from the street view has restored the building's overall street appearance with the reinstatement of the original design intentions of simplicity and non-embellishment along this facade. These changes have also improved the functionality of the building with updated modern conveniences for the tenants.²⁴

persons/organisations involved: OPUS and Housing New Zealand Corporation

type of change: Entrance canopy structural remediation

date(s): February 2006

circumstances/ reasons for change: structural insufficiency

effects of changes: The remediation of the canopy at 97 Greys Avenue was extensive due to its failing structure. The original design of the canopy was retained while new replacement materials were used for its construction. This change has not detracted from the heritage value of the building whilst improving the canopy structurally.²⁵

²³ Dave Pearson Architects Limited, 'Grey's Avenue Flats Auckland: Conservation Plan', Conservation Plan, Auckland, 2006, p. 29.

²⁴ OPUS, 'Removal of all existing TV and radio antenna from the exterior of the buildings and replaced with a single MTAV system: February 2006,' Building Report, Auckland, 2006, np.

²⁵ OPUS, 'Entrance Canopy Structural Remediation: 97 Greys Avenue, Auckland', Building Report, Auckland, 2006, np.

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persons/organisations involved: OPUS and Housing New Zealand Corporation

type of change: Roof waterproofing and downpipe repairs

date(s): September 2006

circumstances/ reasons for change: repairs and maintenance

effects of changes: The repair and maintenance of the roof waterproofing and downpipes was required to prevent water damage and deterioration of the structural integrity of the building. These changes improved the functionality and life of the building and do not detract from its heritage values.²⁶

persons/organisations involved: Hampton Jones Property Construction Limited and Housing New Zealand Corporation

type of change: major upgrade and refurbishment for all four blocks

date(s): 2008

circumstances/ reasons for change: This major renovation was required to upgrade the building after 60 years and to provide a better standard of accommodation for tenants.

effects of changes: The Greys Avenue Flats were upgraded and refurbished by GHD Auckland in 2008. This alteration was undertaken to 'repair and refurbish the apartments in keeping with the original features of the building from the 1940s whilst upgrading the facilities to meet modern living standards'.²⁷ These works included the installation of modern fire protection systems and the removal of exposed fire hose reels throughout the building complex; rerouting and concealment of cabling of services that had been added since construction, including emergency lighting and security; new water supply and drainage pipes to replace existing ones; landscaping and planting of garden areas; replacement of external building features such as windows and security screens to provide consistency throughout the building complex; and an upgrade to apartments especially their kitchen and bathrooms including laundry requirements.²⁸ These changes were evaluated through a heritage assessment undertaken by Dave Pearson Architects Limited. The assessment concluded that the renovations would be a generally positive change, increasing the building's functionality and restoring the building to its earlier form. A balance between modernisation and retaining the heritage values was achieved.²⁹

persons/organisations involved: GHD Auckland Office, Dave Pearson Architects Limited and Housing New Zealand Corporation

²⁶ Hampton Jones Property Construction Limited, 'Roof Waterproofing and downpiping repairs/maintenance to buildings at 95-113 Greys Avenue, Auckland', Building Report, Auckland, 2006, np.

²⁷ GHD Auckland, 'Greys Avenue Upgrade', Resource Consent Application, 2008, p.7.

²⁸ GHD Auckland, 'Greys Avenue Upgrade', p.7.

²⁹ GHD Auckland, 'Greys Avenue Upgrade', p.12.

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3. Description of building(s) etc.

3.1 Site/building character

Summarize main character and give notes on surviving site/building(s)/part(s) of area.

If a site: principle features and zones of influence; main elements in spatial composition.

If a building: main features, construction and materials.

The Greys Avenue Flats are located on the west side of the street where the blocks step down with the descending topography of the tree-lined Greys Avenue towards the Civic Centre. Located on the northern and lower end of Greys Avenue, the flats are within close proximity to the Civic Centre where the Auckland Civic Building, Auckland Town Hall and Aotea Square are located.

Like the other blocks of medium- and high-density state rental flats built by New Zealand's first Labour Government, the Greys Avenue Flats are an example of international modernism, characterised by unadorned wall surfaces, flat roofs, regular fenestration and minimal ornamentation.

The building comprises four blocks, three (Blocks 1, 2, and 4) run in a parallel alignment to the street in an end-to-end fashion, while Block 3 is located behind, at a right angle to the other three. The arrangement of the four blocks appears as one collective building, but the four are actually separated by a seismic gap of 75mm.³⁰ With a small set back from the street, the flats contribute a strong street presence in relationship with the mature plane trees which line both sides of the street. Each block ranges in height from four-storeys along the street front to six-storeys at the rear of the site. The rear of the site consists of communal gardens and open spaces.

