



HAMILTON URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL

Meeting Date: 27 June 2018
 Project: Waikato Regional Theatre
 Client: Momentum Waikato
 Architects: Jasmax
 Client Team: Nathan Groth, David Pugh and Jun Tsujimoto (Jasmax); Eric Lawrence, Byron Harrison (Charcoalblue); Adam Wild (Archifact)

UDP Members: Les Matthews (Chair); Judith Makinson; Steve King; Robin Byron; Michael Graham
 Apologies: Brian Squair
 Others Present: Colin Hattingh

Background:

The proposal is a new regional theatre (170 – 206 Victoria Street). Included in the concept is a hotel, art gallery and a number of public spaces connecting the River to Victoria Street.

GENERAL COMMENTS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The panel thanks the applicant for submitting this project for review, noting that the Waikato Regional Theatre represents the most significant civic and urban intervention in Hamilton CBD currently.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The panel commends the applicant for a well prepared and comprehensive presentation, including several additional images augmenting the written submission.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The clearly articulated project vision (as well as Momentum’s own transformational vision) accords exceptionally well with the aspirations surrounding Hamilton’s Transformational Plan. Careful design development in light of this vision has produced a comprehensive proposal with several urban design attributes and positive project outcomes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The panel understands the rationale behind the site selection exercise; and notes that the chosen site offers unique benefits, including the opportunity to combine the theatre with neighbouring uses to form a multi-functional group of activities that complement each other and the arts precinct generally. In this way, the project involves multiple stakeholders, and impacts on the CBD in a significant and meaningful way.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban regeneration and activation are clear benefits derived from this project, with an immediate presence on 3 street frontages, as well as an extended presence addressing the river and strengthening wider connections.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed arrangement of built form on site is well modulated, utilising the slope of the land and a stepped roofline to accommodate significant building volumes without dominating the important existing scale and grain of the Victoria Street context.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE APPLICANT	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particular care in retaining the presence and integrity of the Hamilton Hotel is evident and acknowledged by the panel. The street façade and other elements have been faithfully restored and enhanced; and the panel would encourage the back of the heritage building to be also expressed in design development in order to delineate the new and historic building envelope interfaces.



- It was identified that the site had a number of historic significances associated with it and so the opportunity for interpretation is one which should be exploited. It would be good if this could happen in an integrated way through and with the design
- Similarly, there is an opportunity for tangible integration of mana whenua design principles and cultural referencing in the design. The panel is pleased to note that the project consultants are currently engaging with iwi in this respect.
- The central location of the project site – together with the nature of the component activities – poses challenges for traffic planning and design. Whilst the applicant has addressed issues of public access, service access, and remote parking, the panel encourages further dialogue with HCC regarding street treatment for drop-off etc, and management of the nearby traffic network generally.
- With several entrances to the activities grouped on site, the question of legibility and wayfinding is important to address. The panel acknowledges that the applicant is investigating further design clarity regarding theatre entrances, hotel and gallery entrance(s), and other activities such as the proposed café.
- The panel also suggests that environmental factors may offer further insights to the design response, namely consideration of the river ecology (including the native bat behaviour), and the nature and management of foliage of the retained protected trees to allow for safe pedestrian movement beneath them and regard to the form of the tree.

ISSUES FOR HCC

- In view of the built form modulation and layering described previously, the panel supports the minor height infringement posed by the theatre flytower. The panel believes that the visual effects of the theatre flytower have been sufficiently mitigated such that the infringement is no more than minor.
- The panel also supports the boundary infringement of the screen position along the riverside frontage. The panel understands that the proposed screen location is designed to accommodate the position of existing listed trees, and roughly aligns with the future upper promenade.
- The panel commends the applicant’s remodelling treatment of Sapper More-Jones Place to accommodate access by pedestrians and service vehicles. This addresses initial concerns the Panel had and is seen as key to the legibility of the southern means of entry. Similarly, the panel would support the remodelling of Embassy Place to address the corner condition and to provide for direct and legible access to the theatre. It is noted that the current design assumes a level entry from the Plaza and this is seen as being pivotal for good access and amenity. Without the parity of levels, Embassy Plaza would be dislocated from the new complex and the entry to the theatre seriously constrained.

CONCLUSIONS

- The panel overwhelmingly supports the proposed regional theatre project design, encompassing an entire CBD block and impacting positively on Hamilton’s urban design.
- Several recommendations have been made for consideration by the applicant and Council in order to enhance the design and to assist with the overall success of the project.



- The panel would welcome the opportunity to undertake a further review of the project at the detailed design stage.

Please note that the above comments are advisory only and do not constitute a decision by Council. Recommendations from the panel will be incorporated into the officer's planning report, where applicable. All information before the panel is deemed to be confidential unless it is already part of the resource consent process.