

26th November 2004

Re: proposed plan for Kumutoto

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington. Members of the Architectural Centre who are associated with the Kumutoto proposal, or who are associated with firms involved in the design (and hence may be seen to have a conflict of interest), have had no input into the writing of this submission.

1) Support for the proposal

The Architectural Centre supports the proposal for Kumutoto.

2) Connections to the sea and to the city

The proposed design of Kumutoto enables strong connections to be made to the sea. These connections appear in the vertical as well as horizontal relationships made with the water (particularly in uses of promenade, and walkways at various heights), the protection of viewshafts, and the expression of Kumutoto stream. There appears to be greater investment in the connections to the sea than in the connections made to the city, making these connections to the city appear less sophisticated.

3) Open spaces

The relation of open space to built areas is generally successful with the placement of buildings providing needed sheltered spaces (which are appropriately proportioned in relation to the surrounding buildings), and establishing Kumutoto as a connection point between the city and the sea. A good mix of materials (timber, paving, grass, rip rap) in open areas provides variation in surface treatment though it is difficult to see from the information provided as to whether this variation also occurs three dimensionally. Vertical variation could provide additional opportunities to experience and use the space.

Kumutoto is part of the series of buildings and open spaces along the whole of the waterfront and it is important that, in addition to establishing distinct identity of specific areas, such as Kumutoto, that there are mechanisms (e.g. continuity of furniture) to ensure connections are made with the rest of the waterfront. The scale of the images provided to the public make it difficult to comment on such issues of detail.

4) The Proposed Building: Site 7

While this public consultation is in regard to the master plan of Kumutoto, rather than the design of Site 7, the fact that council has provided some information about what such a building might look like invites comments on the proposed architecture.

In this context we note that any building on this site will have obligations as public architecture because of the council investment in the project, and because of the location of the building on the waterfront. This means that the proposed building must assertively engage with the waterfront, and must have provision for meaningful public access. Indiscriminate transparency and glass may not be the most sophisticated way to architecturally engage the interface between building and view, and more selective viewing may strengthen the interior of the building.

The preliminary design suggests that Site 7 will be appropriately distinguished from the existing historic buildings on the waterfront and is conscious of articulating a scale appropriate to its context (particularly in the seaward facade). The relationships between the two parts of the plan (the rectangle and the arc-shaped annex) and the



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington

outside space between these will be important to the success of the building's coherence. Both the design of the building, and the balance of commercial activities over 24 hours, will be critical if this building is to contribute productively to the intention that Kumutoto is to provide safe 24 hour use, especially in relation to the public access to the atrium space. Finally, the Architectural Centre supports the stated intention for sustainable building and design practices.

In summary we support the Kumutoto proposal, and look forward to seeing further development of the design of Site 7, especially in relation to programme, form and the relation of the building to the waterfront. We hope that some of the issues raised in our submission can productively inform the next stage of the project.

Yours sincerely,

Christine McCarthy
President
The Architectural Centre