

30 November 2021

Urban Design Assessment Report

for the proposed

Residential building and site development

at

One Tasman Pukeahu Park

1 & 23 Tasman Street, Te Aro

SR_500876

Prepared for Wellington City Council

Introduction

The application seeks resource consent for construction of a new mixed use residential housing complex comprising 213 dwellings, two commercial tenancies and carparking across six buildings. The site is situated prominently in relation to the Pukeahu National War Memorial Park and to the Tory/Tasman Street north/south corridor. The site incorporates 1 Tasman Street, the site of the existing Tasman Gardens residential complex, and 23 Tasman Street, a former dwelling that is currently being used as a vet clinic.

The development proposal is described in detail in the application prepared by Urban Perspectives Ltd. Other application documents that have informed this assessment include

- Architectural Design Statement
- Landscape Design Statement and Plans
- Record of pre application consultation
- Urban Design Assessment (UDA)
- Townscape views
- Sun studies
- CPTED Assessment
- Additional information supplied by the applicant

Leading up to the application, several meetings were held between the applicant and Council officers/advisers. I attended two of these. In addition, an earlier version of the proposal was reviewed (20 May 2021) by an independent, three-person panel of urban design experts. Their report, including recommendations, has been considered in the context of forming my own conclusions on the potential urban design outcomes.

Site and setting

The site is at the southern end of the Te Aro area of Wellington's Central Area, where the land rises toward Pukeahu (Mt Cook). It is situated between the Basin Reserve and Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, facing onto the Buckle Street corridor. Old Buckle Street rises from the Basin Reserve, adjacent to the walls flanking the entry to the Arras

Tunnel and here it has a relatively wide paved footpath. As one moves toward the west, one arrives onto the main pathway leading through the Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, passing in front of the Carillon. The Pukeahu National War Memorial Park straddles the north/south Pukeahu ridge with the site laying on the eastern side, where the land falls down toward the Basin Reserve. The site topography and open nature of the park help ensure the visual prominence of the Carillon and former Dominion Museum directly behind it, particularly in views taken from the north and west. The visual prominence of these structures is further ensured by the landscaped buffer space adjoining Tasman Street, directly across from the subject site.

The site has frontages to Old Buckle and to Tasman Street. The relationship with Old Buckle Street is currently mediated by a tall concrete masonry wall, with vegetation evident above it. One of these plants is a large and symmetrical Pohutukawa, which would be retained in the proposed scheme. The frontage to Tasman Street comprises a series of terrace houses with individual garages and entries. The Architectural Design Statement provides a brief illustrated discussion of the site's relationship to broad natural, urban, and cultural histories.



Figure 1: Plan view of the site, located in centre of image and highlighted around its perimeter, and the surrounding setting.

As noted, the site is in an area that transitions to Mt Cook, which is also reflected in the orientation of streets. Tasman Street aligns closely with Adelaide Road as it extends south

from the Basin Reserve, where it veers to have an orientation closer to north/south, influenced perhaps by the Pukeahu ridge and the narrowing valley. However, the buildings around the site, including the Carillon and former Dominion Museum, are aligned to the Te Aro grid system. This orientation is also seen clearly in the Basin Reserve and adjoining Sussex Street. Refer to figure 1. The existing buildings on the development site (not including 23 Tasman Street) are however, aligned with the layout of Tasman Street.

While the site, situated in the northwest corner of the block, is more closely associated with Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, it is also in a dynamic area, adjacent to the busy SH1. The buildings to the east of the site and around into Sussex Street appear blunt and hardened against the SH1 frontage; perhaps such response is necessary when the buildings provide residential & traveller accommodation in close proximity to a busy road. In Rugby Street and the southern part of Tasman Street the buildings appear more 'friendly', with a finer development grain and scale with areas of planted landscaping. These streets are, of course, much quieter and the older buildings have yet to be redeveloped in the way the sites along Sussex Street have. Nevertheless, redevelopment of some sites within this block is currently under way, with a moderate scale residential development emerging on the corner of Tasman and Rugby Streets. As noted, the site is in an area with diverse and dynamic building form and land use characteristics.

Development Proposal

The proposal is to demolish the existing buildings on the site, which have been found to be structurally deficient. The site plan is formed around six primary buildings;

Building A (Northern Apartments) is a ten storey, base isolated residential building with approximately 104 apartments. This building is 'split' in plan along its long axis to enable the western side to slide (relative to the eastern half) to the south. The split is also reflected in the vertical dimension as the western half is one floor lower than the eastern side, allowing for a landscaped terrace at roof level. The applicant notes that this feature is primarily driven to enhance visual permeability through the site from vantage points east of the site. Nevertheless, this design feature also brings other benefits, which will be discussed below. All but one of the apartments on each level of this building would have single aspects, either west or east facing.

