

19 June 2006

Re: Lambton Quay Upgrade

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.

1) Support for the Proposal

There are many aspects of the proposed Upgrade of Lambton Quay that the Wellington Architectural Centre supports.

We strongly support extending the footpath areas, raising pedestrian crossing to footpath level, lowering the speed limit to 30km/hr, providing new trees, and relocating taxi stands and parking into streets adjacent to Lambton Quay. We see these proposals as positive ways to privilege pedestrian over vehicular traffic.

We also encourage the increased number of rest areas, and the inclusion of more shoreline marker plaques (though we also encourage marker plaques which commemorate other aspects of the city as well).

We do however have particular comments to make about the proposed Farmers Lane and Masons Lane upgrades and the proposal to install consistent paving and street furniture, and we consider these separately below.

2) Farmers Lane upgrade and Masons Lane upgrade

The Architectural Centre supports the proposed widening of footpaths, and the new planting of trees in these areas. We are not however convinced on the need to plant a "green wall" along two buildings in Farmers Lane, and are interested in the reasoning behind this proposal. In the material provided, there appears to be no rationale for this proposal. If the buildings have been deemed to require aesthetic assistance then more public debate is needed regarding this, and, if agreed, revision of the District Plan to prevent similar occurrences (and perhaps charging the owner an "ugly building" tax?). We do however strongly oppose any idea that architecture should be planted out.

Regarding the removal of the concrete banisters on the stairs: we acknowledge that these "blind spots" (and other aspects of the lanes) are not conducive to a safe environment, but we consider that this needs a carefully designed solution, and that the design proposals be made public prior to implementation. We do not want an anaemic design (such as that which happened at Glover Park) to occur in these linkages from the Terrace to Lambton Quay.

We are also concerned about the proposal to add "wall art" to the staircase corner. We are wary that this might be (like the "green wall" approach) a simplistic design proposal driven by short-term cheap solutions rather than more considered approaches. We also consider that lighting should be improved regardless of the inclusion or not of "wall art."

We would like to see both the proposed design of the Farmers Lane proposal and the proposed new canopy to the Lambton Quay entrance into Masons Lane before expressing support for them, and the proposed "upgrade" of the internal stairs. Upgrade can be a dangerous word which compromises the architectural integrity of the buildings and spaces "upgraded."

3) Installation of consistent paving and street furniture



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington

We do not support the wholesale replacement of existing paving and furniture simply on the grounds of consistency. There may be a need to replace, for example, decrepit street furniture for health and safety reasons, but to replace all paving and street furniture appears to us to be, not only an excessive use of council money, but to irradicate the signs of change and variation which are the mark of growing and changing cities.

Texture and variety should be cherished and not suppressed. In this vein we do not support proposals for continuous paving links on Johnston Street, and repaving Grey Street to match Woodward Street. We suggest more elegant and sophisticated solutions be proposed to support the visual connections from Lambton Quay to the harbour. This could be the subject of a competition.

4) Other issues

In addition to the above we would appreciate an explicit statement from the council re: provision for cyclists. Presumably the council are supportive of encouraging cyclists to reduce private transport use and to increase the health of Wellington's citizens. Are, for example, the widened footpaths intended to also cater for cyclists in this area, or is it that discouraging cars will provide a safer environment for cyclists in the city?

As we have mentioned previously, in relation to the Lincolnshire Farm Development proposal, we appreciate the availability of material on the council's website, but encourage you to ensure that graphic material (i.e. images) is able to be printed from the website at a suitable resolution. This was not the case for material supplied for this proposal.

5) Conclusion

In general we support the upgrades but caution the Council regarding the adoption of simplistic solutions. This Lambton Quay area requires careful and considered long term approaches in its "upgrade" which acknowledges the city as a changing vibrant place.

Yours sincerely

Christine McCarthy
President
The Architectural Centre