

5 November 2012

Kumutoto Design (COCM02)
Freepost 2199
Wellington City Council
P.O. Box 2199
Wellington 6140

Re: North Kumutoto Design Brief

This submission is from the Architectural Centre, an incorporated society dating from 1946, which represents both professionals and non-professionals interested in the promotion of good design.

The Architectural Centre strongly supports the WCC proposed Design Brief for North Kumutoto, but has additional comments below.

1.1 General Design Principles

The Architectural Centre supports the General Design Principles. We agree with the need for buildings to provide a range of uses to support a "safe waterfront and 24-hour activity." We would add that development of this part of the waterfront has the potential to support a consistent population on the waterfront during winter, and cold, wet weather, when recreational users of the waterfront are at a minimum.

We would also encourage the council to include social housing as part of the expected mix of functions to be accommodated on the waterfront, and suggest that a minimum of 20% of any residential development include social housing. We support the intention for the waterfront to provide primarily for pedestrians and cyclists, and consider that parallel routes alternate their priority for these different modes of transport.

We note that while the Environment Court has designated Site 8 as open space, there will still be the need for built structures to ensure the optimal use of this space, including: furniture, and built shelter to protect the public from what is a harsh natural environment (i.e. wind, rain and sun/skin cancer).

We also ask the council to plan longer term and map out a harbour connection to Parliament which might be aimed to be achieved in a 25-50 year timescale. Such a planned visual corridor would need specific consideration in the design framework for Site 10.

1.2 District Plan

The Centre is very pleased that all new building work will require Notified Resource Consents. As we stated in our submission regarding the Proposed District Plan Change Variation 11 (6 April 2009): "The waterfront ... quite literally belongs to all of us. We believe our waterfront is too important for us to be excluded from the debate about the merits, or otherwise, of all proposals. Transparency and participation, and the ability to voice our opinions, is our role and you must not take it from us. Our voice determines robustness and accountability in the process, enables wider perspectives, and ensures a measured pace in decision-making."

1.3 Process

The Architectural Centre supports this section of the proposal. In particular we support the rigour of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) process, which ensures a high level of scrutiny from knowledgeable experts.



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1.4 Phasing

The Architectural Centre supports this section of the proposal. We accept that this process will best happen over time.

2.1 Site boundaries

The Architectural Centre supports this section of the proposal. We note that the proposed site boundaries will effect a large majority of the area (over 65%) being open space. We also consider that, as designated open space, Site 8 should be enshrined in the District Plan, with similar provisions regarding shading, though we would strongly recommend that the council increase the sunshine provisions for Site 8 such that it be shadow-free for the hours of 10am-4pm.

We also note that the Design Brief should stress that site boundaries are different to building footprints, and that any Site 9 building should also be cognisant of the connection from Balance Street to the waterfront.

2.2 Links to the city

We strongly support the need to strengthen links between the waterfront and the city, and vice versa. We also support the need to better provide for pedestrian commuters, which are likely to be the largest group of users of the waterfront in the widest range of weather conditions. We also remind the council of our submission on the Proposed 2040 (19 August 2011) where the Centre suggested additional ways to improve city/waterfront connections. These included rethinking Post Office Square as a shared space. We acknowledge that this would be a bold move - but such a move is needed if car traffic is to be encouraged to use the by-pass rather than Jervois, Waterloo and Customhouse Quays. We also recommend that the council analyse pedestrian flow across and into the area of Shed 21. A link to visual Parliament should also be anticipated (as mentioned above and in 2.6 below).

2.3 Heritage and contemporary culture

We support the council's approach regarding heritage on the waterfront. Complex cultural layers must be recognised. We strongly support the re-use of salvaged materials (mentioned 3.3. Furniture guidelines) and note that careful supervision of contractors is needed to achieve this. In past developments a large number of the timber bricks from the original wharveside were disposed of when they had been designated for reuse on the waterfront, meaning that a fewer number than originally envisaged were retained. We also remind the council that heritage represents those things both old and new which are valued by Wellingtonians, and that notions of heritage be released from a narrow age-dependent definition.

2.4 Pedestrian access

The Architectural Centre acknowledges the importance of accommodating pedestrian traffic, but does not believe that this should be prioritised over cycle traffic. Both of these modes of transport should have equal priority. This is particularly important as:

- (1) cycling is more energy-efficient than walking and all other modes of transport.
- (2) there is a deficiency of inner-city cycle routes for cyclists because council attention is currently focused on cycle routes *into*, rather than *through*, the city. Consequently the waterfront is the only safe cycle route through the city, as such it must provide and prioritise the diverse needs of cycling (e.g. commuter vs recreational). It may be that the waterside and landside paths may be able to be developed to resolve any conflict between pedestrian and cycle traffic, with one prioritising one mode over the other.

