

110 JERVOIS QUAY

MFC PRECINCT PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



APPLICATION FOR RESOURCE CONSENT

URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

Prepared for MFC Development Limited Partnership

Revised August 2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2022 the Applicant submitted a resource consent application for a new comprehensive commercial development on the Michael Fowler Carpark Site (street address 110 Jervois Quay, Te Aro, Wellington Central). The application has been reviewed by the Council but has not been processed.

Subsequently, based on various considerations (i.e. structural, value engineering, client's requirements and further design development), the Applicant has decided to revise their proposal. The revised proposal, while refining and/or modifying certain aspects of the original design, does not change its underlying design concept and/or its overall bulk and form in any significant way. Therefore, it is considered to be in scope of the original proposal.

The revised proposal (the proposal) is comprised of commercial office accommodation on upper levels and a range of ground level tenancies including café and other leased spaces and cross-site links and significant areas of curtilage landscape along with associated servicing infrastructure.

The proposal, which is based on the winning scheme by the project architects in the WCC-led design competition 2016, has evolved and has been further developed with reference to WCC site-specific Design Brief for the MFC Carpark Site while addressing the client's requirements.

This report provides an assessment of the urban design outcomes of the proposed development against the relevant District Plan provisions. In addition, the visual impact of the proposal on the surrounding townscape is also evaluated.

The assessment is based on site visits, discussions with the project team, attendance at pre-application meetings and a review of the architectural plans and associated Architectural Design Statement and other relevant technical reports. The urban design report forms part of the AEE accompanying the Resource Consent Application.

2 SITE & CONTEXT

Site and immediate setting - the development site, known as the Michael Fowler Carpark Site (MFC site or the site) is a largely flat triangular piece of land. Sitting at the eastern tip of the Civic Centre Heritage Area the site is bordered by Wakefield Street to the south, Taranaki Street to the east and Jervois Quay to the north. The site has a corner location with two main street frontages (Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay) and features in short and mid-range views from within the surrounding area. It also has a strong visual connection to the waterfront opening views across the Lagoon and the wider waterfront setting.

Immediately to the west of the site is the Michael Fowler Centre (MFC) and adjacent service lane with the wider Civic Centre Heritage Area further to the west. While the site is part of the Civic Centre Heritage Area, it currently sits at its periphery without any strong spatial or functional connections to it. The immediate built context to the south along Wakefield Street is comprised from 7-11 storey buildings including the former Amora Hotel. The John Chambers Building sits to the south/east with the former Wellington Free Ambulance building and the Odlins Building beyond, with the Lagoon and Wellington Harbour opening out further to the north.

The site has served for a long time as a carpark accessed from Wakefield Street and more recently has been used as a temporary site for the Royal NZ Ballet. The site is also used as an important pedestrian throughfare connecting the waterfront to the city (along Cuba Street and the Opera House Lane). A new 'light rail' route (part of the 'Get Wellington Moving' project) is planned along the quays on the eastern and northern edges of the site.

The site accommodates some notable Pohutukawa trees along its periphery (mainly along its northern edge) most of which are to be retained. The existing/dis-used pedestrian bridge (the bridge) landing on the Wakefield Street side of the site is to be removed as part of the redevelopment along with the existing temporary Royal NZ Ballet 'pre-fab' building.

Broader Context - the site is part of the Civic Precinct, shaping its eastern end. The Civic Precinct and its context have undergone a series of spatial and functional changes in the past, before taking on its present form with many of the existing elements still evolving and/or facing an uncertain future. The MFC, the closest neighbour to the site, provides definition to the eastern end of the Civic Precinct, but has interrupted the connection of Cuba Street to the waterfront. Changes to the surrounding context to the north/east have also occurred to create the current environment, (including the multi-storey development at One Market Lane). The earlier site history is recorded in the Architectural Design Statement.

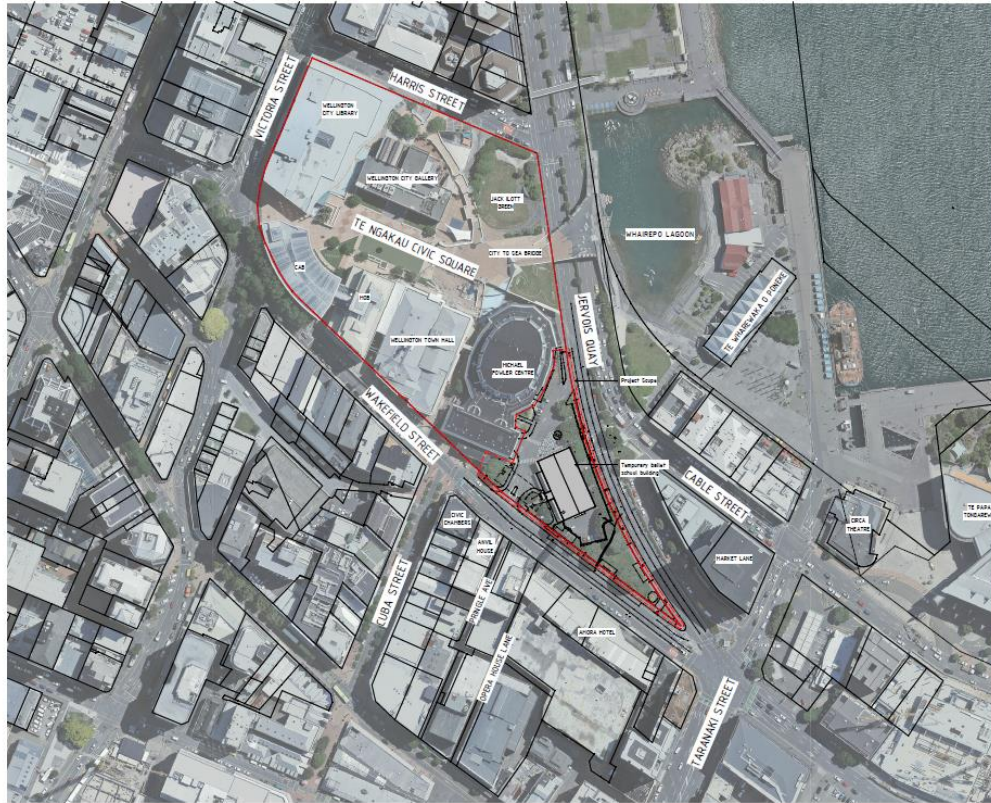


Fig. 1: Development site and context

On a broader urban scale, the site forms part of the wider harbour setting that extends from the railway station to Te Aro. It also shapes the western end of the Wakefield Street corridor that connects the site with Te Aro, Waitangi Park, Te Papa and the future Convention Centre.

The 'cross-roads' location of the site and its visual prominence account for the site's 'gateway' quality, which will be experienced by those travelling to the north and those arriving from the waterfront. This makes it a good candidate for an 'urban marker' with the potential to enable new or improve existing connections and interfaces and add supporting activity, while complementing the MFC and contributing to a consolidated and 'completed' Civic Precinct.

