

22 July 2005

**Re: Waitangi Precinct Design Competition Brief**

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) Support for the Competition Brief**

The Wellington Architectural Centre:

- a) supports and encourages architectural competitions, and supports and commends the council's initiative to have a competition for buildings in the Waitangi Precinct.
- b) in general supports the Waitangi Design Competition Brief. This is a relevant and comprehensive brief.

Despite the support for the brief, the Architectural Centre is not supportive of the lack of public involvement in the short-listing of the architects invited to participate in the competition. We encourage the council to reconsider the architectural competition as open to all interested architectural design professionals.

**2) Specific Comments**

The Architectural Centre supports the brief for the competition to design buildings for four sites in the Waitangi Precinct. The brief is not restrictive and the Primary Assessment Criteria address an appropriate range of issues which are relevant to the design of good architecture. We strongly endorse the clause which states that "The ground floor of buildings should be predominantly accessible to the public" (p. 5), and would also encourage other floors to also be open to the public.

However we also consider that the competition would produce a better range of work if:

- a) the competition was open to more than the limited list of 21 architects. The current competition appears to have been conducted in secret with no public input.
- b) the competition also allowed for entrants to design buildings for only one of the four sites.

We also remain to be convinced (due to the harsh site conditions), that the Waitangi Precinct is an appropriate location for a Chinese garden. Instead Chinese gardens need enclosing walls and protection from wind and salt spray. Consequently, this site is not suitable. We encourage the council to find another location of similar prominence in the city.

**3) Site 4: The "Transitional Building."**

The proposal for buildings for the Waitangi Precinct is an unusual and important opportunity for the city. The way the sites are handled will be critical to making the precinct successful.

The precinct project also opens up other architectural possibilities. One possibility for the precinct, that the Architectural Centre considers worthy of consideration (despite its potential for controversy), is that the precinct could provide a more appropriate location for the troubled Futuna chapel than its present (and original) site in Karori. Whilst this suggestion raises complex issues pertaining to ideas about heritage, it does provide an opportunity to relocate one of New Zealand's most important buildings on a site which is



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more akin to the original intention of the architect and client. In its current position, Futuna has seemingly become an uncared for timber store hemmed in by (in the Centre's view) an unfortunate subdivision of townhouses.

We consider that Futuna chapel, as a building of cultural significance, could productively contribute to Site 4 as one of the transitional buildings. In fact this site could be exploited as an outdoor exhibition space, which does not required an enclosed pedestrian link (p. 12). Internationally there are several examples for museums and art galleries to be considered as an assemblage of buildings (e.g. the Serpentine and its Summer pavilions in Kensington Palace Gardens and the Boilerhouse at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London). These might be models worth considering for this site.

#### **4) Submission requirements**

The competition brief is not clear as to whether the submission requirements stated are for the design of each site or for the entire precinct. This needs clarification. We also consider that building plans, sections and elevation at 1:200 will be too small for a relevant understanding of the buildings, and strongly recommend that drawings of buildings be at least 1:100.

#### **5) Conclusion**

We reiterate our endorsement of a competition for the precinct, and we encourage further involvement of the city with such initiatives.

Yours sincerely

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President  
The Architectural Centre