

1 JULY 2021

NICK MATTISON  
CIVIX LTD  
BY-EMAIL

Dear Nick

## CONCEPT SUMMARY, 6-10 THE STRAND, TAKAPUNA

1. Thank you for asking me to provide a short summary of the concept that has been developed in collaboration with the other project consultants and Moller Architects Ltd for the Urban Design Panel.
2. The key urban design characteristics of the 100 serviced apartment, 202 apartments, and slightly more than 2,000m<sup>2</sup> GFA of associated commercial and retail services concept are:
  - a. Recognition of the Site's context and location as part of an identified metropolitan centre, and a distribution of mass and height that maximises the opportunity of the Site to accommodate development in a way that remains compatible with the general 'tapering' built form pattern identified for Takapuna (with the tallest, high-rise buildings set well-back from the Coast). The form proposed also relates positively (by way of stepped heights) to the slope of the land and the Site's street edges.
  - b. The proposal fronts and relates positively to its public street edges. Hurstmere Road is the key commercial street in Takapuna, and retail activities are proposed to face it. The buildings are well-articulated and of a visual quality that is commensurate to their likely prominence. The roof profile of the building will be varied and interesting when viewed from the streets around the Site. Residential development is proposed along Channel View Road which I support given how unlikely this frontage would be to support commercial activity, and that the slope of the Site lends itself to a raised podium here that is well-suited to residential development.

- c. Provision of publicly accessible lanes through the Site, including one that is a civil easement requirement, will provide permeability between Hurstmere Road and Channel View Road, and The Strand and Hurstmere Green. These will complement the focal point quality of the public streets and provide a distinctive experience for users.
- d. The proposal seeks to include an upgrade to the quality of an existing pedestrian connection along the Site's north-eastern edge from Hurstmere Green to The Strand and Takapuna Beach, and a substantial upgrade to Channel View Road, converting it from a parking lot into a more readily-identifiable street and 'front door'. In my opinion these represent genuine public space 'wins' for the community.
- e. The proposal has been designed to generally comply with the applicable Unitary Plan standards except for building height. In my opinion the Site has characteristics that lend support to an over-height building, including by way of the unusual 'stacked' configuration of The Strand and Channel View Road sitting side-by-side and having the effect of giving the Site a de-facto 20 – 25m greater setback from the Takapuna Beach reserve than is generally the case along The Strand. Coupled with the existing trees within the reserve, I consider that any visual dominance effects of the proposal on the Beach and reserve would be minor when compared to a fully height-compliant hypothetical scenario.
- f. The proposal does not seek to take advantage of a building height 'bonus' method within the Unitary Plan based on provision of a through-site link in a specified position within the Plan. Having reviewed the specified location of that link, I regard it as inferior to what has been proposed and the ability to more genuinely 'front' it with land uses on each side as it proposed.
- g. A mix of activities are proposed that is in my opinion well-suited to a metropolitan centre setting. This includes living, retail, food-and-beverage, and resident services. A parking basement of 459 car parking spaces and 101 cycle parking spaces is also proposed. In my opinion this will support a varied user and occupant profile and a quite wide degree of market choice.
- h. The proposed dwellings have been designed to individually comply with the Auckland Unitary Plan: Operative in Part spatial layout and on-site amenity standards.

*Response to Previous Urban Design Panel minutes*

- 5. The proposal has also responded to comments made by the Council's Urban Design Panel. Specific responses are:
  - a. Greater emphasis on the architectural expression of entrances to the buildings along Channel View Road.
  - b. Reconsidering the massing of the proposal so as to create a more visually obvious stepped / varied height and bulk strategy across the Site following the natural slope. This includes revising the Channel View Road frontage from appearing as 4 slender buildings to 3.

- c. Further refinement of the form and elevation design of the base, middle and top elements of the buildings, and providing a differing response to the Hurstmere and Channel View Road frontages.
- d. Further design and massing refinement based on a wider selection of photo-simulation viewpoints including the Takapuna War Memorial.
- e. Further refinement of the design of the largely 'back' south-facing wall facing an existing service lane and low-height buildings at The Strand.
- f. Improvement in the efficiency and performance of the apartment and communal open space design and layouts, and the way that the proposal relates to the pedestrian linkage / easement along the Site's northern boundary connecting Hurstmere Green to The Strand and beach reserve.
- g. Reconsideration and design tests of the internal laneways including their positioning, width and land use edges. However, the northern laneway and public easement area of interest to the Panel will not be able to present a retail-based edge to users.

*Response to John Stenberg*

- 6. Mr. Stenberg continues to possess a number of concerns with the proposal. These have been considered through the design process but are not in all cases agreed with. Particular disagreements are:
  - a. In my opinion building height either has acceptable environmental effects or it does not. Placement of a laneway at the ground level does not credibly change those effects. Expanding generally, I am not a supporter of Plan provisions that seek to trade-off very different types of urban design effects against one another.
  - b. In any event, Precinct Plan I540.10.3 identifies an area for a through site link that would qualify for an additional storey of building height that is approximately 35m wide. This is not in my opinion indicative of a very precise spatial location for a linkage being necessary, and the linkage proposed is close to the identified area (and is in part within it).
  - c. In my opinion the proposed linkage benefits from being able to be activated on both sides by architect-tested commercial tenancy depths. This is superior to a linkage that might appease a staff preference in a 2-D site plan but have inferior real-world conditions. This is what makes it optimal, in my opinion.
  - d. Retail along Channel View Road has been tested and is not credible. In urban design terms it is a 'back road' relative to both Hurstmere Road and The Strand. Because of the very unusual situation of a road adjoining a road, the Site is separated by between 40m – 45m from the Esplanade Reserve. This makes it commercially inferior to other sites to the north that have a direct frontage with The Strand. I consider that the residential units proposed atop a podium is the sensible response to this context.
  - e. Following on from the above, my opinion would change if the Council closed the section of The Strand east of Channel View Road (expanding the Reserve), and making Channel View Road a continuous part of The

Strand. This would give the Site a markedly greater engagement with what urban designers refer to as the 'movement economy' of people passing by. This is not understood to be an outcome on any Council or Auckland Transport plan.

- f. The cross sections that have been prepared and included in the Moller pack show how the buildings step up and away from the beach, and still do contribute to a general 'tapering' of height sought by the Plan. Although the proposal is to exceed the height limit (and even that which could result from qualifying for the bonus height), I consider that when viewed in the round and in the context of the building heights enabled in Takapuna, the proposal will not sit out of place to the extent that would create an adverse urban design effect.

#### *Conclusion*

7. The concept offers a successful urban design solution to the Takapuna Precinct policies. In particular, the proposal successfully demonstrates an outcome that maximises development potential and provision of housing in a very high-amenity location, while not visually dominating or overshadowing the beach and reserve (I540.3(1)); proposes an appropriate graduation of building heights and steps for the Site (I540.3(2)); and provides convenient, attractive and safe pedestrian connections (I540.3(3)). In terms of the Metropolitan zone policies more generally, the proposal is of a suitable visual quality that positively contributes to its environment (H9.3(3) and H9.3(5)); provides appropriately for its car parking and ground floor activities (H9.3(6), H9.3(7) and H9.3(10)); and will avoid, remedy or mitigate potential adverse effects on adjacent residential-zoned land (H9.3(22)).

Please feel welcome to contact me should you wish to discuss any aspect of the above further.

Yours sincerely,



**IAN MUNRO**

urban planner and urban designer

B.Plan (Hons); M.Plan (Hons); M.Arch [Urban Design] (Hons); M.EnvLS (Hons); M.EngSt [Transport] (Hons); MNZPI

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