3 PROPOSAL

The proposal is for a new comprehensive commercial development accommodating high quality office space at the upper levels and a range of ground level tenancies including café and other leased spaces and a main building entrance + foyer and internal and external cross-site links. This is complemented by a significant area of proposed curtilage landscape along with associated servicing infrastructure. The building design incorporates high resilience measures including a base-isolated diagrid structure and raised ground floor in response to potential flooding and sea level rise.

The proposed development is comprised of the following elements:

- a new building comprising three interconnected and well-integrated components (referred to as ‘the Lantern’, the ‘East Wedge’ and the ‘West Wedge’);
- new landscape areas (referred to as the MFC landscape and the Waimaphihi Stream Corner); and
- city-to sea links.

The height of the building components varies, with the Lantern - the tallest component - rising up to 9 storeys.

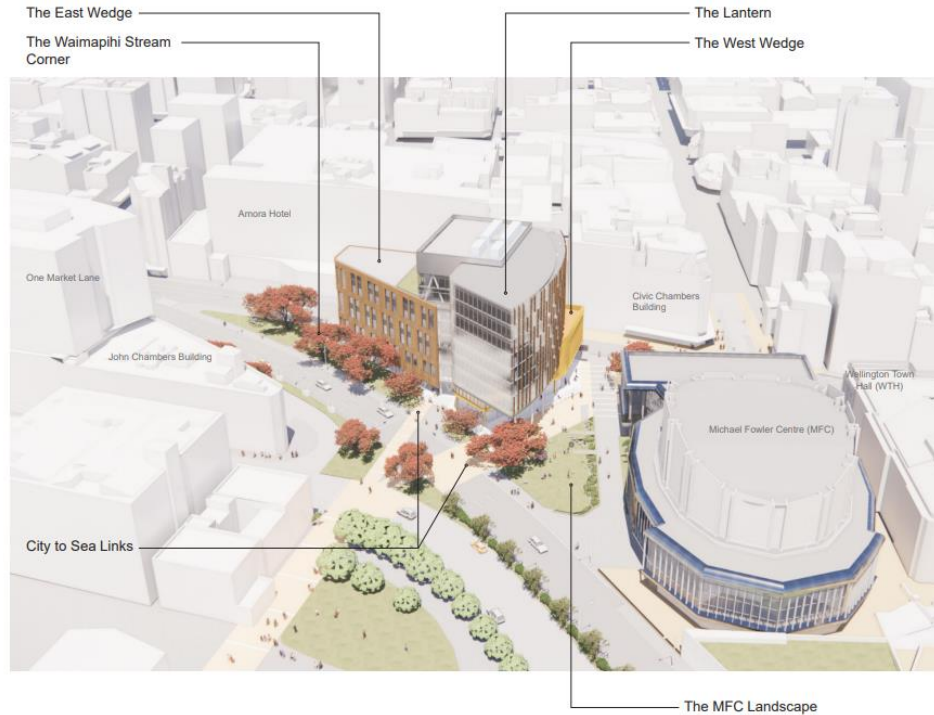


Fig. 2: Proposed development: building components

The specific design characteristics of each component and the way they relate to each other are discussed in the urban design assessment (Section 4 of this report) and explained in detail in the Architectural Design Statement.

4 ASSESSMENT CENTRAL AREA DESIGN GUIDE

4.1 RELEVANT DESIGN GUIDE PROVISIONS / ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The relevant District Plan provisions for the urban design assessment of the proposal include:

- (a) The Central Area Urban Design Guide; and
- (b) The Civic Centre Heritage Area guidelines

Central Area Urban Design Guide - the intent of the Central Area Urban Design Guide (“Design Guide”) is “to achieve high quality buildings, places and spaces in the Central Area of the City” by ensuring buildings, places and spaces:

- *are coherently designed;*
- *make a considered response to context;*

- *address heritage values;*
- *establish positive visual effects;*
- *provide good quality living and working environments;*
- *integrate environmental sustainability principles; and*
- *provide conditions of safety and accessibility.*

The Design Guide is built upon six urban design matters with specific objectives and associated guidelines for each matter. The Design Guide acknowledges that good design is both site and programme specific, meaning that the main emphasis is on objectives and guidelines that are most relevant to the context and issues of the specific proposal. It further acknowledges that due to the unique conditions of each location, some objectives are more important than others.

Civic Centre Heritage Area - the Design Guide includes a number of Appendices covering specific areas within the city that require site-specific guidance. The development site features in Appendix 3 as part of the Civic Centre Heritage Area.

The design guidelines are focused primarily on: (a) the relationship/impact of any new/refurbished buildings on the Square or on existing buildings within the Civic Centre; and (b) the retention/refurbishment of listed heritage buildings within the Civic Centre. While the development site is included in the Civic Centre Heritage Area as one of two development sites, it does not have a direct relationship to the Square or to any of the buildings defining it except for the Michael Fowler Centre. This is recognised in Appendix 3 which states that: 'Being at the eastern end of the heritage area its principle [sic] relationship is with the Michael Fowler Centre, a building that has, over its life, developed landmark qualities.'

An assessment of the urban design outcomes relative to the Design Guide and associated Appendix 3 (Civic Centre Heritage Area) provisions is provided below. The assessment follows the structure of the Design Guide and integrates, where relevant, comments against the provisions of Appendix 3.

4.2 ASSESSMENT OF URBAN DESIGN OUTCOMES

DESIGN COHERENCE: *“A new building or public space should have its own inherent design integrity and coherence”.*

Objective 01.1 aims: *“to ensure each design solution is coherently designed, demonstrates design integrity, and integrates all relevant design criteria in the best possible way”.*

The relevant **guideline** (G01.1 'Internal consistency and integration') encourages designers to: *“demonstrate in the design and composition of any building an overall coherence that integrates the various design guide requirements”.*

Assessment

- The proposal is based on the award-winning scheme for the site as part of Council-led design competition. The design competition scheme was guided by a site-specific design guide developed by the Council. The design of the proposed development continued to respond to that brief ¹ while also undertaking further detailed analysis of the site's specific context and conditions. This has been balanced against the requirements of the Applicant's brief for a high-quality commercial space, supported by publicly accessible ground floor areas within an environmentally sustainable building that is seismically resilient. The specific requirements of a future tenant (The VUW School of Music) have also been integrated and have influenced the design response.

¹ The key objectives of the Council's Design Brief are listed in the Architectural Design Statement, Section 3.

