

28 February 2014

North Kumutoto Consultation
Freepost 2199 (COCM02)
WCC PO Box 2199
Wellington 6140
north.kumutoto.consultation@wcc.govt.nz

Re: North Kumutoto Site 10 Development Proposal

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 supports a building on this site, and we support that the building has a predominantly commercial function, so long as there are significant areas of publicly accessible space, and public space.

Despite this, the Centre does not support the proposal put forward for Site 10, North Kumutoto, as it currently stands. While many of the fundamentals of the design are there, it is a missed opportunity as a design, and lacks the confidence and experimentation that we should be demanding from architecture on this prominent site.

Public spaces

We support the ground floor accommodating publicly accessible spaces (e.g. cafés, restaurants and shops). We especially support the provision of covered pedestrian walkways around the building and through the ground floor, but consider that inside spaces with harbour views also need to provide for the public to be able to sit without being required to purchase anything. We appreciate the statement that "[o]utdoor spaces are provided for on most floors, and a roof deck and green roof will offer open space amenity and outlook over the harbour and visual amenity to those overlooking the building from the city." There does not appear to be a statement regarding any degree of public accessibility with respect to these desirable spaces, or are these all intended to be for private use? We also consider that it is extremely important for the building description to distinguish and explain areas which are public space, and those which are publicly accessible commercial space. We note that the provision for public space is significantly less in this project than the previous proposal. As noted in our previous submission, we encourage innovative thinking about public space on the waterfront. With free wifi a digital waterfront branch of the public library, for example, is a possibility.

The general urban scheme seems to work well along the waterfront, however the exterior spaces all feel a bit timid with respect to being a destination, as does the building.



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington



Wind, Sunlight, Environmental Factors & Earthquake Design

While we appreciate the intention of the Harbour Wharf Link (i.e. the diagonal line cutting through the building) this appears to be a crude architectural move, which doesn't understand the geometry of the building, and will be an appalling wind tunnel, worsening pedestrian experience. Linking the windy and windward side of a building as exposed as this is just not sensible, as the market area on the Herd Street Post Office site demonstrates every northerly day. Another example is the poor aerodynamic design of the Asteron building, which channels wind onto Waterloo Quay in northerlies. Awareness of wind and sun issues is key for these transitional spaces, and for public outdoor spaces.

We do however acknowledge there may be some slight improvements on part of this site in southerlies due to the narrowing Waterloo Quay. There may also be some new shelter in northerlies on Waterloo Quay. Regardless, given the building is 25.7m high it will require wind tunnel testing to quantify wind effects. We similarly suggest that studies are also needed with respect to sunlight, given the apparent lack of sunshading and large areas of glass. The building will be an energy drain unless it has good shading on the north and west facades, that is properly designed to work effectively.

We support the building being fully base isolated.



Building height; public roof access

We do not have any concerns regarding the height of the building (25.7m rather than 22m), despite it being higher than that suggested by the Environment Court, **if** the green roof is a public space, and **if** it extends over the whole surface of the roof. One of the diagrams suggests that this is not the case. There is a statement that "[t]he feasibility of a public viewing platform from the building's green roof will

be investigated." This does not fill us with confidence that the building will be a meaningful contribution to the waterfront's public space. There also needs thinking about how this might work. The example of the Chaffer's Apartments (formerly Herd St Post Office and Telegraph building) and its lack of access (including lack of clear signage) to the public roof space demonstrates that an assertive effort is needed, rather than a meek and insignificant gesture. We strongly encourage both Wellington Waterfront Limited and the Wellington City Council to pro-actively incentivise both an increase in the number of green roof spaces in Wellington and public access to those rooves in the CBD. Projects such as the Oslo Opera, demonstrate ways in which waterfront buildings might enable innovative public interaction, and public access to roof spaces.

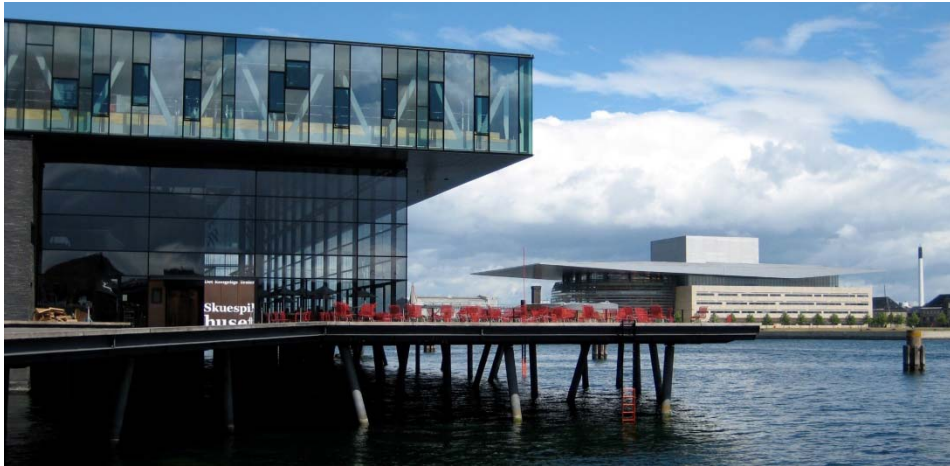


Building Form and Design

We are also not convinced about the stepping back of the top floor of the building so it cannot be seen, and philosophically think that any desire to hide part of a building suggests that it is not good enough to be built. We note that the cantilevered floors are described as "a reference to a maritime gantry." We are unable to be convinced by this, and instead find a likeness to the NZi3 Innovation Institute at the University of Canterbury, which appears to be a similar building.



Other examples which might be useful references for the development of the design include the Copenhagen Theatre.



The potential elegance of the cantilever in the Site 10 proposal appears to be cluttered with stairs and platforms, which - if this is the case, would be unfortunate.

In addition to our concerns about the extent of public space and the potentially negative wind effects, the building is nothing special. In the words of one of our members: "the building is a bit meh."

Information

It is noted that the building will have generous provision of amenities for building occupants who are pedestrians or cyclists. What are these amenities? This is one example of the need for a greater level of detail, including plans and elevations to enable more thorough consultation.

We also found the fragmented website which provided information about this proposal incredibly frustrating and tedious to access. We hope we have found all the relevant information, but doubt this. It would be helpful - if feedback is truly desired - that information should be made available in a single location - rather than having to click through numerous pages - and preferably in a single downloadable document.

Conclusion

We see development in this area as positive. The architectural response seems lukewarm and will potentially fall into the lost opportunity category. Development on the site will bring the public further towards the BNZ, which is positive, but this can be achieved with good architecture. 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