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Architectural Centre submission on Draft Adelaide Road Framework

This is a submission from the Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington, as well as the functional and inspirational planning of our city.

The Architectural Centre is largely supportive of the proposed vision for Adelaide Road. We have previously noted our support for the concept of a 'Growth Spine', centred around provision of a high quality public transport network running through the centre city and through the Adelaide Road area. We note that the long-term proposals presented in the Draft Adelaide Road Framework are a step towards the stated aims of encouraging growth and responsible development as part of that.

Housing

Adelaide Road is currently an area of extremely low-quality commercial development, with a high proportion of overly densified low-quality residential student accommodation. We note the study's findings that 56% of the areas residents are aged 20 - 30, and 31% are in tertiary education: it is an obvious summation that with the proximity to Massey's Wellington campus, and Victoria's Te Aro campus, the area is a student accommodation stronghold, although only approx 20% of the current land use is residential. Yet currently the accommodation of these students, mostly congregated along Hammond St, is within fairly appalling, badly designed, and grossly overcrowded housing. Wellington can, and must, do better for its considerable student body, rather than treating them as second-class citizens.



We see the proposed changes to the Adelaide Road area as being an important step forward for the possibility of gaining better quality developments for student housing. The relaxing of the height limits, and the ensuing encouraging of ground floor industrial / commercial uses, is to be applauded as an effort to retain existing employment opportunities and city servicing

requirements. We would expect however that with this relaxed height limit would come additional requirements for better quality provision of housing, and more usable public space: the present cheek by jowl cramming of 'investment' properties along Hammond St is an example of shamefully greedy overcrowding.

Refer to accompanying photographs to demonstrate the current poor quality of development and lack of external amenities (indicative of similar lack of internal amenities).



Transport

Architectural Centre previously proposed that the City look again at the layout of bus and cycle routes through Adelaide Road, and we are pleased to see that these suggestions have, in part, been taken up and put forward as an alternative. We reiterate again our previous comments: that the smallest road user should not be sharing road space with the largest: the separation of cycle lanes and bus lanes should be mandatory, especially in such a high volume commuter transport corridor such as this.

Therefore we strongly support the “possible longer term vision” of the Adelaide Road corridor, with the central lanes for possible provision of future light rail, over the more traditional central median strip design which combines bus and cycle lanes. The area has been vastly improved from a traffic quality viewpoint since the introduction of a dedicated bus lane, and we encourage this retention and further development as described above.

Public Space

The proposed array of public space is an important feature of the Adelaide Road draft framework, and while we support it, we also feel that it needs to go much further and be more proactive in creating new park space and pedestrian links. The proposed landscaped “pocket park” on the corner of Drummond St and King/Hammond St is a derisory feature: the Council needs to allocate a serious amount of land for a serious park for our creative people, not just allocate some left over street corner with little chance of success.

The dismal failure of the public spaces created along the edge of the Inner City Bypass should show the Council that creation of parks in SLOAP (Space Left Over After Planning) is never a good thing. Spaces need to be carefully created, ensuring adequate sun, pedestrian flow, enclosure by surrounding buildings, and freedom from cars to be successful and popular

with the desired inhabitants. Space created on street corners that stick out into the traffic lane are, by nature, highly likely to be doomed from the start.



Council needs to be pro-active, and make plans to designate or purchase land now, before the up-coming redevelopment of the area succeeds in pushing prices skyward. Concurrent with the development of an open area park scheme for the area, wind studies should be undertaken to ascertain what effect the extra building height will have on pedestrians at street level. We note that at present, with the current low level building heights, there is already significant wind tunnel effect down Adelaide Road due to the north/south orientation: this has the possibility of becoming a far greater wind funnel if the height limits and setbacks are not carefully planned.



Pedestrians

Concurrent with the traffic moves on Adelaide Road, we support the plans for further sensitive upgrading of traffic crossings and intersection design to make it a safer zone for pedestrians to cross. The road at present, despite the area's high pedestrian population, is unsafe and unpleasant to cross, and this factor needs further design thought. The development of housing on both sides of the road, and the high school children quotient around the area, would seem to indicate that at least one significant pedestrian bridge be incorporated into schemes for crossing the road without impeding traffic flow.

An alternative suggestion is that a section of Adelaide Road be routed below grade, to allow relatively level and safe pedestrian access over the top of the major traffic flow. We suggest that here the Council take a proactive stance, undertaking surveys to find the best location for further housing and maximum schoolchild pedestrian flow, and to hold a competition for the design of a pedestrian bridge and incorporation of this bridge into the design and layout of associated housing. In an area such as this, where residential intensity is required and pedestrian safety must be enhanced, such a suggestion should be explored. The condition of traffic on Adelaide Road is only going to get heavier, not lighter. The City should act now to secure the best possible plan for the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft Adelaide Road Framework: we appreciate this aspect of the democratic process and hope our comments, observations and suggestions have been helpful to you.

If you have any questions about any of the points raised please contact me.

Yours sincerely

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The Architectural Centre