- The proposed site-planning and design, while taking into account the Design Guide objectives, also responds to the comments/recommendations of the Urban Design Panel review (associated with the original proposal) and issues raised by the Council at pre-application meetings. As a result:
 - the proposed site planning/massing and the form/design of the individual building components create a well-integrated spatial layout and building composition which responds well to the specific local conditions along the site's street frontages and acknowledges the main contextual elements in terms of both buildings and spaces (see specific comments under 'relationship to context');
 - the proposed development will define as well as activate the street frontages of the site by providing a ground level café and locating building entrances facing the street and through-building links, while enhancing existing cross-block connections between the city and the waterfront; and
 - the proposal provides high-quality commercial space and appropriately configured ground level space which, along with the activities it will accommodate, will enhance the connectivity and safety of the site and its setting.

The proposal is based on a clearly defined, well-considered and contextually responsive design concept where the main elements of the design composition, while each exhibiting a distinctive form, integrate into an overall coherent building providing a range of activities. The sense of coherence is complemented by the proposed landscape enhancements that have been considered as an integral part of the proposal.

RELATIONSHIP TO CONTEXT: *“Relating to context means understanding and responding in a considered way to conditions beyond the site”.*

Objective 0.2.1 aims: *“to recognise the unique qualities and sense of place of every urban setting and respond to and enhance these with new development”.*

Objective 0.2.2 aims: *“to maintain or enhance the quality of the settings of individual heritage buildings, including those in heritage areas”.*

The supporting **guidelines** cover the following matters: *Consistency or contrast (G2.1); Positive precedents (G.2.2); Achieving consistency (G2.3); and Developing an authentic sense of place (G2.4).*

APPENDIX 3 objective aims:

(CC) 01.1 To maintain and enhance the values of this area, and its special civic status, by protecting the special configuration of the public space, and protecting and conserving its heritage buildings.

The Appendix 3 **guidelines** are focused primarily on the impact of new development on the Civic Square and/or the retention of existing heritage buildings and their setting, and, as such, are not directly applicable to the proposed development. The key reference which is relevant to the assessment relates to the specific building height limit of 27m identified for the MFC carpark site as recorded in the 'Table of Heights' attached to the guidelines, which states that: 'The height limit specified will provide for the development of the carpark site at a scale that will help to retain the landmark value of the Michael Fowler Centre' (Appendix 3/page 32).

Assessment

The scale relationship of the new development to the MFC is a central issue in relating the development to its context while also focusing on its spatial 'dialog' with its other neighbours as well as on the way it will shape the visual experience of those moving to, around and across the site.

The key aspects/characteristics of the site and its context which the development needs to consider include:

- the interface location of the site and the variable contextual conditions around its edges;
- the role of the site as an important city-to-waterfront pedestrian thoroughfare;
- the role of the site in shaping /completing the eastern corner of the Civic Centre Heritage Area;
- proximity/close relationship to the MFC; and
- visibility of the site and its role in shaping views along adjacent streets and from within the waterfront setting.

The proposal has responded to the key contextual conditions of the site in a considered way while taking into account the relevant 'relationship to context' design objectives/guidelines. This has been achieved through: (a) the proposed site planning/massing into three distinctive and yet well-integrated components; (b) the form and external design of the individual components which reference the scale and character of their neighbours; (c) the configuration, treatment and spatial quality of the proposed pedestrian through-links; and (d) the proposed landscape treatment/enhancements that complement the collective built form and facilitate the integration of the proposal to its setting. The more detailed comments are:

The approach to the proposed site planning/massing and design of the collective building form has been appropriately focused on:

- addressing the two street edges of the site in a manner that reflects their local contextual conditions, while referencing existing patterns of building form and alignment;
- breaking up the bulk into three distinctive building components each with form, height and scale that responds to their neighbours and the character of adjacent spaces. Placed within the centre of gravity of the site the Lantern - the tallest component (ground + 8) - references the heights of the existing buildings to the south-west. The West Wedge with its lower horizontal volume (ground +2) provides a scale transition to the MFC while also relating to the pedestrian scale of Cuba Street and visually enhancing the 'entrance' to the city-to-waterfront connection in spatial terms. The East Wedge (ground +5) references the height of the nearby John Chambers Building and its wedge-shaped form, while reinforcing the spatial definition along Wakefield Street;
- referencing the scale, texture and materiality of the MFC and the built character of the surrounding Wakefield Street and Cuba Street environment;
- enhancing existing city to waterfront connections in spatial and activity terms; and
- distributing ground level activities in relation to their location within the building footprint - food and beverage tenancies are envisaged along the most publicly significant edges of the development (e.g. along the city-to waterfront connection), while service areas have been minimised and integrated amongst 'active' edge spaces along the Wakefield Street frontage.



Fig 3: View from Jervois Quay

The proposed landscape treatments (as illustrated and documented in the Landscape Plans) have been approached in an integrated manner as part of the overall site planning to aid the spatial and contextual relationship of the development to its site and setting while promoting the ecological and cultural significance of the historic Waimapihi Stream.

The proposal will create a building with a distinctive image which, together with the proposed landscape enhancements, will contribute to a stronger and more pronounced sense of place.

SITING, HEIGHT, BULK AND FORM: “The siting of buildings should allow for intended activities while also acknowledging neighbouring buildings, reinforcing valued patterns of public space, and creating positive open spaces”.

Objective 03.1: To complement existing patterns of alignment and achieve a positive scale relationship with adjoining buildings and public spaces.

Objective 03.2: To respect the setting of heritage items and identified heritage areas.

Objective 03.3: To create coherent patterns of buildings that contribute to the amenity of neighbouring public spaces.

Objective 03.4: To ensure that reasonable levels of ventilation, daylight and outlook are maintained in a building’s habitable spaces should development on adjacent sites be built to the maximum standard.

Objective 03.5: To enhance the informal pedestrian network within the Central Area, by encouraging the retention and enhancement of existing pedestrian thoroughfares and promoting the creation of new thoroughfares where they would enhance walkability and permeability for pedestrians.

The supporting **guidelines** relate to the following matters: Street edge definition and building alignment (G3.1 - G3.4); Height and scale relationship (G3.5 - G3.7); Building bulk (G3.8); Natural light, outlook and ventilation (G3.9); Positive open space (G3.10); Wind effects on public space (G3.11); and Pedestrian block permeability (G3.12).

Many of the objectives/guidelines under ‘Siting, Height, Bulk and Form’ overlap with those under ‘Design Coherence’ and ‘Relationship to Context’. To avoid repetition, issues already covered under those headings are cross-referenced, where appropriate.

Assessment

Street edge definition and building alignment

The proposed building has two street frontages both of which have appropriately addressed the relevant ‘street edge definition’ and ‘building alignment’ guidelines.



Fig 4: Ground level plan

The proposal reinforces the continuity of front façade alignment along the Wakefield Street frontage and improves the street edge definition.

There is no consistent pattern of building alignment along Jervois Quay and the MFC does not set up a strong reference in that respect. The proposal is aligned with but setback from the Jervois Quay street edge. This is an appropriate response to the site's context and conditions as it recognises the street alignment, while maintaining the existing characteristic line of Pohutukawa trees that currently define the street edge. Retaining the Pohutukawa trees provides a soft background to views from the north/east which will aid the integration of the building bulk to its visual setting while improving the sense of the spatial definition along the Jervois Quay.