We agree that the Whitmore Street extension provides poor provision for pedestrians.

2.5 Parking and vehicle access

The Architectural Centre considers that cycling needs to be acknowledged, along with pedestrians, as a prioritised transport mode. Motor vehicles at all times and places must be subservient to pedestrian and cycle traffic. We also consider that the traffic system on the wharf north of Whitmore Street should not involve car movements.

2.6 Views

The Architectural Centre supports this section of the proposal, and adds that we consider that long term planning regarding the connection between Parliament and the waterfront must be anticipated and included in the District Plan. This is a project which will greatly enhance our status as the capital city. We also note that views out to the harbour are only experienced in a south-east direction at ground-level (due to the position of heritage wharf sheds), and that the best views out to the north-east are only available from Site 8 (and not Site 10). Views need to be retained for users of the waterfront spaces, not for passing motorists.

2.7 Promenade

As noted above both pedestrian and cycle access is important. We recommend altering the last sentence of paragraph 3 in this section to read; "The promenade not only serves the waterfront but is also part of the wider pedestrian network, and the *prime* cycle route, for the city."

We agree that the promenade engages with both the architectural language of the city and the historical context of the city's wharfside. It is intrinsically an artificial built environment which is subject to harsh natural conditions, not suited to large areas of soft surfaces and planting. The path of promenade reflects this urban context because it shifts from being street-side (at Shed 21) to being sea-side (at Site 8). We consider that it is important to reflect this literal connection of city to wharf in the Design Brief, including the fact that the natural circulation desire line cuts diagonally through Site 10, an angle which draws a line towards the harbour view. In contrast the wharf-side of Shed 21 is not well-suited to pedestrian traffic but is a good area for cyclists to ride through.

The Architectural Centre also considers the development of the North Kumutoto precinct as significant regarding connections to Harbour Quay, including the BNZ and Customhouse buildings. We see discussions between WWL and Centre Port as important to mutually benefit both areas of the waterfront.

3.0 Open Spaces

The Architectural Centre supports this section of the proposal, in particular the salvaging and re-use of wharf materials in new structures where possible (3.3. Furniture guidelines), and we consider that these will likely reinforce a robust, nautical aesthetic. We note that the Brandon Plaza (between Steamship Wharf and the Queens Wharf Centre) would benefit from particular attention, especially in relation to the conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, and the need for a better definition of space.

We also note that the wharf construction (in most places thin concrete topping over piles) can not plausibly support substantial areas of grass or other plants. Instead the nature of the open space on the harbour wharf will require low level structures that act as windbreaks, while allowing views, sunshine and access to the water. We suggest that significant solar analysis of any proposed building will be required to ensure that maximum sunshine is allowed into the new public square anticipated at Site 8.

4.1 New building principles

We support ground floor heights in the realm of 6m. We suggest that the last sentence in point 2 read: "All facades to provide a **high** level of active edge." We question what "coherent fashion that relates to the waterfront context" might mean given the idiosyncratic nature of the current built environment, a characteristic which we consider appropriate and expressive of the adventurous and playful complexity of our waterfront, and the requirement for buildings to include "innovation, creativity and imagination ... and be an expression of contemporary culture" (point 7).

We agree with the proposal that new building are sympathetic to existing heritage and have character to their roofscapes, but in saying these we acknowledge there are a

number of sophisticated ways in which designers might address this, and mimicry is not one of these.

We also ask the council to require public access to the roofs of all of the proposed buildings, as this will further enrich the public experience of the waterfront, providing views down to the water and across the harbour from a public space. We also ask that such a provision be meaningfully adhered to, unlike the very compromised result at the Herd St Post Office building.

The Architectural Centre also supports the council's ambitions for publicly-accessible ground floor spaces. Any public space needs to be complemented by a tightly defined function (e.g. cafe, retail) that will give people a reason to occupy the space. Such commercial functions must be supported by a carefully-designed fitout which is cognisant of maximising the transparency of the building at ground-level. The Wagamama fitout, for example, blocks views through the building due to the placement of toilets etc. longitudinal to the facade.

4.2 Building relationship to open space

We recommend that the council amend the first point to read: "Buildings should **positively** contribute to the open spaces of the waterfront."

We appreciate this opportunity to make a submission on this Draft Design Brief for North Kumutoto.

Yours faithfully

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