

27th February 2006

Re: Queen's Wharf Outer T Project

This submission is from the Wellington 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.

Members of the Architectural Centre who are associated with the design of the proposal, or who are associated with firms involved in the design (and hence may be seen to have a conflict of interest), have had no input into the writing of this submission.

Opposition to the proposal

The Architectural Centre does not support the proposed building in its current form.

Introduction

We also have several specific comments to make, including areas of concern, which we discuss below.

Specific Comment

1) Pedestrian and Vehicle Traffic

We are pleased to see that much of the current vehicle traffic around the waterfront has been reduced and largely removed from the pedestrian areas and we commend the applicant for this. We do feel however that there is still a need to further address drop off points for buses, and a need to prevent large trucks from occupying any of the pedestrian spaces.

2) Viewshaft

The existing shed occupies city viewshafts, and the new proposal does not remedy this. In fact, the proposal exacerbates the violation of the viewshaft, as the proposed new hotel is longer than the existing shed, and twice its height. Allowing this would create a precedent which will compromise the viewshafts and call into question why we have protected viewshafts. The city viewshafts are vital links between the heart of the city and the harbour, and have an important contribution in defining Wellington as a harbour capital. Viewshaft 8 is one of the few viewshafts through which open sea is clearly seen, and hence is particularly valuable in defining the city's relationship to the sea. The Centre considers that the demolition of existing shed is a rare opportunity to reclaim the viewshaft, and we strongly encourage the council to advocate for a redesign of the scheme to protect this view, and to be vigilant in the protection of the viewshaft.

3) Ground floor visibility

A related issue to the viewshaft discussed above is the need to ensure that there is maximum visibility through the building at ground floor level. We consider that the current ground floor layout needs to be reconsidered to maximised this view and we suggest that there should be viewshafts through the building, and noted on the Resource Consent, to ensure that they can not be blocked.

4) Accommodation for recreational users of the current building

The current shed provides an important venue for sports and recreation on the waterfront. The proposal will clearly impact negatively on the people using this facility. An alternative venue for these activities needs to be found. We note that Tom Beard has suggested the possibility to provide new recreational space under the motorway, and we ask that the council consider this proposal seriously.



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5) Public access to ground floor and potential noise control issues

A strength of the proposal is public access to the ground floor of the building. The Architectural Centre anticipates that this harbour site location will be an extremely popular place for the public in the evenings and because of this it may become extremely noisy. We raise this to alert the developers of the hotel that this aspect of the construction will need close attention, as long-term access of the public to this ground level space will be important to the success of, and community support for, the project.

Conclusion

While we welcome the hotel as positively contributing to the waterfront, the Architectural Centre does not support this scheme in its present form. We strongly recommend that the scheme be altered as per the discussion above.

Yours sincerely

Christine McCarthy
President
Wellington Architectural Centre