

9 March 2012

Re: Kumutoto Precinct

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. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Firstly it is important to say that we support a building on this site. The Architectural Centre believes, in order for the waterfront to be a vibrant place supporting people-centred activities, that facilities must be provided by buildings. Buildings, including those of a commercial nature, can contribute positively to the waterfront as a destination, and as a safe place for the public to visit.

We also believe that buildings on the waterfront have multiple public functions:

- (a) to facilitate activity (e.g. the provision of cafes, toilets, art galleries, wind breaks)
- (b) to contribute positively and assertively to the new city's architectural heritage through exemplary standards of design
- (c) to generate income to supplement the public purse

(1) The Architecture Centre believes that the proposed design is not of a high enough quality for this public front to our city. It is a decorated box which prioritises efficient income-generation over providing an exciting sculptural design to the citizens of Wellington. The WWL statement that "10 Waterloo Quay is a sculptural, contemporary addition to this significant waterfront site" is factually incorrect. The building is not a positive contribution to public architecture, and is disturbingly close in exterior design to Sydney's Macquarie Bank Building. Wellington deserves a better and more exciting building. The facades appear incongruous and more attention needs to be paid to comprehensive and sensible sunshading. The building continues the poor precedent, set by Shed 21, to run pedestrian shelter along the road-side of the building. We are also very concerned about the inactive edges of the building, especially on the northern end.



Macquarie Bank Building, Sydney

(http://designrevolutionaustralia.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/macquarie_bank_sydney_5.jpg?w=385)



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington

(2) We strongly support the inclusion of public space, and endorse increasing the currently proposed 60% of public space on the ground floor. This is one of the few sites where the Quay is close to the water's edge, and so views through the building at ground floor level are especially important. We also consider that the ground to ceiling height of this level be at least 5m. We ask that WWL ensure that: the interior fitouts do not obscure the transparency of this level and block views out to the harbour for the public (e.g. the blockages caused by Wagamama), and that this floor is more open to the waterside, even if this was only during calm days. Perhaps there are other strategies to maintain the openness by re-planning the enclosed areas to allow for an overall sense of openness between the street and the waterfront rather relying on glass to make it look open. This might also increase the amount of sheltered public space available 24 hours.

We are however concerned that the current design of the public space is likely to only receive significant sun in the early morning and the evening. The ground floor may be more successful with less untenanted "public space" and a greater mix of retail designed to allow visual access through the building. While providing 60% of public space, the current design of the ground floor will not only exclude the public from 40% of the ground floor, but appears to also block the views through the building for a significant part of the ground floor. We are also concerned that there is insufficient function provided in this space, suggesting that it maybe unlikely to attract continued use as a destination in itself. Is it possible that, for example, this space become an e-library extension to the public library, supplemented by coffee carts etc.? Given that wifi will be available, some innovative thinking regarding new twenty-first century public spaces, which embrace new technologies, seems appropriate. We suggest that the WWL reconsider how publicly accessible space will work in the building. There are dramatic buildings which engage the public spectacularly (e.g the Reichstag, Berlin and NeMo (the National Museum for Science and Technology), Oosterdok, Amsterdam) and looking to these models might provide less mundane ways to engage the public in what we hope becomes a significant contribution to public architecture.

(3) We acknowledge the commitment to innovative earthquake design in the building, in particular with the use of base isolation. The greater number of buildings successfully using this technology can only be a positive contribution to Wellington's post-earthquake resilience.

(4) What is the rationale for 77 carparks? This will be an expensive part of the construction, and is not necessary in a location which is so ideally placed with respect to the train station and the bus interchange. The waterfront itself attracts many pedestrian and cycling commuters. There should be no carparks provided for this development. The Architectural Centre strongly opposes the proposal for car parks. To build these would be ecologically irresponsible and demonstrates disregard by WWL to meaningfully address climate change or issues of sustainability. The underground car park will also increase vehicle traffic on the waterfront, to the detriment of cyclists and pedestrians. We support instead that if there is to be a basement level, that it be used to accommodate showers and the cyclepark (which are currently located on the ground floor), and that retail and publicly-oriented space (designed to maximise visual transparency) be the predominant function on the ground floor.

(5) The images provided do not enable us to ascertain how the building will address the issues related to wind for pedestrians and cyclists, especially on the Thorndon Quay/Bunny Street corner, which can be quite dangerous. It appears that improving the wind environment has not been addressed in the design.

(6) As an overall comment, the images of this building are insufficient. There is a poor range of images, and insufficient detail. How can people understand the public spaces, how views will be framed/blocked/seen from the site, and what the winter garden is? What does the space between this building and its neighbours look like? A site plan, including the ground floor plan, (from the beginning of the consultation) would be very useful to help the people understand the extent of the building in relation to the context

of the streets, waterfront and ferry building in terms of scale and connections between the building and the outdoor areas, as these are noted as important aspects of the proposal but they are not clear from the renders alone.

(7) There was an invited competition for this site. A winner was announced. A proposed building was decided on. We are raising this issue not because we think that Athfield Architects should design every building in the city, but rather that architectural competitions are important, and it is equally important that they are respected and are competently run to ensure the outcome has some integrity and longevity.

We see development in this area as positive. It will bring the public further towards the BNZ. This point is important as the lack of success of the public spaces in the BNZ is largely due to a lack of public to enjoy them. We therefore encourage WWL and WCC to liaise with Centreport to ensure that the once further development of this end of the waterfront occurs that the public spaces of the BNZ ground floor revert back to public use.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on this proposal for Kumutoto. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Christine McCarthy
President
The Architectural Centre
arch@architecture.org.nz