The set back area of the western half of Building A creates a space for Building B (Pukeahu Terrace Houses) to be situated at the Buckle/Tasman Street corner. This is a low rise building with units accessed from within the site in the space between Buildings A and B. A total of four multi storey terrace type dwellings is provided, along with a space designated for café use on the corner. Two of the four units are situated on the levels above this café space.

Building C comprises five multi storey terrace dwellings, located on the Buckle Street boundary in the northeast corner of the site. These units would be accessed directly from

the footpath, across steps and small garden spaces. The units are set to consistent floor levels, with the differences to site level mediated by the steps.

Building D comprises eight 2-storey terrace houses set above the car parking structure. This building is in the centre of the site, located hard up to the eastern boundary. Together with Buildings A and C, this building defines the central courtyard space (discussed further below). These floor levels of these units sit above Building C to enable the northern block of four to access direct sunlight and outlook.

Building E is the Southern Apartment tower, rising to nine storeys. This building is laid out along an east/west primary axis (orthogonal to Building A). Situated along the southern boundary of the site, Building E would be accessed directly from Tasman Street. While a portion of the street frontage would be hidden behind a 2m high brick wall, the southern half of the ground level façade would provide for a live/work commercial space with a fully glazed façade. This building is also structurally base isolated.

The sixth building is the car parking structure, which has two levels. The basement level would be accessed along a ramp situated to the south of Building E, adjacent to the boundary with 25 Tasman Street. The at grade level car parking would be accessed directly from Tasman Street, between Buildings A and E. This access corresponds to the potential through site link. More importantly, this is the space through which views toward Pukeahu Ridge can be had from vantage points to the east.

The site between and around the proposed buildings would be fully developed with planting, fencing and areas of hard paving. As noted above, a central courtyard space is situated between Buildings A and D and this space is part of a walkway through the site, from Old Buckle Street through to Tasman Street, between Buildings A and E. The street edge conditions vary with the building and topography. Along Old Buckle Street, brick walls separate the at grade private terrace spaces of Building C from the street with stairs between. See figures 2 and 3 below.



Figure 2: Old Buckle Street elevation showing the different street edge conditions.



Figure 3: Elevation of the northern part of the Tasman Street elevation, again showing the different conditions along the length of Building A.

Review and assessment

The Central Area Urban Design Guide (CAUDG) is the appropriate reference for assessing the urban design outcomes of development proposals in the city's Central Area. The design guide is organised under six headings corresponding to the design aspects that are known to influence people's perceptions and use of urban buildings. Objectives and design guidelines are provided under each to assist designers; these are referred to below as relevant.

Design Coherence

Design coherence considers the extent to which the form, architectural spaces and fabric of new buildings are coherently designed, demonstrate design integrity and integrate relevant design criteria.

In essence, this is a summative consideration. Coherence of the design, in an overall sense, is informed by successful integration of the outcomes sought by the five headings that follow. This section of the guide invites one to zoom out to consider the proposal in an overall sense; to evaluate its coherence. To do this, we can consider the project at two scales; macro and micro. At the macro scale, the relevant compositional factors revolve around urban form within the site and how these relate to the setting. Specific factors include building heights, spatial arrangements between them, alignment and design proportions. At the micro scale we can consider the façade composition, treatment of the public edges, ways in which the design would create amenity for users and visual richness. Clearly several of these overlap with assessment under the following headings.

Built form setout and massing responds first and foremost to the Te Aro grid alignment. While this differs from the existing layout of buildings on site, it is entirely appropriate. As noted, the majority of buildings in the surrounding area align with this grid, even those located south along Tasman Street. The proposed alignment is also consistent with the Carillon and former Dominion Museum. The rational setout of buildings to the existing grid

structure is an important attribute of overall coherence, as this links the proposed buildings to their setting.