Block 1, to the north, is 'L' shaped in plan with a length of 62' 4" and a width of 28' 7". Blocks 2 and 4, both rectangular, measure 98' in length and 28' 7" in width. Block 3, located between Blocks 2 and 4 and extending back into the site, is 95' 6" long and, again, 28' 7" wide.³¹

The exterior design and form of the Greys Avenue Flats follows that of the Dixon Street Flats (1941-44), also designed by the Department of Housing Construction under Gordon Wilson.³² The Greys Avenue Flats have employed a simple rectilinear form with minimal ornamentation on the south-east street elevation. Each block has similar rhythmic fenestration that is interrupted by the central placement of multi-level stairwell windows. These stairwell windows project above the entrance doors and canopy, extending to parapet level.

The north-west elevation of the Greys Avenue Flats includes recessed balconies for each unit with flower boxes. Timber framed casement windows of two or three bays are also used in the design of this façade. Solid walling dominates the short elevations, enclosing internal stairwells. Block 3, with its contrasting orientation, has a similar façade design and layout to the other three blocks; the non-embellished façade faces southwest while the recessed balconies overlook the city on the northeast.

The building has a loadbearing reinforced concrete construction with a plastered and painted white finish. Concrete achieves fire- and sound-proofing for the party walls between units as well as providing shear earthquake resistance. Timber-framed walls divide interior spaces. Concrete roof construction has been covered in a bituminous felt membrane to allow for the laundry and drying room activities at this level.³³

³⁰ Dave Pearson Architects Limited, 'Grey's Avenue Flats Auckland', p. 22.

³¹ Dave Pearson Architects Limited, 'Grey's Avenue Flats Auckland', p. 22.

³² Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 220.

³³ Dave Pearson Architects Limited, 'Grey's Avenue Flats Auckland', pp. 27-28.

The building comprises 50 units. There are five one-bedroomed units, 42 two-bedroomed units and three three-bedroomed units.³⁴ Each unit includes kitchen and bathroom fittings as well as a built-in shelving unit and electric fireplace.³⁵ Laundry and drying rooms were originally located on the roof and in the basement. However, the recent 2008 upgrade provided each unit with its own laundry facilities.³⁶ Rubbish was disposed of via a series of chutes throughout the building, linked to incinerator rooms.³⁷

3.2 Current use

of whole building/site: state rental flats

comments: The Greys Avenue Flats have been fully occupied since its original construction.³⁸

3.3 Present (physical) condition

of whole building/site: Overall, the building appears in reasonable condition reflecting the recent extensive upgrade completed on all four blocks in 2008 by GHD Architects. The building has been adequately maintained and continues to fulfil its prescribed functions.

of surrounding area: Following the completion of stage one in 1947, the remaining two-thirds of the site was laid out in lawn and gardens planted.³⁹ The landscaping behind these flats is relatively unchanged.⁴⁰ Other parts of the original site have been substantially developed. This development includes the 1958 Upper Greys Avenue Flats to the south as well as independent building developments along the east side of Greys Avenue. Other notable changes to the building's surrounds include the development of the Auckland Civic Centre from 1951 to the 1960s at the northern end of Greys Avenue, including the Civic Building and Bledisloe Building in the 1950s and 60s, the Aotea Centre in the 1970s and the more recent Aotea Square upgrade.

3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments

Indicate, if known, potential developments relevant for the conservation/threats of the building/site

Following the building's extensive refurbishment in 2008, the flats are now provided with up-to-date conveniences and the building continues to serve the function for which it was built.

Note: Because the building is scheduled on the Auckland City District Plan – Central Area Section and the proposed Auckland Unitary Plan, resource consent would be required if Housing New Zealand Corporation planned additions, alterations or demolition in the future.

³⁴ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 220.

³⁵ Dave Pearson Architects Limited, 'Grey's Avenue Flats Auckland', p. 29.

³⁶ GHD Auckland, 'Greys Avenue Upgrade', p.7.

³⁷ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 220.

³⁸ Gatley, 'Going Up Rather than Out', p. 154.

³⁹ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 218.

⁴⁰ Dave Pearson Architects Limited, 'Grey's Avenue Flats Auckland', p. 31.

4. Evaluation

Give the scientific reasons for selection for DOCOMOMO documentation

Intrinsic value

4.1 technical evaluation:

The Greys Avenue Flats are of technical interest for their reinforced concrete construction. Because of material shortages during and after World War II, the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works aimed to use a range of building materials in its housing programme. Reinforced concrete was one such material. The use of reinforced concrete also enabled the Housing Division to build at higher densities, i.e. to include blocks of flats within its state housing programme.⁴¹ From the mid-1950s, when New Zealand recovered from post-World War II building materials shortages, reinforced concrete was increasingly used, and ultimately became a common and much used building material.