Height and scale relationship & building bulk - these guidelines are aimed at avoiding abrupt height differences between adjacent buildings, while ensuring the height/bulk of new development relates well to and does not dominate adjacent public spaces and/or neighbouring buildings. The aim is establishing a positive height and scale relationship between proposed and existing.

In the context of the proposed development at the MFC carpark site, achieving a positive height/scale relationship to the MFC is a key urban design objective. The District Plan height limit for the site is 27m above ground level.

The proposal is comprised of three building components of varying heights. The primary bulk of the tallest component - the Lantern - rises to 37.7m with the exterior mechanical equipment 'boxes' extending further to 39.3m. The heights of the other two components the East Wedge and West Wedge - 26.8m and West Wedge 16.7m respectively, are both within the 27m height limit.

In terms of the relevant Design Guide 'height/scale/bulk' provisions, the main issues for the proposed development include:

- (c) height relationships and impact of bulk on the immediate and wider setting, noting the visibility of the proposal in close-up and mid-distance views and its proximity to the MFC and the wider Civic Centre Heritage Area beyond;
- (d) bulk in relation to internal amenity with reference to natural light, outlook and ventilation; and
- (e) massing of the building bulk in relation to providing positive open space and encouraging pedestrian block permeability.

Height relationships and impact of bulk on the immediate and wider setting

The proposed massing breaks up the collective building bulk into three distinctive building components with varied height, form and design that respond to the differing scale and characteristics of the neighbouring buildings and spaces. This is a valid and effective response to moderating the impact of height/bulk and integrating the proposal to its setting while achieving a positive scale relationship to the MFC (as already discussed under 'relationship to context'). To avoid repetition, the following points are added/reiterated:

- positioned to partly wrap around the tallest and most prominent part of the building (the Lantern), the two lower building components (the East and West Wedges) assist to effectively break up and reduce the impact of the total building bulk while aiding the spatial relationship to the MFC and the wider Cuba Street setting (see also Townscape Assessment, Section 5 of this report);
- the height of the West Wedge is similar to that of the adjacent Renouf Foyer, while the height of the East Wedge references and is slightly lower than that of the MFC auditorium;
- the curved wall of the Lantern and its juxtaposition with the convex shape of the MFC auditorium together with the combined 'splayed' space of the new city-to-waterfront connection provide a generous spatial separation between the Lantern and the MFC, which is further supported by the adjacent MFC new landscape; and
- the setback from the Jervois Quay street edge and the retention of the existing trees + the proposed new landscape areas provide a soft foreground to the development that reduces the visual impact of its collective bulk in views from the east, north and north/east.



Fig 5: View from Frank Kitts Park

Notwithstanding that the Lantern exceeds the 27m height limit, the development as a whole, based on the proposed massing comprising distinctive and yet well integrated components of varying height, relates well to the MFC and the wider Civic Centre Heritage Area in spatial and visual terms. The distinctive volumes of the three building components and their juxtaposition, complemented by their differentiated external façade treatment, will create an interesting and visually balanced building form - a building form which, in combination with the proposed landscape enhancements, will appropriately 'complete' the development of the Civic Centre Heritage Area at its the eastern tip in a way that integrates with, responds to and enhances its setting.

Bulk and internal amenity (natural light, outlook and ventilation)

The Design Guide encourages new buildings to achieve acceptable levels of natural light, outlook and ventilation for residential and other habitable spaces by providing on-site setbacks from side and/or rear boundaries (or atria and light wells) and without needing to rely on the openness of adjacent sites.

The comprehensive development nature of the proposal and the resultant free-standing building form with large spaces around it will ensure that the aspects of internal amenity targeted by the Design Guide (natural light, outlook and ventilation) will be positively addressed. The upper levels of the Lantern will afford great views across the harbour. The proposal includes features that are not required by the Design Guide which enhance the overall amenity of the building (i.e. the roof of the West Wedge incorporates an accessible landscaped terrace, while the roof top of the East Wedge includes an area of extensive green roof where overlooked by levels above).

Positive open space & pedestrian block permeability

The Design Guide suggests that any proposed publicly accessible on-site open space should be positively defined, sunny and sheltered and support occupation. The 'pedestrian block permeability' guidelines seek to maintain and enhance existing pedestrian thoroughfares or alternatively consider creating new ones as part of the site redevelopment where a thoroughfare would enhance the walkability and permeability for pedestrians.



Fig.6: Views to the proposed Cuba Street / Waterfront connection

The proposal provides an excellent response to the above objectives through providing the following:

- two clearly defined sheltered pedestrian cross-site links, including:
 - an external sheltered link, referred to as Cuba Street-to-waterfront connection, running along the northern side of the proposed building adjacent to the MFC. This link, which follows the existing desire lines, is defined by an 'active' ground level building edge that is further enhanced by the new MFC landscape. Developed in the form of a generous elongated space, the proposed Cuba Street-to-waterfront connection will replace the existing poorly defined and largely utilitarian connection with a high amenity, sheltered and activated pedestrian thoroughfare. The entrance to that link is clearly signalled in views from Cuba Street through the distinctive form of the West Wedge creating the notion of a gateway; and
 - an internal publicly accessible generous cross-site link through the middle of the building footprint. The proposed internal link, accessed via a separate entrance, facilitates pedestrian movement from along Opera House Lane across Wakefield Street through to the waterfront beyond.
- two well-designed new landscape areas - referred to as the MFC landscape and the Waimapihi Stream Corner. The new spaces have been developed in response to their location within the site and associated contextual conditions. Their design complements the building design and assists its integration to the site and surrounding setting (refer to the Landscape Plans for detail).

Wind effects on public space - a wind assessment has been prepared as part of the Application by WSP. The assessment concludes that there are no significant wind issues arising from the proposal.

EDGE TREATMENT: *"The buildings that line the edges of streets and other public spaces establish their character and attractiveness".*

Objective 04.1 aims *"to create building edge conditions that support pedestrian activity and enhance the visual interest, legibility, safety and comfort of streets and other public spaces".*

The supporting **guidelines** cover the following matters: *Building forms/street frontages; Active edges; Servicing and car parking; and Shelter and building entrance enhancement.*

Assessment

Building fronts & active edges + Shelter and building entrance enhancement

The proposal is a commercial development with two street frontages, each with a different context and character. The triangular-shaped footprint of the proposal creates a third 'public' frontage running along the enhanced Cuba Street-to-waterfront connection. The proposal has addressed the treatment of each of these frontages in a manner that builds upon and enhances their specific character and place within the site. The development's most significant public edges have been carefully addressed through the well-considered integration of landscape treatment, external connections, and internal ground level activities.