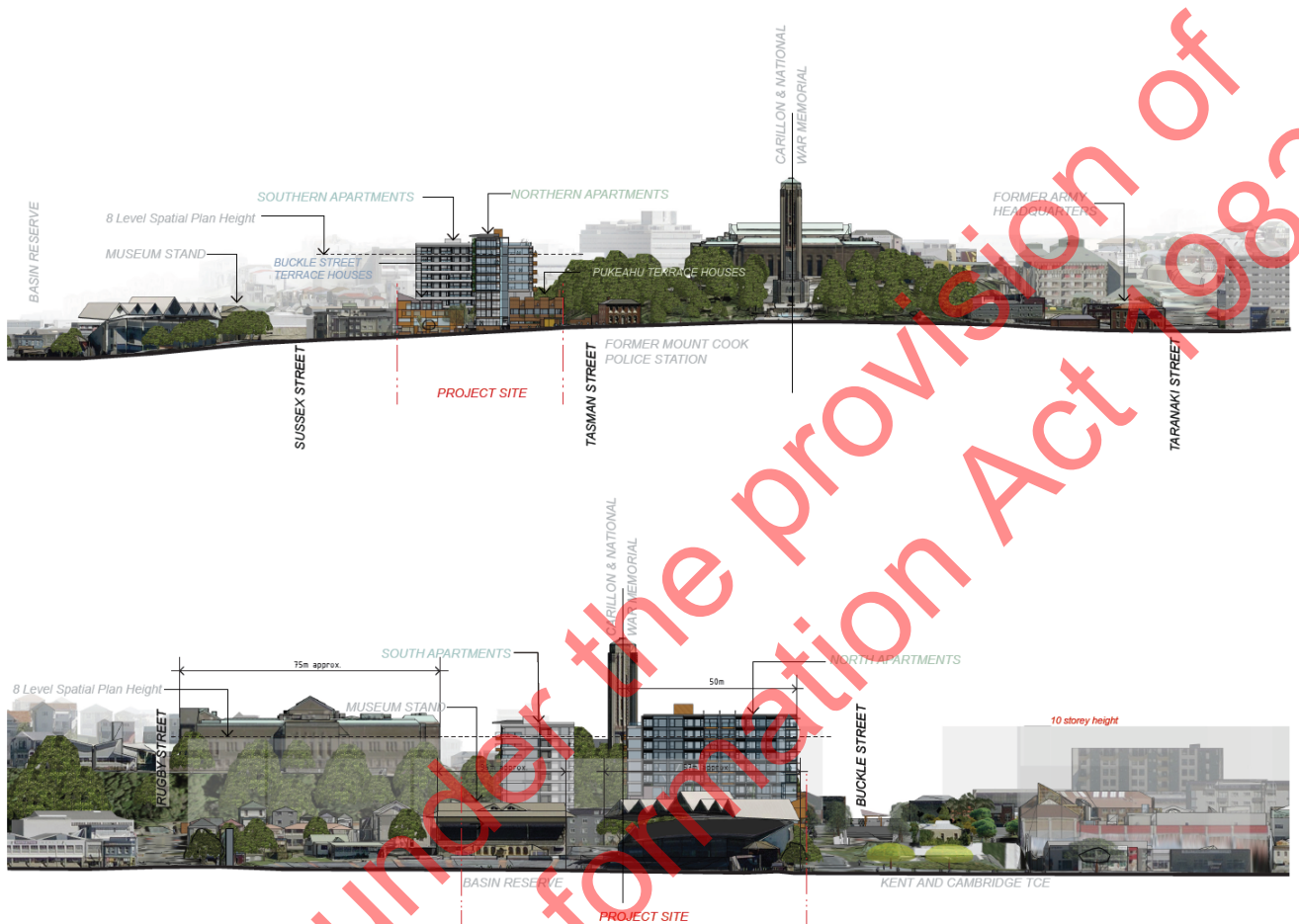


Figure 4: Elevation views of the site, with the proposed development shown, from the north (top) and east (bottom). These views confirm the primacy of the Carillon and the former Dominion Museum despite the height of the proposed buildings.

Massing of buildings across the site situates the tallest building toward the northern boundary, where it will enjoy the most visibility from - and outlook toward - areas to the north. The risk here is that the building could serve to diminish the primacy of the Carillon and former Dominion Museum in the setting. While there are locations around the eastern side of the site from which views of the Carillon and former Dominion Museum will be obscured, this is also likely to be the case with forms that are lower in height, particularly where there are no viewing channels provided between buildings (as there are here). Figure 4 confirms the significant heights of the former Dominion Museum and Carillon relative to those of the proposed development. Visibility of these important existing elements will continue to be ensured by the planted open spaces that surround them as well.

Two other factors enable the design to successfully acknowledge the Carillon & National War Memorial, and to a lesser extent, the former Dominion Museum. Firstly, the

western half of Building A slides back from the northern boundary, enabling a wider viewing area from vantagepoints to the northeast. Secondly, a gap is provided between Buildings A and E, which enables views though to the Carillon and the planted eastern bank of the Pukeahu ridge from distant vantage points to the east, including the road emerging from the Mt Victoria Tunnel (see figure 4). These are well considered massing attributes.

The height of Building A enables it to engage positively with Pukeahu War Memorial Park and would contribute to positive CPTED outcomes¹. The height, in combination with the articulation of the building into two more slender halves, also leads to a building of elegant proportions. Compared with what may have been possible with a shorter building, the massing proposed here is put to good use. That is to say, the massing leads to those elements that will have the greatest visibility to also be imbued with elegant overall proportions.

