

26 August 2016

Freepost Wellington City Council  
District Plan Team  
Wellington City Council  
P.O. Box 2199  
Wellington 6140  
towncentre@wcc.govt.nz

**Re: WCC Tawa Town Centre Improvements**

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.

We are disappointed in the proposal. Rather than having any depth or integrity this appears to be a "quick and dirty" bandage, which, we believe, **will not deliver substantial benefits in terms of community identity, better opportunities for sustainable transport, or implement sustainable urban design.** This is a missed opportunity, and the poverty of the proposal appears to be linked to inadequate funding.

Given the small budget allocated, we strongly encourage the council to instead commit to a well-designed and comprehensive long term proposal, which supports council policy, and then stage its implementation, so that any work done contributes to a larger, long-term vision.

**THE CURRENT PROPOSAL**

1. **The current proposal is flawed** because it:
  - a) does not advance sustainable urban design principles (including the WCC Water Sensitive Urban Design Guide),<sup>1</sup>
  - b) does not support the WCC Public Space Design Policy<sup>2</sup>
  - c) does not support the Parking Policy (e.g. 5(i)-(iii), (f),(h),(i) etc.); an assessment of parking need should be undertaken to inform the design
  - d) is not supported by an analysis of the existing character and heritage of the Town Centre, including identifying key qualities, for example, modernist architecture (including Our Lady of Fatima Church (1966)), and including places of significance to tāngata whenua.
  - e) it does not facilitate sustainable transport, in particular it:
    - i. reduces the viability of the road for cyclists
    - ii. prioritises car parking
    - iii. fails to reduce traffic
    - iv. does not provide cycle parks
    - v. does not propose improvements to public transport
2. Water Sensitive Urban Design (to, for example, manage and reduce run-off volume) might include implementing:
  - a) swales
  - b) green walls
  - c) permeable/porous paving

<sup>1</sup> *Water sensitive urban design guide* <http://wellington.govt.nz/services/environment-and-waste/stormwater/water-sensitive-urban-design-guide>

<sup>2</sup> *Public Space Design Policy* (December 2010) <http://wellington.govt.nz/~media/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans-and-policies/a-to-z/publicspace/files/publicspace-2010.pdf?la=en>



the architectural centre inc.  
PO Box 24178 Wellington

3. The Public Space Design Policy includes the following:
  - a) "All design considerations promote environmentally friendly and sustainable outcomes, contributing to the city's wider environmental and ecological systems" (Objective 6, Policy 1)
  - b) "Traffic efficiency and on-street parking requirements should not dominate, and needs to be considered in the context of pedestrian and cycle use and amenity" (Objective 3, Policy 3)
  - c) "Public art, memorials and monuments will be incorporated, where appropriate, as a means for telling the city's stories" (Objective 1, Policy 5)
  
4. The Parking Policy includes the following:
  - a) "The demand for parking should be influenced by the facilitation of effective sustainable transport solutions, such as public transport, walking and cycling" (5(f))
  - b) "Additional provision for cycle parking will be provided where possible and appropriate and further provision will be identified as part of the Cycling Plan" (5(i))
  
5. Techniques to reduce traffic might include:
  - a) implementing a shared space
  - b) encouraging use of Cambridge St for traffic over Main Rd through the Town Centre
  - c) relocating car parking to the periphery of the Town Centre
  - d) replacing at least one side of angle-parking with a two way (counter-flow) cycle lane (planning for a cycleway along Cambridge and Oxford streets may also be a productive move).
  - e) implementing speed humps, designed so as not to impede cyclists
  
6. It appears from the Heritage List that there is yet to be a heritage assessment of Tawa. Historical knowledge could also provide information regarding events and identification of sites which could be recognised in some way. As noted in our previous submission of 17 December 2015, we strongly recommend that the Council **commission the Sculpture Trust** to organise at least two large-scale sculptures rather than attempt any twee town centre identity-branding exercise.
  
7. We appreciate Council acknowledgement of **the need to improve pedestrian connections to the train station**, though note that this may require more than simply improving the pedestrian crossing at the junction of Oxford and Melville streets via the Minor Road Safety programme, as suggested. Articulating the street connection to the railway is a larger aspect of urban design.

#### **INDEPTH MASTER PLANNING AND DESIGN EXERCISE NEEDED**

8. **The proposal's lack of consistency with council policy for urban space design suggests that suburban town centres are not taken seriously** as design projects requiring integrity. This is disappointing, given that many of Wellington's residents live in suburban centres, and viable centres could have positive benefits for the city in relation to increased residential density, employment and remote work, especially if designed well. They are also places where children and the elderly are likely to spend more of their time than those of working age. The importance of safe walking and cycling, and priority of public transport, is thus even more important in suburban centres than in the CBD. The weakness of this proposal contrasts the current interest in implementing walkable city strategies via the pedestrianisation of Lambton Quay.

9. Given the **insufficient funding allocated** to the project (it is less for example than the amount of money spent on the unfortunate Island Bay cycleway, or the \$15m additional funds given to the design of the Peter Jackson film museum and conference centre), we recommend that the Council commission a proper long term design for Tawa Town Centre, and stage this according to funds. Such a design would likely include **redesigning the land between the station and Porirua Stream** (perhaps identifying 48 Oxford St as a site for the council to purchase in its long term planning, in order to make a viable connection with the stream). This would be a more feasible and healthy plan than the current one of requiring a choice between "Character" and "Movement" as options.
10. We believe that such a plan needs to be designed to:
  - a) identify and protect heritage and character
  - b) encourage sustainable transport
  - c) support the increasingly older demographic
  - d) implement sustainable urban design, including water sensitive urban design
11. We note that none of these requirements underpin the current proposal.

#### **THE POOR COUSIN ALTERNATIVE**

12. We anticipate that **a proper shared space/plaza would likely be the core of such a plan**, and if the council decides not to invest properly in Tawa, we advise prioritising a better plaza/shared space which crosses Main St and commissioning (via the Wellington Sculpture Trust) large scale sculptures. We do however note that the \$610,000 price tag for what is proposed as a "plaza" appears expensive. In addition this is really a forecourt for the building it is adjacent to, rather than a plaza in any meaningful sense, which would create a true centre for Tawa, rather than just an appendage to the street.
13. **Other funds (e.g. Minor Road Safety programme) could be used to:**
  - a) provide cycle parking
  - b) implement cycle lanes (paint on road)
  - c) remove car parks from Main Rd (there does appear to be a large number of car parks - what is Tawa's number of carparks per capita and how does this compare with the rest of Wellington?)
  - d) include dropped kerbs to provide flexibility for cyclists
14. **We consider the proposals under consultation to be poor alternatives to a more thorough master planning and design exercise**, and they suggest that Council considers investment in suburban centres to be a very low priority.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Tawa Town Centre Improvements proposal. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



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