The specific design responses are discussed below:

- The ground level will house food and beverage tenancies, a main building entrance + entrance foyer directly accessible from Wakefield Street, an integrated cross site link with a separate entrance and an educational tenancy. End of trip facilities are also provided within the ground level and located adjacent to the main core with good access from either entrance and directly accessible from the commercial lobby. The service delivery area and bike storage area are located mid-point along the Wakefield Street elevation of the East Wedge;
- The proposed arrangements appropriately locate the building entrances along the site's main street frontages with the food/beverage tenancies arranged along the primary public frontages of the development defining the waterfront connection. Service areas are suitably positioned between spaces incorporating some active frontages with the 'end of trip facilities' situated in the middle of the building footprint.

- Pedestrian shelter will be provided along the northern edge of the building adjacent to the Cuba Street-to-Waterfront connection with the civic-scale verandah created by the cantilevered West Wedge sheltering an afternoon sun-facing café terrace and further supported by the overhang of the Lantern. A colonnade along the western half of the Wakefield Street frontage connects to the commercial lobby entrance with a continuous verandah extending along the entire length of that frontage. The elevated underside of the West Edge allows for oblique views of the Renouf Foyer from Wakefield Street. Both building entrances (to the main lobby and to the internal through link respectively) are sheltered and well defined.
- The ground level, as part of base-isolated building, sits approximately 1m above ground. The change in level has been appropriately addressed by creating elevated terraces at the interface between the interactive building edge and the adjacent ground level spaces. Steps and ramps are well integrated into the building design to provide access to the main building entrances.



Fig 7: Accessible main entry below West wedge



Fig.8: Entrance to internal cross-link / view from north-west

Servicing and carparking - the proposal does not provide any carparking. It incorporates a kerb side loading zone along Wakefield Street. This arrangement reduces the length of service-related street frontage. The service/deliveries area is appropriately positioned between spaces with some active frontages.

FAÇADE COMPOSITION AND BUILDING TOPS: *“The composition of buildings determines their relation to context, their design coherence, and their suitability for a range of uses”.*

Objective 05.1: *To ensure the façade and building top design is coherently resolved.*

Objective 05.2: *To ensure that additions and alterations to heritage buildings maintain the heritage values of those buildings, their setting and any associated heritage area.*

Objective 05.3: *To facilitate multiple and changing building uses, except where such change adversely affects the heritage values of heritage buildings or areas.*

The supporting **guidelines** refer to issues such as: *Relationship to neighbouring buildings; Shopfronts, Building tops and roofscapes; and Human scale.*

Assessment

Relationship to neighbouring buildings - this issue has been largely covered under ‘Relationship to Context’.

Façade composition & Building Tops - the building form and façade composition of each building component have been appropriately addressed as part of an overall design concept in relation to the site’s context to create a coherent collective building form.

The approach to the massing and form of the individual components has already been discussed. To avoid repetition, the discussion here is focused on some of the more detailed aspects of the façade composition/treatment of the three building components.

The East Wedge - located within the sharpest eastern portion of the triangular site, the East Wedge (ground +5) addresses the Wakefield Street corridor with its narrowest /eastern corner and links visually to Te Papa and the future Convention Centre as seen in views from the north. Its form responds to the

bull-nose of the John Chambers building sitting diagonally to the east and its height references that of the John Chambers building.

The Jervois Quay elevation of the East Wedge, partly obscured by the Quay-side Pohutukawa in views from the east and north/east, is defined at ground level by the edges of the respective tenancies and the generous entrance to the internal cross-link and the VUW above. The upper levels of the south/Wakefield Street façade of the East Wedge relate to the same VUW tenancy, however, its ground level also incorporates the building service areas accessed from Wakefield Street.

The proposed ground level façade of the East Wedge appropriately reflects the internal uses around its perimeter. The façade is intended to be clad in profiled concrete panels (or treated as masonry wall) to express its plinth condition, combined with glazing around the entrance areas and along the northern edge of the East Wedge. The façade design of the upper levels is based on a system of punched windows reminiscent of the surface grain of the buildings along Wakefield Street arranged in three tiers within an 'off-set' alternating pattern. This, together with the intended profile terracotta cladding, or the use of large format porcelain panels, will assist in articulating the building façade, provide a sense of texture and visual interest, while also enhancing the individual form and scale of the East Wedge.



Fig 9: East Wedge, view from the corner of Taranaki and Wakefield Street

The East Wedge terminates at the area where the historical Waimapihi Stream once met the harbour. The ecological/cultural history of the place is interpreted/expressed through the landscape design but is also reflected in the intended textures/patterns incorporated into the ground level/plinth design of the East Wedge.

The roof of the East Wedge includes an area of extensive green roof where overlooked by levels above.

West Wedge - the lower cantilevered characteristic volume of the West Wedge, reads as a distinct element creating a civic scale veranda sheltering café tenancies and public space areas below while providing a height/scale transition between the Lantern and the MFC. Its dynamic form signals clearly the enhanced connection from Cuba Street to the Lagoon.

The West Wedge, which references the scale and materials of the MFC's Renouf Foyer, is to be clad in a modulated coloured stainless steel, or similar material, with its elevated underside allowing oblique views of the Renouf Foyer from Wakefield Street.

The intended use of curtain wall system with folded metal infill panels and vertical fins and the proposed 'paired' expression of the openings on west elevation, applied in combination with the more solid southern side of the West Wedge, appropriately address the variable conditions around its perimeter, while responding to some of the tenant's functional requirements. The roof of the West Wedge incorporates a landscaped terrace accessible from the adjacent floor within the Lantern.



Fig 10: West Wedge, view from the corner of Cuba and Wakefield Street

The Lantern - the Lantern is the tallest part of the development (ground + 8) providing shelter to a new public lane at ground level and housing quality commercial space. Wrapped around its base, a civic scaled colonnade provides shelter along the enhanced city-waterfront connection.

The configuration and form of the 'Lantern' with its curved northern side and fine edges contribute to a dynamic relatively slender building image in views from the city and the waterfront. The curve of the northern façade complements the convex shape of MFC auditorium opening through views to the new landscape and the waterfront beyond.



Fig. 11: The Lantern

The Lantern is treated as a lighter volume clad in a curtain wall with exterior fins. The façade treatment varies along the individual frontages of the Lantern reflecting contextual conditions, the change in orientation and internal planning. The façade treatment along the west side, which incorporates articulated exterior fins/vertical metal louvers, responds to and complements the stainless steel fins of the MFC, while providing solar mitigation to the upper level spaces. The north-east side of the Lantern (with prime harbour outlook) is more open/highly glazed (to support open format workspace). The south/Wakefield Street façade incorporates some vertical profile metal cladding along the areas associated with the core which extends up and wraps around the roof top. This assists to articulate the south façade, provide visual interest and integrate as well as differentiate the building top. The 3D quality of the south facade and the

entire south/western corner of the Lantern are further enhanced by the juxtaposition with the projecting volume of the West Wedge.