At smaller scales, the buildings have been designed to respond positively to the streets they each face onto as the conditions change. This includes the manner in which the smaller scale terraces of Building C are accessed directly from Old Buckle Street, the public café within Building B at the Tasman/Old Buckle Street corner and the direct engagement between the ground level of Building E and Tasman Street. The scale of the street facing Buildings B and C, as well as the garden wall extending along the Tasman Street edge as it defines private spaces within the site and landscaped spaces opening to the street, are also very positive. These parts of the project, adjacent to where people will walk, cycle and congregate relate well to human scale and serve to moderate the more imposing heights of Buildings A and E. Making space in front of the taller building volumes to enable smaller, more human scale building forms, is another strong attribute of the design.

The site is laid out in a manner that is highly legible, this despite the significant difference in height between Old Buckle Street and the courtyard space within the site. The proposed height of the entry gates and nature of the threshold space enables people to view up into the principal organising space within the site. Considering also the other entry exit points around the perimeter of the site, it is clear how visitors and residents will be able to access and move through the site. This can be attributed to a logical layout of buildings, enhancement of the spaces between by way of paving, site structures and planting and clear entry points to the individual buildings.

Several of the solid surfaces along the two street frontages will be brick masonry, a material that will add visual warmth and a natural texture to the setting and will help relate the project to the former Mt Cook Police building and to the landscaped wall running south from it on the opposite side of Tasman Street.

Overall then, the massing of built form across the site, the specific heights of buildings and way the taller forms are stepped down at the street edges, the engagement between

¹ Applicant's CPTED Statement dated 17 September 2021; p3

the development site and the streets and the legibility of the spaces between buildings all contribute to the coherence of the design. Other specific attributes of the project are discussed in sections that follow.

Relationship with context

Relating to context means understanding and responding in a considered way to the conditions beyond the site. The objectives invite consideration of the extent to which the proposal:

- *recognises the unique qualities of the setting and is designed to enhance these (O2.1)*
- *maintains or enhances the quality of settings of heritage buildings, including where they fall within a designated heritage area (O2.2)*

The design guide also includes more specific objectives around development in and around the National War Memorial Area (Appendix 2 to the CAUDG). These include:

- *retention of the landmark status of the Carillon and National War Memorial and to respect its symbolic status (TAO1.1), and*
- *to maintain an unobstructed ridgetop setting for the National War Memorial and good visual connections to the city (TA)1.2).*

Although the site does not technically fall within the Area, the objectives and associated guidelines are relevant in considering the relationship of this proposed development to its context.

Several aspects of the design can be seen to address the context objectives listed in these two parts of the design guide; specifically:

Overall alignment of the buildings with the Te Aro grid (and existing buildings around the site) while also responding to and reinforcing the alignment of the adjacent streets.

Building massing that enables views through the site by separating Buildings A and E, and across the northwest corner of the site by stepping the two halves of Building A in plan. These two attributes of the design increase the extent to which views toward the Carillon and former Dominion Museum can be gained from vantage points northeast and east of the site. These are illustrated in the Townscape Views document.

Stepping the height of buildings down around at the street edges to help moderate the scale of the two taller buildings and to relate to the height of the former Mt Cook Police building.

Contextual relationships are also formed through the choice of materials, the detailing and in the modulation of building forms across the site. In particular, the stylised brick clad form of Building B responds well to the setting, particularly in close relationship to the former Mt Cook Police building on the SW corner of Tasman and Old Buckle Streets.

In light of these positive attributes it is also important to acknowledge that the most significant challenge in terms of relating to the setting is with the proposed heights of Buildings A and E. This has been acknowledged throughout the pre-application process, where height and location of buildings on the site have been robustly discussed and options tested. Appendix 1 to the Architect's Design Statement provides a summary of the various options discussed through these meetings and it can be expected that many more have been considered by the design team in their own internal processes. While none of the options have been at or below the height anticipated by the District Plan (18.6m above ground) the merits of a building at or around the height currently proposed have been discussed and generally accepted. The potential merits that have been discussed include

- feasibility to incorporate seismically resilient base isolation techniques,
- that this will lead to a significant number of new residential dwellings in a relevant part of the city,
- that opportunities arise to create space around and between buildings within the site (redistribution of development potential) in order to help ensure views, light and air for the benefit of residents and the public.

Throughout the preapplication process, including review by an independent panel of urban design experts, it has been acknowledged that there is potential to redistribute the development potential in ways to optimise these outcomes while managing potential negative outcomes. In my opinion, the application succeeds in both.