4.2. social evaluation:

The Greys Avenue Flats are close to the location of Auckland's original Chinatown. Chinatown was cleared using public money because it was considered to be a 'slum', an eyesore and a disgrace to the city. The site and its 'slum' clearance thus tells us much about attitudes in New Zealand in the 1950s towards ethnic minorities. No visual evidence of the old Chinatown remains.

In the 1930s and beyond, Greys Avenue was cleared of its old houses and shops and substantially redeveloped.⁴² In the mid-1940s, the housing shortage was acute and there was increasing concern about the impact of suburban sprawl. The Greys Avenue Flats were significant in providing affordable housing while not contributing to the city's urban sprawl. Such redevelopment prefigured other major changes in Greater Auckland, including the Harbour Bridge, civic centre and motorway system.

The Greys Avenue Flats and its site are of high social significance. New Zealand's first Labour Government has a landmark place in New Zealand's 20th century history for its wide-ranging social welfare programme. Its state rental housing programme was a fundamental expression of this broader social programme, and demonstrates its belief that working people should have access to a decent standard of housing.⁴³

New Zealand's state housing of the late 1930s and the 1940s was predominantly detached and semi-detached houses, with some four-house units also built at that time. Only a small percentage of units within medium- and high-density blocks of flats were included in the housing programme. They were pre-dated by privately built apartment buildings during the inter-war period, such as Inverleith in Wellington's Oriental Bay (1922) and Shortland Flats in Shortland Street, Auckland (1923). Nonetheless, there was resistance to the construction of state rental flats in Auckland, expressed by staff within the Auckland Branch Office of the State Advances Corporation and by members of the public before and during construction.⁴⁴ Cedric Firth acknowledged this in his 1949 history of state housing in New Zealand: 'To the ordinary citizen the term "flat" is indelibly associated with a tall barracks-like structure with poor accommodation and poor appearance'.⁴⁵ At the time of construction, the Labour Government worked to overcome these negative presumptions through newspaper

⁴¹ Gatley, 'Going Up Rather than Out', p. 145.

⁴² Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 243.

⁴³ Gatley, 'Early Flats in Auckland', p. 13.

⁴⁴ See Gatley, 'Going Up Rather than Out', p. 142, for more information about early high-density living in New Zealand. Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 200.

⁴⁵ Cedric Firth, *State Housing in New Zealand* (Wellington: Ministry of Works, 1949), p. 34.

advertisements and opinion columns.⁴⁶ The Auckland City Council also began building public housing, most extensively in Freemans Bay in the 1960s and 1970s. It was not until the 1990s, however, that a greater number of Aucklanders really embraced the idea of high-density, inner-city living.

4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation:

The Greys Avenue Flats are of high aesthetic and architectural significance. Together with the Centennial Flats, the Dixon Street Flats, the McLean Flats and the Symonds Street Flats, this building demonstrates the mid-20th century adoption of international modernism by architects living and working in New Zealand. While the Labour Government's detached and semi-detached state rental houses were built to standardised designs, the medium- and high-density blocks of flats were designed within the Department of Housing Construction / Housing Division and were of particular interest to architects employed within the department because the building type (medium- and high-density public housing) was closely identified with European modernism and its broader social programme and objectives. Under the leadership of chief architect Gordon Wilson, the Department/Division chose to follow avant-garde European housing models or precedents.

The Dixon Street Flats provided the model for the detailed design of the Greys Avenue Flats but the Auckland scheme is nonetheless distinguished by its linear composition, with a series of blocks parallel with the street. Thus, in addition to the collective significance of this group of buildings, the Greys Avenue Flats have high architectural significance in their own right.

The Greys Avenue Flats were designed by the Chief Architect of the Department of Housing Construction / Housing Division of the Ministry of Works, Francis Gordon Wilson. Gordon Wilson was an important architect in New Zealand during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. He had a strong interest in modernist architecture, more particularly the international style, and was heavily influenced by European modernist ideologies and design in his buildings.⁴⁷ This is evident in the design, structure and detailing of the Greys Avenue Flats, which helped introduce and establish the international style in New Zealand.

Comparative significance

4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)

The Greys Avenue Flats are of local significance as one of two schemes of state rental flats built in Auckland in the 1940s. In terms of design, the building followed Wellington precedents, but at the same time differed from them in scale and in its status as the largest urban renewal scheme pursued in New Zealand at the time. The building is significant for its architectural form, contribution to urban renewal and its realisation of socio-political policy. Collectively it and the other blocks of state rental flats represent the social ideals and reforms set out by the progressive 1935 Labour Government.

The significance of the building has been recognised by Heritage New Zealand, in its listing of the flats as a Category 2 historic place.

The Greys Avenue Flats are also included in *Long Live the Modern*, a book developed under the auspices of DOCOMOMO New Zealand, identifying 180 of New Zealand's best and most important

⁴⁶ Gatley, 'Going Up Rather than Out', p. 147.