Roof form/silhouette - the building top has been designed as an integral part of the design composition. The varying heights and forms of the separate building components contribute to a varied, interesting and visually balanced building silhouette while providing opportunities for upper-level terraces and green roofs.

The main plant area is integrated within the extended metal skin/facade of the roof top floor of the Lantern. This facilitates the reading of the Lantern as a recognisable element with a singular volume and simple silhouette in views from within the surrounding setting. The configuration of its footprint and associated volumetric characteristics provide an additional level of articulation to the roof top of the Lantern.

The roof of the West Wedge incorporates an accessible landscaped terrace. It is intended that both the West and East Wedges will incorporate areas of extensive green roof to improve views when overlooked from levels above.



Fig 12: View of the south-western corner of the development

Human scale - the proposal clearly conveys a sense of human scale at the publicly occupied edges of the building. This is expressed through the design of the ground level and associated colonnade and verandah elements and the proposed activities and through the lower building volume of the West Wedge.

Flexibility and adaptability - the building form and internal layout, with a special reference to the 'free-standing'/ 'in the round' nature of the building and associated amount of natural light provides a good level of adaptability for possible future change of activity.

MATERIALS AND DETAIL "**Materials and detail are important in maintaining visual interest and a positive relation to context and heritage value**".

Objective O6.1: To achieve qualities of visual interest and physical robustness consistent with demands arising from the building's location in the central city.

Objective O6.2: To respect and conserve original heritage fabric.

The supporting **guidelines** cover matters such as: *Compositional coherence; Visual interest; Physical robustness; and Façade transparency.*

Assessment

Compositional coherence/visual interest/physical robustness/facade transparency - these issues have already been addressed throughout the assessment. Here the following points are reiterated:

- the external treatment of the building has been approached in an integrated manner and in response to the location of the respective building components on the site while acknowledging the range of distances they will be experienced from;
- the façade treatment reflects the strata of the building - to this end, the plinth-base component of all parts are generally high mass surfaces (honed concrete or selected stone surfaces), while the elevated components use lighter materials (glass, timber, folded metals).
- in terms of material and detail, the facades of individual components have been designed in relation to their orientation, the commercial activities they accommodate and the character of the surrounding setting - e.g. the proposed modulated coloured stainless steel cladding of the West Wedge and the metal clad fins on its western curve of the Lantern reference the material of the MFC with the Lantern's more open northern side maximising harbour views and supporting open format workspace. The cladding of the East Wedge, based on a system of punched windows, is reminiscent of the surface grain of the buildings along Wakefield Street and reflects internal functions/requirements. The intended materials are shown on RC2.02 - RC 2.05).
- The design is aimed for high ESD performance. To this end, cladding systems are high performance, highly insulated and the ratio of glazing to solid façade in the order of 40:60.

The intended design detail and palette of proposed materials, and their application on the building's facades, are illustrated on the architectural drawings and further described in the Architectural Design Statement. Due to the nature of the design process associated with complex developments such as the proposal, facade materials and detailing might need refinement during the next stages of design development should consent to the proposal be granted. As with any similar Central Area projects, the challenge at a resource consent stage is providing a level of certainty on design quality (in terms of materials and detailing) while allowing for flexibility in the next stages of design development. This can be addressed via a condition of consent re making final choice of materials and associated detailing subject to Council's approval prior to lodging for building consent. This is an appropriate and well-used mechanism that will be offered by the Applicant.

5 TOWNSCAPE ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The proposal will be visible from a range of locations around the development site. However, it will be experienced most often in close-up and short to mid-distance views from viewpoints up to 250m to the north, north-east, south and south-east. The proposal will not be seen from some of the key public spaces in the surrounding area such as the Civic Square, Te Papa Tongarewa Plaza and the Great Harbour Way (vicinity of the 'wind wand' sculpture).

The key viewpoints from which the proposal will be most prominent have been identified by the project team and discussed with the Council's urban design and heritage advisors. The viewpoints are marked on the map in Appendix 9 to the AEE. Viewpoints A, B and C (the key public spaces from which the proposal will not be seen) are marked in blue. The selected 14 viewpoints are considered to be representative of the collective visual experience of the proposal and therefore sufficient for assessing its visual impact.

For each viewpoint an 'existing' and 'proposed' image is provided. The 27m height limit has been marked on each image in red line to help illustrate the extend of the 'extra' visual bulk associated with the Lantern.

The images are analysed and referred to in the townscape assessment that follows. The purpose of the assessment is to establish the degree of visual integration of the proposed development to the character of its setting and associated impact of building height/bulk/design on the adjacent MFC and the wider Civic Centre Heritage Area, as well as the visual experience of people moving to, around and across the site.

The assessment is carried out in relation to the viewing direction of the identified viewpoints, and where appropriate, in relation to all views from a certain direction. This is to acknowledge that most often the collective visual impact of the proposal is experienced in and shaped by sequential views obtained when

moving towards or around the development site. The townscape assessment should be read in conjunction with the townscape views included in Appendix 9 to the AEE.



Fig 13: Townscape views / Viewpoint location map.

VIEWS FROM THE SOUTH-EAST/NORTH-EAST

The selected views from the south-east and north-east include dynamic views when approaching the site from Taranaki Street/Wakefield intersection (Views 1 & 2, viewing distance approximately 150m) and/or moving closer to the site from along Jervis Quay and Cable Street (Views 3 & 4, approximate viewing distance 120m and 100m respectively).

Views 1 & 2, are from slightly different angles within the same location - the vicinity of Taranaki Street/Wakefield intersection respectively. In both views the characteristic/dynamic form of the East Wedge the foreground of the view defining the street edges of the currently vacant site. The Jervis Quay and Wakefield Street frontages of the Lantern are seen in at an oblique angle. Appearing at the foreground, the lower volume of the East Wedge provides a height/scale transition to the Lantern's taller volume thereby reducing the visual impact of its bulk.



Fig. 14: View 1

In View 1 the 'extra' bulk is seen primarily along the Wakefield Street frontage of the proposal. The height of the Wakefield Street façade of the Lantern and the lower height of the West Wedge make visual references to existing building heights along the street. Similarly, the height and overall bulk of the Lantern relate to the height of the existing taller buildings further to the north, thus aiding the integration of the proposal to its visual setting.

In View 2, the 'extra' bulk appears on the Jervois Quay side of the building and its impact is moderated by the East Wedge. In Views 1 & 2 the visibility of the MFC will be reduced, however, its northern end will remain visible and continue to signal its presence.

The specific footprint of the Lantern helps to articulate its bulk, an effect that is further enhanced by the differentiated treatment of the building top at the eastern end. The rooftop plant and associated mechanical equipment will not be present in those views. This will help to create a legible building top with a simple silhouette line.