The Te Aro Corridor design guidelines provide perhaps the most direct reference to height of new development proposals in this context. TAO1.1 and TAO1.2 remind us that the Carillon and the National War Memorial require protection of their visual prominence in the setting, to help ensure that their symbolic values are maintained. It can be noted that creation of Pukeahu National War Memorial Park has enhanced their status by eliminating the previous interference of SH1 as it passed by at grade. It is also clear that the design guide emphasises viewpoints from the north and northwest, where TAG1.1 notes the importance of maintaining "a significant contrast in height between the National War Memorial and any development to the north and west of this building". The guideline then goes on to describe in quite certain terms the height and plan dimensions that should apply to any development in an area immediately to the north of the National War Memorial, extending as far as the northern boundary of the Mt Cook School. The current site does not fall within the area described in the design guide nor would the development challenge in any way the prominence of the National War Memorial and Carillon in views from the north and northwest.

Overall, I am comfortable that the proposed development will relate well to the setting. The design draws on important environmental cues in ways to help overcome potentially disruptive relationships with the setting. The site layout and building designs respond

appropriately to the surrounding setting at various scales, such that the overall outcome will be positive.

Siting, height, bulk and form

This section of the design guide invites consideration of the extent to which the siting of buildings allows for the intended activities while also acknowledging neighbouring buildings, reinforcing valued patterns of public space and create positive open spaces.

Addressing five objectives aimed at fostering positive siting, building height and form outcomes, specific guidelines are grouped under the following headings.

Street edge definition & Building alignment;

As the buildings are set out across the site, their orthogonal alignments help to reinforce the wider Te Aro grid pattern. This also effectively connects the new buildings to their neighbours, including those within the same block, and the more prominent Carillon and former Dominion Museum.

The street edges are well defined by the proposed development, including by the terrace houses (Buildings B and C) along Old Buckle Street, the café on the Tasman Street corner and by the landscaped garden wall along Tasman Street. Building B is shown to wrap around the corner into Tasman Street, confirming the three-dimensional qualities of this building and serving to further punctuate this visually prominent corner.

The setback of Building A from Tasman Street allows for an intermediate space of variable width, taking up differences in the alignment of the building relative to the street. While this wall is an effective definer of the street edge, it is also broken along its length to allow for two significant areas of planting. The garden wall then stops in line with the southern end of Building A, helping to define the pedestrian access into the centre of the site from Tasman Street. Building E has another large tree and planted area located to its north. This tree will be read with the other two described above and together will create another layer of street edge definition.

Guideline G3.4 discusses the relative importance of maintaining a consistent height of buildings along the street edge. In this case, the building heights vary around the street edges, from the terrace houses along Old Buckle Street to Building E in Tasman Street. Building A is of course taller, but is also set back with the space between mediated by the garden wall and landscaping treatments. Despite not having a consistent height along the street edge, the project outcomes would still achieve the underlying aims of G3.4, in my opinion.

The proposal does not seek landmark status, nor should it². Instead, while heights are varied across the site, and even against the street edge, the differences are coordinated in design terms, with sufficient space between elements as to moderate effects that may

² Reference discussion under guideline G3.4

arise from the differences. The key to achieving the aims of this guideline lays in the coordinated composition of building heights across the whole of the site.

Height and scale relationships; Building bulk

The arrangement of building volumes across the site effectively addresses G3.5 and G3.7. In essence, four approaches, each addressing a different viewing distance, have been taken to moderate the height and scale of the entire development, but more critically, of Buildings A & E. At the broader scale, the articulated compositional form of Building A helps to limit the extent to which it would appear bulky, and effectively steps the height down to important edges. Secondly, the lower height Buildings B & C help moderate the height of Building A along Old Buckle Street and into Tasman Street. A third approach, effective in similar ways to the lower flanking buildings, utilises hard and soft landscaping elements. These include the trees and garden wall along the Tasman Street edge and the existing Pohutukawa along Old Buckle Street. Finally, the choice of materials and the planting will help generate positive scale relationships between the project and people in the adjoining public spaces. Here I refer to the brick and timber claddings, transparency into the café facility and the texture of the plants.

While Building E is effectively hard up to the Tasman Street boundary, the design incorporates a verandah out over the footpath along its entire length and across the entrance to the basement car parking area. In addition, the Lobby and Live/Work spaces have transparent frontages facing onto the street. The western wall of unit E0.01 is shown to be brick masonry and at its base would support climbing plants, which could eventually extend up the full height of the building (reference RC2.09). Overall, the height and scale relationships around the public interfaces of the site are effectively moderated through a range of design tactics.

Guideline G3.6 anticipates the ground level spaces will be used for non-residential purposes. While several buildings in the proposed development are clearly residential and would for the foreseeable future remain so (Building D primarily but also Buildings B and C) two others would potentially be candidates for future change. It is noted that Buildings A and E both have structural systems that would enable their large floor areas to be utilised for non-residential purposes and the site location could conceivably facilitate future non-residential uses. The proposal does not distinguish between the floor to floor heights of the ground level and those above, in the manner suggested by the design guide.

