

16 December 2005

Re: Proposed Visitor and Education Centre and associated Car Parking, Karori Wildlife Sanctuary (Service Request Number 137702)

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 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 this application for resource consent.

2) Specific Comments

a) The need for a Visitor and Education Centre and associated facilities

The success of Karori Wildlife Sanctuary has demonstrated the importance of the sanctuary both in supporting and increasing local birdlife in the area, and as a tourist and visitor attraction Wellington should be very proud of. There is a demonstrated need for the proposed Visitor Centre and associated improvements to facilitate the ongoing conservation activities of the Wildlife Sanctuary which will positively increase public education and awareness about environmental issues. The Architectural Centre supports this further development of the sanctuary.

b) Environmental Impact

It has been noted that there will be minimal negative impacts in the loss of indigenous vegetation and the increase in stormwater runoff. We are confident that appropriate consideration has been given to minimising these negative ecological impacts, and understand that they will be mitigated particularly by a replanting programme, by sediment and pollution containment management, and by weed control. We consider that overall the proposal will positively contribute to Wellington's natural heritage.

c) Carparking

We acknowledge that in the current car culture that an increase in carparking can be convincingly argued for. We would also encourage more thought be taken to accommodating other modes of transport, in particular accommodating pedestrian (e.g. the track by the stream), bicycle, and motorised bike traffic, which would be more consistent with the wider conservation aims of the sanctuary. We would also suggest that the relationship of the carparking to its natural setting could be further enhanced.

d) Proposed building design

While this is a resource consent, as distinct from a building consent (where more detailed information about the building would be available, and where it is appropriate to make detailed comments about the design), we would like to make the following comments about the proposed design. The Architectural Centre's support for the proposal is significantly influenced by the proposed building. We commend the design for its appropriate scale, use of materials, and siting. The building demonstrates a good relationship (in terms of both aesthetic considerations and physical location) to existing historic structures and to its natural setting. The building demonstrates a sensitivity to site, and, in the documentation provided, appears to be a carefully considered design, which will address the ongoing needs of the Wildlife Sanctuary.



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We are concerned however about the apparent hesitancy expressed ("Assessment of Effects on the Environment" p. 6) in the statement that the building should be "nearly invisible." We do not support an apologetic stance on architecture. If a building is inappropriate and needs to be made invisible, then it is preferable that that it is not built. The proposed building is not one which needs to be "made invisible" and the sanctuary should be proud that it has the opportunity to contribute positively to both Wellington's architectural and cultural heritage in addition to the great conservation work it is doing to protect and enhance our natural resources. The heritage value given to the existing historic structures (namely the boatshed and the valve tower) within this natural context is evidence that architecture and the natural environment do not have to be at odds with each other.

Conclusion

The Architectural Centre acknowledges the importance of the conservation work at the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, and the need for additional facilities at the sanctuary. We support the effort to minimise ecological impacts on the site and commend the design of the proposed building. We support this application for resource consent.

Yours sincerely

Christine McCarthy
President
The Architectural Centre