View 3 is a close-up oblique view of the proposal (from the Jervois Quay footpath). Due to the short viewing distance, only a limited portion of the Jervois Quay side of the proposal will be revealed. The prominence of the proposal in View 3 will be further reduced by the line of the existing mature trees providing a soft foreground. Similar to View 2, the height of the proposal will provide visual references to the height of existing buildings seen in the more distant background of the view.

View 4 shifts the viewpoint to the north-east along Cable Street. Framed by the Odilins Building on one side and by the John Chambers Building on the other, View 4 will reveal only the northern-most end of the Lantern while retaining the existing visual exposure of the MFC. In this view the proposal will read two storeys higher relative to the 27m height limit. The Jervois Quay entrance of the development will be seen in the view signalling the northern end of the internal cross-site link.



Fig. 15: View 3

VIEWS FROM THE NORTH/FROM THE WATERFRONT

The selected views from the waterfront include short-distance sequential views when approaching the site from the vicinity of the Wharewaka and the Lagoon (Views 5, 6, 7 and 8 / viewing distance varying approximately between 80-150m) and views from the vicinity of the southern edge of Frank Kitts Park (Views 9 & 10 / viewing distance up to 220m).

Views 5, 6, 7, 8 are sequential views in which the proposal is seen from a similar direction but from varying distances and slightly different angles when approaching the site from the vicinity of the Wharewaka and the Lagoon. The focus of these views is on the Jervois Quay side of the proposal. View 7 will reveal a larger portion of the building, compared to the other views due to the more distant location of

its viewpoint. The Lantern and parts of the East Wedge with a small portion of the West Wedge will feature in Views 7 and 8.



Fig. 16: View 7

The proposal will be seen as a new element shaping the 'foreground' skyline. The Lantern's articulated bulk and differentiated roof top treatment along with its curved façade, which will appear in some of the views, create visual interest, reduce its visual bulk and contributes to a dynamic silhouette line. The lower distinctive volume of the East Wedge that wraps around the eastern end of the Lantern provides a step-in height to the east.

The existing line of mature trees along Jervois Quay will obscure the lower parts of the proposal and provide a soft foreground to the building, thereby assisting its integration to the surrounding visual setting.

The separation distance between the Lantern and the MFC auditorium helps to reduce the visual impact of the Lantern and aid its relationship to the MFC as seen in above views. The curved form of the northern façade of the Lantern and associated façade treatment, as seen in views 7 and 8, will further assist the visual relationship to the MFC.

Views 9 and 10 are from a similar distance but their viewing angles are slightly different. In View 9 the curved façade and the quality of the overall 3D modelling of the Lantern's bulk will be apparent and the relationship between the three building components will be clearly understood. The considered juxtaposition and the visual 'advantages' afforded by the lower volumes of the two wedges in aiding the scale integration of the proposal to its setting, will be evident.

As seen in View 9, the collective silhouette of the proposal appears sufficiently articulated with the specific shape and proportions of the individual building components providing visual interest to the city skyline.

View 10 shows a similar view of the proposal as View 9, but from a much more oblique angle. The existing foreground trees obscure a large portion of the development in that view reducing its visual prominence.

The overall height of the proposal, as seen in Views 9 & 10 fits in well with the heights of buildings in the wider visual setting.



Fig. 17: View 9

VIEWS FROM THE CIVIC CENTRE HERATGE AREA

Two views were investigated from within the Civic Centre Heritage Area - from within the Civic Square (View **C**, in which the proposal will not be seen) and from the City-to-Sea Bridge (View **11**).²

The viewing angle in View **11** is similar to that of View **9** but from a slightly shorter distance. However, given the elevated position of the viewpoint in View **11**, the lower parts of the development will be obscured. The comments relating to the skyline of the proposal and its integration to the visual setting made for View **9**, also apply to View **11**.

In View 11 the MFC appears in the foreground. This enhances its visual presence while reducing the visual impact of the Lantern.



Fig. 18: View 11

² The specific viewing point on the city-to-sea bridge lies outside the Civic Centre heritage Area.

VIEWS FROM THE SOUTH AND SOUTH/WEST

These include close-up views from the vicinity of Wakefield/Cuba Street area (Views **12**, **13** & **14**/viewing distance between 50-80m). View **12** focuses on the western corner of the proposal seen at the foreground of the Town Hall and the MFC. The view shows the West Wedge with part of the curved northern façade of the Lantern. The horizontal form of the West Wedge makes a clear reference to the height and horizontal form of the MFC Renouf Foyer, while the fins on the curved façade reference the shape and materiality of the MFC. The dynamic form of the West Wedge is apparent in that view marking the 'gateway' to the enhanced city-to-waterfront connection.



Fig. 19: View 12

View **13**, reveals the north/west part of the proposal with the West Wedge seen projecting forward from the taller volume of the Lantern. Framed by the existing Civic Chamber building (Cuba/Wakefield Street corner), View 13 limits the exposure of the West Wedge but shows enough of its volume to illustrate its height relation to the MFC. The overall design quality of the West Wedge and the Lantern and the visual references afforded by their detailed design to the MFC will be apparent in this close-up view from the Cuba Street/Bond Street junction.



Fig. 20: View 13

View 14, provides a close-up view of the northern end of the Wakefield Street frontage of the proposal. The diagrid structure and the colonnade space leading to the main building entrance and the entrance to the internal link will be clearly experienced. The juxtaposition between the Lantern, the West Wedge and the East Wedge and their differentiated façade treatment are seen close-up in View 14 obtained from the northern end of the Opera House Lane. The short viewing distance reduces the extent of the visible street façade but provides an understanding of the intended detailed façade treatment.



Fig. 21: View 14

Summary Comment - the proposal will be seen primarily in close-up and short to mid-distance views from viewpoints located up to 250m away from the site. It will be experienced primarily in dynamic views obtained by motorists moving along the street edges of the site and by pedestrians in sequential views when approaching the site from either the city or the waterfront and when traversing the site.

The assessment established that the proposal relates well to the MFC, the wider Civic Centre Heritage Area and the surrounding setting in terms of scale and visual integration.

This has been achieved through breaking the building bulk into three distinctive building components with differentiated façade composition/design treatment. The massing and relative position between the building components, the articulation of their building forms and their specific façade treatments assist to moderate/reduce the visual impact of the proposed height/bulk while aiding the scale/visual relationship of the proposal to its immediate and wider setting.

Notwithstanding that the tallest building component exceeds the height limit for the site, the impact of the additional bulk has been appropriately moderated to create a well-balanced and visually interesting collective building form which will fit in well with and contribute to its immediate and wider setting.

6 DESIGN EXCELLENCE

The District Plan requires design excellence for any building that is higher than the height standard specified for the Central Area (Policy 12.2.5.5). There are no explicit criteria in the District Plan for assessing design excellence. However, the explanation under Policy 12.2.5.5 states that in processing a consent application for an over-height building, Council will consider “*both the scale of the proposed height increase and the comparative height of the resulting building in relation to its surroundings*”.