Natural light, outlook and ventilation;

The site layout is based around a distributed building mass, comprising five buildings with reasonable open spaces around each. In my view, guideline G3.9 is clearly met.

Positive open space;

There are few public open spaces provided in this development proposal, although the site plan does anticipate a future (currently unplanned) through block link between Buildings A and E. This is a positive open space nevertheless, as it does provide

opportunities to view the Carillon from vantage points to the east of the site. Smaller spaces within the site would also be seen positively, here I refer to the garden areas that punctuate the Tasman Street frontage. In addition to modulating the otherwise long garden wall, these garden plots help link the site to the western side of the street and provide opportunities for biodiversity and visual amenity. G3.10 is achieved.

Edge treatment

The buildings that line the edges of streets and other public spaces establish their character, quality and attractiveness. They collectively define the setting for the activities that take place there.

Building fronts, Active edges & Building entrance enhancement

The UDA provides a summary of the attributes of the proposed development against these guidelines. I agree with the observations and note that the edges of buildings and open spaces onto the two street frontages will help activate the street – as in the case of the Tasman/Old Buckle Street corner, where a café space has been planned – and to relate to the human scale – where the use of brick materials will introduce warmth and texture. The frontage is varied and interesting and at the same time reasonably legible. Entrances are provided into the residential complex from both streets, including adjacent to the existing mature Pohutukawa in Old Buckle Street and to individual units, where steps leading up to the entry stoop are provided. In Tasman Street the vehicle entrance to the at grade car parking area is adjacent to the entry for pedestrians. Access is controlled in line with the Building A lobby. A canopy extends out over the footpath to mark this site entrance.

Servicing and car parking

The majority of car parking and all servicing provisions are located within the site. Two car parking spaces are located along the Tasman Street frontage but mostly screened by the adjacent garden area. One of these is shown to be an accessible space.

Façade composition and building tops

The façade composition of buildings determines their relation to context, their design coherence, and their suitability for a range of uses. The objectives reiterate expectations around coherence of the design and ensuring that façade design does not limit the building being used for other purposes in the future.

Relation to neighbouring buildings

The 'rhythm' of façade subdivision of the building adjoining the site in Old Buckle Street is not one that should be extended across to the current site (G5.1 and G5.2). Instead, the proposed design introduces in Building C, a modulated pattern that is set up by the steps and low brick walls and then reinforced by the deck areas above and the fenestration. Further along Old Buckle Street the modulation of Building B is more pronounced, as it is reinforced by the cladding pattern and stepped profile of the parapet, leading to a visually

complex silhouette. The metric of both modulation patterns is the individual dwelling, a standard that is somehow missing from the façade composition pattern of the existing building adjacent the site to the east.

Modulation patterns are perhaps less intensive along the Tasman Street frontage. Horizontal modulation is set up in Building A by projecting fins that define edges of recessed balconies and boundaries between adjacent dwellings. However, the vertical modulation set up by expressed floor levels is the primary rhythm in this and the adjoining structure, Building E.

A shortcoming under this heading might be the poor relationships that these two buildings foster with the existing development grain of sites to the south in Tasman Street. However, this may be excused here in light of the likely future redevelopment of those sites. Redevelopment of the site on the corner of Tasman and Rugby Streets is already well under way. It is likely that any future redevelopment of the sites in between will tend toward the patterns seen in the current proposal and emerging in the far southern corner of the block.

Shopfronts

It is fair to note that the shopfront to the proposed café space does not correspond to the the relevant guideline under this heading (G5.4). The shopfront provides no clear connection with the overall composition of the building. However, this can be excused here in light of the contemporary nature of the project and localised effects. Although the cladding material is the traditional brick, the design language of Building B is clearly contemporary. Large, punched openings and clear reliance on a separate supporting structural frame enables the expansive shopfront opening to sit comfortably within the design composition. An added benefit of this approach is the opportunity to open the shopfront on pleasant days up to the adjoining footpath. The approach that has been taken with this development, would not conflict with the intentions of the guideline.

Building tops and roofscape

The guidelines here anticipate that the tops of new buildings will be well integrated with the overall design composition and that roofs will accommodate the mechanical plant and other equipment within that compositional strategy. Indeed, while the rooflines of buildings A and E are relatively understated, they do support an integrated and coherent design approach. Building A offers a split form, which is accentuated by the step in plan at the northern end. The eastern half of this building rises one level higher than the west, enabling the west to be used as a defined outdoor common area. The stepping form increases the elegance.

