

28 July 2005

**Re: 10 Alpha St, Te Aro**

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.

**1) Opposition for the Proposal**

The Wellington Architectural Centre does not support the proposal for a 14 storey apartment building of approximately 43 metres above the ground in this area of Wellington city. A building of such a height would be detrimental to the existing character of this area as it consists of predominantly low level (mostly two storey) buildings.

**2) Specific Comments**

**a) Relation to the Organising Principles of the District Plan**

The District Plan for the City of Wellington sets out basic organising principles, primary of which are the designation of the central area into a low city and a high city. The Alpha St area is in the low city area, and is on the opposite side of the city from the High City zone. In addition Alpha Street is not far from the low scale housing of Mt Victoria's Inner Residential Zone.

The Plan has identified the Te Aro flat as a place which is expected to grow in a consistent manner, incorporating increasing residential apartment buildings. The plan also notes that the maximum height of the buildings in this 'low city' area should be six storeys, or 27 metres (Condition 13.1.2.1). The proposed building is at a height of approx 43 metres above ground level, some 16 metres above the maximum permitted level - over half as tall again as the maximum height level to the area. It should not be permitted to go ahead in its present form.

**b) The Height Characteristics of the Area**

As noted in the application, there are two existing tall buildings nearby which are older, and taller than the surrounding buildings. They also exceed the current height limits and appear as anomalies. The application states that these buildings are a spike in the otherwise low level surrounding buildings and argues that the proposed 43 metre high apartment building will fit in with this local spike. It states that "the height of the building will not be out of context in the low city environment," and that "it will also not be at odds with or interrupt the rhythm of the high-low city form of Wellington's central city area" (p10 HGC report). This is not strictly true. The application does not point out that the proposal would be by far the tallest building in the local spike, and that it would transform the local spike from two isolated buildings into a large solid mass. This proposal would have significant blocking for many houses in Mt Victoria, would interrupt the rhythm of the low city. If the proposal was approved it would set a dangerous precedent for the maximum height limits of the low city to be ignored, and for further tall buildings to be created.

The application for the proposal states that "rather than introduce a new height element at this locality, the proposal will nestle amongst an existing cluster of taller buildings" (p18 HGC report). This is not the case. Rather the building of this 14 storey apartment building would dominate and distort the current skyline. It would create a new record for height in the area. It would not "nestle amongst," but would loom over the surrounding



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buildings as it is the tallest of the group by a significant amount. The proposed building would be 16 metres (four to five storeys) over the permitted height limit, and approximately 36 metres (ten storeys) above a majority of the surrounding buildings, which are nearly all two storeys high on Courtenay Place.

c) Council Approval not warranted in this Situation

The application notes that "Council is able to approve buildings that exceed the permitted height limit when the effects of the height are not more than minor... " The Architectural Centre considers that the effects are considerably more than minor. In fact the effects would be substantial for a number of surrounding buildings and other residences, as well as for a large number of people living on Mt Victoria. While the application notes that the extra height of the proposal should be justified on the absence of height above the Courtenay Place building, we do not believe that the stated benefits are of an order sufficient to ignore one of the prime, and most politically sensitive of all guides for the city, that of maximum heights. While the saving of a building with heritage is commendable, it does not justify the wholesale abandoning the height limit in an adjoining site.

**5) Conclusion**

We strongly oppose the addition of this apartment building to the fabric of low level city, and consider that it will be detrimental to the architectural character of this popular part of the Courtenay Place precinct.

Yours sincerely

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President  
The Architectural Centre