While all new buildings (according to the District Plan) are expected to be of sufficient design quality to make a positive contribution to the public environment, delivering design excellence is considered

particularly important to “proposals that will result in a building that is significantly higher to the surrounding built form”.

Assessment overview: the two likely scenarios re over-height buildings discussed in the explanation under the relevant District Plan policy include: “... a building of exceptional height in comparison to every other building in the city (i.e. in excess of 130m in height), and a building that is very tall in relation to the scale of surrounding properties. Both scenarios are likely to result in a building of significant visibility and prominence”.

While the proposal does not fall neatly or entirely under either of the above scenarios, it still requires a ‘design excellence’ assessment.

Design excellence criteria - neither the District Plan nor the Central Area Urban Design Guide provide a definition of what constitutes design excellence or identify any specific assessment criteria. However, a list of informal ‘considerations’ for design excellence, which had emerged from Council’s workshop several years ago, have been circulated by the Council to guide the assessment.

Council ‘Design Excellence’ Considerations: ‘Design excellence’ requires:

- i. a coherent and concept driven design, relevant to its context. This will include a thorough site analysis identifying matters of importance to the site and how they influence the design*
- ii. a design that enhances the site, the street (including neighbouring buildings), the urban block, the wider city*
- iii. a high level of internal and external building functionality and amenity*
- iv. three-dimensional articulation of building form and building top to reduce the visual impact of the building, mitigate wind effects, and create a strong architectural identity*
- v. detailing and materials that add visual interest to the façades*
- vi. a design which goes over and above what would normally be expected to satisfy the Central Area Urban Design Guide provisions.*

The above considerations, except for consideration vi, rehearse more or less the content of the Central Area Urban Design Guide and therefore do not provide any substantially different or additional guidance. In this sense, consideration vi: ‘... a design which goes over and above what would normally be expected to satisfy the Central Area Urban Design Guide provisions’ seems to be the most useful reference.

All of the above design excellence matters, except for consideration vi have been discussed under the Design Guide assessment (Section 4 of this report). To avoid repetition, only the key points have been reiterated and integrated in the ‘design excellence’ assessment that follows.

- The proposal is based on a well-considered and contextually responsive design concept where the main elements of the design composition, while each exhibiting a distinctive form, integrate into an overall coherent building providing a range of ground level activities complemented by the proposed landscape enhancements.
- The proposal clearly illustrates that the key characteristics of its contextual setting have been considered and suitably interpreted. This is expressed through the formal aspects of the massing of the collective building form and its external design treatment while addressing city-waterfront connections in an integrated fashion.
- The proposed site planning/massing and the form/design of the individual building components create a coherent and logical spatial layout where the enhanced city/Cuba Street-to-waterfront connection follows existing desire lines to create an attractive, ‘activated’ and convenient pedestrian thoroughfare. Its high-quality landscape treatment has been developed as an integral part of the overall development of the site. An internal cross-site link through the building with a separate

entrance provides an alternative pedestrian route with a location/layout that responds to and connects to Opera House Lane.

- Proposed ground level activities are mindfully distributed in relation to the hierarchy of the development's most publicly significant edges.
- The articulation of the building bulk into three distinctive building components, with special reference to the West Wedge, negotiates well the scale and visual relationship to the MFC and the wider Civic Centre Heritage Area, while referencing the scale and character of existing buildings and the specific contextual condition along each of the site's street frontages.
- The proportions of the individual building components and their juxtaposition creates a well-balanced and visually interesting building form when viewed from the surrounding public spaces. The visual experience of the site will be enhanced by the street definition provided along both street frontages and through the form of the East Wedge which by providing a 'bookend', appropriately shapes the site's most prominent corner.
- Notwithstanding that the tallest building component exceeds the height limit for the site, the impact of the additional bulk has been sufficiently and appropriately moderated to create a well-balanced and visually interesting collective building form which will integrate well with and contribute to its immediate and wider townscape setting.
- Design responses and features which go over and above what would normally be expected to satisfy the Central Area Urban Design Guide provisions include:
 - seismic resilience achieved through the base-isolated structure of the development;
 - provision of two high-quality cross-block connections with different spatial/design characteristics developed as part of an integrated site/building layout in response to existing desire lines;
 - the generous height of the colonnade/overhang to the Cuba Street-to-waterfront pedestrian connection acknowledging its public significance + the adjacent outdoor terraces with active edges;
 - high internal amenity of the proposed commercial spaces in terms of daylight and outlook;
 - 'excellence' in design quality expressed in the design of the individual building components and the way they relate to each other as part of the collective building form and composition; and
 - 'excellence' in landscape design quality based on a well-considered and contextually responsive concept which complements the building composition and recognises the ecological and cultural significance of the Waimapihi Stream. The careful integration of existing and new landscape elements play an effective role in moderating the visual bulk of the proposal in views from surrounding public space and enhance pedestrian experience across the site.

Based on the above assessment, I consider that *the proposal has addressed appropriately the design excellence considerations and can deliver an outcome that goes over and above what would normally be expected to satisfy the Central Area Urban Design Guide provisions.*

7 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The proposal is for the comprehensive development of an important and visually prominent site that is part of the Wellington's Civic Centre Heritage Area. The development has been developed with reference to the WCC Design Brief for the site and in relation to the specific contextual conditions of the site.

Part of the proposal goes through the height limit envisaged for the Civic Centre Heritage Area. This, together with the sensitivity of the site, its proximity to the MFC and the Civic Square and its prominence in public views from the waterfront, call for design which integrates well to its immediate and wider setting and contributes to the visual character of that setting.

Three separate assessments were carried out with reference to: (a) the response of the proposal to the Central Area Urban Design Guide (Design Guide); (b) the visual impact of the proposal on its immediate and wider townscape setting; and (c) the degree to which the proposed design is exemplary and capable of delivering 'design excellence'. These assessments established that:

- The proposal is based on a well-considered and context-driven design concept that has taken into account and appropriately addressed the relevant Design Guide objectives and guidelines.
- Notwithstanding the visual prominence of the site, the proposal will be experienced primarily in close-up and short to mid-distance views from within the locations up to 220m away. In those views the proposal will appear as a new element which integrates well to its visual setting while adding visual interest to the surrounding townscape and without impacting in views from within the Civic Square. The visual impact of the proposed 'extra' height of the Lantern has been appropriately moderated through the massing and façade treatment of the proposal as a whole and further supported by the intended high-quality landscape enhancements.
- The proposal demonstrates a high level of professionalism and a commitment to building design quality. The outcome, in terms of an overall quality clearly exceeds the quality of a development that merely satisfies the Design Guide. A condition of consent re making final choice of materials and associated detailing subject to Council's approval prior to lodging a building consent will provide a good level of certainty on the detailed aspects of building quality outcomes, should consent to the proposed development be granted.

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