Human scale

Human scale relationships are managed at several scales. Firstly, the larger Building A is surrounded on its public frontages by smaller buildings, at three storeys, that relate more readily to a human scale. While Building E does not have such a scale moderating building

between it and the street, it does have a large tree immediately adjacent to the north and a verandah. Building E also has two highly transparent floor spaces at ground level, where people inside will be easily seen. All three approaches present building volumes, elements and spaces that relate well to human proportions, from which people can then judge size more easily. This helps moderate the scale of the buildings that these elements are associated with.

Secondly, Buildings A and E have highly transparent façade treatments, meaning that people, their furniture, and other clues will be visible to people passing by the site. Again, being able to see people will help convey the relative size of the indoor spaces and of the building as a whole.

Finally, the project design makes use of construction materials that are inherently modular and are well known to people. The most common and effective of these is the brick.

Overall then, I am of the opinion that the proposal meets the intentions of the design guide for *Building tops and façade composition*.

Materials and detail

Materials and detail are important in maintaining visual interest and a positive relation to context and heritage value.

Each of the buildings across the site would be articulated through use of a discrete palette of cladding materials. The palettes are outlined, with completed project examples, at section 3.8 of the Architectural Design Statement. Working from the Old Buckle Street frontage, Buildings C and D would utilise timber and metal claddings, above the datum level of brick masonry. Building C and the Tasman Street frontage would largely make use of brick masonry cladding, helping to foster positive relationships with the Mt Cook Police building, the landscape wall extending south along Tasman Street at the base of the sloping site around the National War Memorial and with people passing. Brick is noted in the Te Aro Corridor Design Guide as an historically relevant construction material.

The two taller structures would comprise concrete, cement plaster, timber and clear glass cladding materials. The material selections and anticipated detailing characteristics are appropriate and can be seen to support the design agenda both within the site and in relation to the setting. The materials and suggested detailing seem to be appropriately robust (G6.5) and to foster high levels of visual interest (G6.3 and G6.4).

Conclusion on the CAUDG

The proposal has been reviewed in relation to the design guide objectives and relevant guidelines. This analysis has found that the design is overall coherent and, while the building forms and cladding materials vary, there would be strong links between the different building such that the composition hangs together. This is largely as a result of

the positive spaces between and around the buildings within the site, and the manner in which the buildings have been designed to relate to human scale.

The significant height of the two tallest buildings – in terms of the setting and values of the nearby Carillon and National War Memorial – is effectively managed so as to not create more than minor negative effects. In my view this is because of the spaces between buildings and location of the site relative to these nationally significant structures/places. Although limited, there will be views available to the Carillon and landscaped slopes of the Pukeahu Ridge across the site from some locations around to the east. I note that the topography is a factor limiting views from closer vantage points.

Nevertheless, the proposal does not achieve expected outcomes around ground level floor to floor dimensions for Buildings A and E. The low (actual, and relative to the floors above) floor to floor dimensions diminish the potential design outcomes and would limit the extent to which these levels could be used for other purposes in the future.

In summary, with one exception identified above, the proposed development has been found to meet expected urban design outcomes, as outlined by the CAUDG.

Design excellence

As parts of the project would extend significantly (more than 35%) higher than the height standard set for the site, it is required to demonstrate design excellence (Policy 12.2.5.5). Policy 12.2.5.4 allows for over height buildings, where doing so can provide an urban design outcome that is beneficial to the public environment, or to reduce the impact of the proposed building on a listed heritage item. In this case, where it can be demonstrated that the proposal addresses the second of these goals and it can be easily argued that this would also lead to an outcome that benefits the public environment.

Both the application AEE and the UDA discuss policy implications of design excellence and the framework by which design excellence is to be considered. Referring to a set of criteria developed during a Council led workshop on Design Excellence, the UDA provides a list of six criteria. The first five of these criteria rehearse, more or less, the content of the Central Area Urban Design Guide and therefore do not provide any substantially different or additional guidance³. I agree. The UDA then notes the most useful reference for discussing Design Excellence in relation to the policy is item *vi*, which refers to a design that *goes over and above what would normally be expected to satisfy the Central Area Urban Design Guide provisions*.⁴ Again, I agree with this approach.

It can be confirmed at this point that, in my opinion, the proposed design does at least satisfy the provisions of the CAUDG, including the relevant objectives set by Appendix 2-

³ UDA, p29-30.

⁴ UDA, p30

Te Aro Corridor. This addresses the points i. – v. in the set of criteria developed by the Council workshop.

As I have become familiar with the details of the proposal through the lens of the CAUDG, the design attributes that I believe contribute to design excellence have come into focus in three categories. These are discussed below.

Complexity

Complexity in this context is another term for variation or variety.