⁴⁷ Greenish, 'Obituary', pp. 56-57.

extant modern buildings, sites and neighbourhoods.⁴⁸

4.5 historic and reference values:

In her Master of Architecture thesis on Labour's state rental flats, Julia Gatley concluded that the first Labour Government's inclusion of blocks of flats in its state housing programme was commendable for many reasons. The building type 'provides accommodation to types of applicants other than families with children; it brought diversity to types of labour and materials being used within the state housing programme; it meant that good use was made of the valuable serviced land that was available for building; it helped to draw attention to urban issues and to address the problem of urban sprawl; it provided opportunities for political propaganda; and it entailed a direct New Zealand engagement with modernist ideals'.⁴⁹ The Greys Avenue Flats were one such block, but more than this, they are one of the most admired of the various blocks of the 1940s state rental flats, as a result of their architectural and streetscape value, including their linear arrangement, stepped form in response to the topography, and their relationship with the mature trees lining both sides of Greys Avenue.

5. Documentation

5.1 archives/written records/correspondence etc. (state location/ address):

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (Northern Region), 2 Durham Street East, Auckland Central, New Zealand.

Archives New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand

5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):

'Time Marches On'. *Home and Building*, vol. 10, no. 4, June-July 1948, pp. 13-15.

Firth, Cedric. *State Housing in New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Works, 1949.

Greenish, F.E. 'Obituary: Francis Gordon Wilson (F.), A.R.I.B.A.'. *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, March 1959, pp. 55-59.

Gatley, Julia. 'Early Flats in Auckland'. *New Zealand Historic Places Trust Journal*, May 1995, pp. 13-15.

Gatley, Julia. '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. 'Going Up Rather than Out'. In Barbara Brookes (ed), *At Home in New Zealand: Houses, History, People*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2000, pp. 140-154.

Martin, Lewis. *Built for Us: The Work of Government and Colonial Architects, 1860's to 1960's*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004.

⁴⁸ Gatley, 'Greys Avenue Flats – Lower and Upper', p. 46.

⁴⁹ Gatley, 'Labour Takes Command', p. 244.

Dave Pearson Architects Limited. 'Grey's Avenue Flats Auckland: Conservation Plan'. Conservation Plan, Auckland, 2006.

Hampton Jones Property Construction Limited. 'Roof waterproofing and downpiping repairs/maintenance to buildings at 95-113 Greys Avenue, Auckland'. Building Report, Auckland, 2006.

OPUS. 'Removal of all existing TV and radio antenna from the exterior of the buildings and replaced with a single MTAV system: February 2006'. Building Report, Auckland, 2006.

OPUS. 'Entrance Canopy Structural Remediation: 97 Greys Avenue, Auckland'. Building Report, Auckland, 2006.

Gatley, Julia. 'Shabby and Shambling: Decadent Housing in Greys Avenue'. In Christine McCarthy (ed.), *'From Over-Sweet Cake to Wholemeal Bread': The Home & Building Years: New Zealand Architecture in the 1940s*. Wellington: Centre for Building Performance, Victoria University of Wellington, 2008, pp. 46-52.

Gatley, Julia. 'Greys Avenue Flats – Lower and Upper'. In Julia Gatley (ed.), *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1940-1984*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008, p. 46.

GHD Auckland. 'Greys Avenue Upgrade'. Resource Consent Application, Auckland, 2008.

Auckland Council. 'Appendix 9: Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places'. *Proposed Auckland Council Unitary Plan – Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places – Part 1: Historic Heritage Places*. Accessed January 13, 2014.

<http://unitaryplan.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Images/September%202013%20version/Appendicies%20PDF/Appendix%209/Appendix%209%20-%20Schedule%20of%20significant%20historic%20heritage%20places%2020130913%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Auckland Council. 'Appendix 1: Schedule of Buildings, Heritage Properties, Places, Monuments and Objects of Special Value and those subject to Heritage Orders'. *Auckland City Council District Plan Operative 2005 – Central Area Section*. Accessed January 13, 2014.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/central/pdfs/appendix01.pdf>

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. 'Greys Avenue Flats'. *The List*. Accessed May 21, 2015. <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/583>

Auckland Council. 'Appendix 2: Schedule of Trees'. *Auckland City Council District Plan Operative 2005 – Central Area Section*. Accessed January 15, 2014.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/central/pdfs/appendix02.pdf>

Gatley, Julia, 'Wilson, Francis Gordon', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Accessed January 15, 2014. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/wilson-francis-gordon>

5.3 visual material (state location/ address)

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:
Archives New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand.

Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland.

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The Fletcher Trust Archive, Auckland.

Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, Auckland.

recent photographs and survey drawings: n/a

film/video/other sources: n/a

5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier

n/a

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6. Fiche report

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date of report: January 2014

examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Dr Ann McEwan

sign and date: 21 May 2015

examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

NAI ref. no.:

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