Here, we have complexity in the composition of built form and space across the site. In comparison with what could be contemplated with a more consistent, albeit height compliant design, this proposal would generate significantly higher levels of visual interest. This approach also enables permeability across the site, both visually and at ground level, where the potential for future through block linkages has been established.

A variety of residential formats is provided for. This will help generate greater diversity in the makeup of future residents, although it must also be acknowledged that this cannot be classified as affordable housing. Nevertheless, there is variation in the dwelling types, which should prove attractive to a more diverse range of owners and occupiers.

There is complexity in the relationships between the site and adjoining street spaces. The basis for this complexity lies in the different house and building types and is reinforced by the site development, access provisions and by the detailing and materiality of the dwellings. Transparency, particularly in the taller buildings, also will complement the diversity set up at the street edges by the perimeter buildings.

Physical qualities

The physical qualities that go beyond the expectations of the CAUDG are centred around materiality, structural design and site development.

The materials proposed for this development are uniformly of a high quality, which should enhance the visual interest one perceives on a day-to-day basis and should continue to look tidy over the life of the building. While it is impossible to make any judgement of the detailing quality based on the information provided, one can set reasonable expectations based on past performance. In this case, the project team has delivered a series of visually complex, exceptionally detailed and robustly constructed projects around the Wellington area. I am familiar with most and have observed that these projects have delivered in each of these three areas. I am also reassured that there will be the opportunity to check that material selections and detailing remain consistent with expectations by way of the consent condition proposed by the UDA. There is no doubt that the specified materials will contribute to an excellent design for the reasons noted and that detailing/construction will simply enhance these expected outcomes.

The two largest buildings (A & E) will be structurally base-isolated, which is further evidence of the quality that the proposed development strives for. This enhances

resilience and certainly is a benefit the residents would enjoy. There is a public benefit of course, in that there is less likely to be injury to residents or public around the site in the event of a severe seismic event. Each new building that is built to such a standard advances the technology and serves to normalise the approach. This will have medium and long term benefits to society.

High outcome quality is also evident in the site development. Design features that go beyond expectations based on the design guide include

- Creation of substantial garden areas along Tasman Street that are to be available to the public
- Retention of the existing Pohutukawa in Old Buckle Street.
- Setting up opportunity for the through site link between Tasman Street and eventually Sussex Street
- Sustainable stormwater disposal through rain garden area.
- High quality paving materials, extending into the publicly accessible areas of the site.
- Rooftop garden area, which will animate the building, provide additional biodiversity and enhance building thermal performance.

Approach

I think we can also characterise the approach taken by the applicant to address, over a longer period of time, the tensions between relating positively to the nationally significant nearby buildings and economic opportunity. This has led to robust consideration of alternatives and refinement of the project outcomes. While it is clear that the outcomes will not satisfy experts from every disciplinary background, it must be acknowledged that concerns have been acknowledged and responded to.

In one case, an adjoining property was acquired and added to the site to enable a wider separation distance between Buildings A and E. In the end, an excellent design can only emerge through a thoughtful and responsive process. That seems to have been the case here, as evidenced by the qualities outlined above.

Other matters

I have read the discussion around Design Excellence in the UDA⁵ and note separately the qualities that the Urban Design Panel considered to be excellent. Many of these overlap with the ones I have focussed on, particularly around the approach to structural resilience and the variations in residential dwelling types. My views on design excellence are closely aligned with notions that “articulation of the collective building form has been designed to reduce the visual impact of the building height/bulk and aid the scale integration of the proposal to its setting”⁶.

⁵ Section 6, p29.

⁶ UDA p30.

Overall then, like the applicant I consider the proposal to redevelop the site as 'design excellent' for the reasons set out above.

Summary

In summary, the project proposal:

1. Meets the objectives and most of the supporting guidelines, where relevant, of the CAUDG. However, I have also identified one aspect of the proposal that does not meet the relevant guideline, which is that:
 - the height of the ground floor of buildings A and E do not meet the expectation that these levels are 30-40% greater in floor-to-floor dimension than the levels above.
2. Achieves a standard of design that can be acknowledged as excellent, in terms of Policy 12.2.5.5.

I have reviewed the proposal in relation to the informally agreed criteria for design excellence, which is required because of the proposed heights of Buildings A and E. This review has found that the project does achieve Design Excellence, basing this finding on three categories of physical and process attributes.

The proposal goes beyond the CAUDG expectations around design **complexity**, exceeds the **quality** expectations around the physical materiality and building performance and finally, has so far been conducted through a robust and reasonably open design **approach** that has led to an excellent design outcome.

I would support formation of a consent condition that would require the applicant to submit more detailed plans, when they are available, for confirmation that they comply with the expectations set at the time resource consent was granted⁷.

Morten Gjerde FNZIA
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⁷ Condition suggested at 4.2.6 of the UDA.