

# Central Area Urban Design Guide

## Appendix 2 – Te Aro Corridor (Ta)

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### Contents

#### Introduction

- Intention
- Character

#### Location-Specific Guidelines

- 1 The National War Memorial Area
- 2 Arthur Street
- 3 Between Cuba and Willis Streets, including the Victoria Street Intersection
- 4 Intersection with Willis and Abel Smith Streets
- 5 Buller and Vivian Streets
- 6 Oak Park Avenue
- 7 Willis and Ghuznee Street Intersection

# Introduction

## Intention

**To integrate the Bypass into the urban fabric of southern Te Aro as an active city street.**

The Bypass is the new street that extends across the southern end of Te Aro, including Buckle and Arthur Streets. It connects the Basin Reserve with the end of the motorway at Vivian Street. This Appendix is intended to assist the design of new development along the Bypass so that this street contributes to the quality, as well as the accessibility, of the city.

The Bypass has cut through the middle of a number of blocks, leaving backs of buildings exposed.

This appendix promotes that new developments within the Te Aro Corridor will:

- contribute to streets that are attractive to all users: pedestrians, people who travel by car (motorists?), and those occupying or visiting buildings;
- help maintain and develop valued aspects of the area's character.

Good quality development will help:

- minimise the impact of the Bypass on the existing environment;
- integrate new land uses with the scale and character of areas along the bypass; and
- strengthen existing land use patterns in the immediate vicinity.

The Bypass is an important traffic corridor with regional significance. At the same time, it is also an integral part of the Te Aro urban fabric and a vibrant mixed-use area of the city that offers places for cycling and walking.

The buildings that line the edges of this street are important in establishing its character, quality and attractiveness. They collectively define the setting for the commercial, institutional and residential activities that take place there. Moreover, these buildings impact on the experience of the Bypass for the many people, both pedestrians and motorists, who will use it every day.

## Character

### Existing character

The character of the Te Aro Corridor varies along its length, from the proposed public park opposite the prominent National War Memorial, to the intricacy and domestic scale of Oak Park Avenue



*Te Aro Corridor*

## **History**

Much of the area was once characterised by a fine grain of narrow lanes and small-scale timber or masonry buildings. By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many of these buildings had been replaced with various types of commercial development, while others had fallen into a near-derelict state. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century the area around Willis Street and Upper Cuba Street had many health and medical related activities and buildings.

Following the approval of the Inner City Bypass Designation Transit New Zealand led a project to restore and reuse many of the original buildings on their site. Others were relocated, with groups of renovated heritage buildings placed in the region of Tonks Avenue and Willis Street. These relocated buildings were orientated to the street, either to the Bypass itself or to a new Tonks Avenue. Thus, much of the area's heritage fabric has been retained, along with a sense of its historic fine grain and character. Listed Heritage buildings and trees within the bypass designation remain subject to the Heritage provision in the District Plan.

## Developing character

The area's character will further change and develop in response to new developments. There is the opportunity for the area to develop a highly unique and valued character by combining positive design precedents (especially a high quality street edge) with complementary areas of relocated heritage buildings.

In Te Aro, narrow building frontages mean that the street edges are lined with an abundance of buildings. The result is complex building forms, diverse activity, and many entrances at the edges of the street. This richness is attractive to pedestrians and expresses the fine grain typical of the older parts of this area, such as Cuba Street.

A feature of this area is its diversity and memorable local character. In places, there is a distinct juxtaposition of contrasting building types, scales and styles. These qualities, combined with the presence of heritage buildings, give all parts of the Bypass a distinctive and recognisable sense of place. As well as listed heritage items the area contains other buildings and trees that contribute to the character, townscape and heritage value of the area. Additional memorable features may arise as a result of the variously shaped sites created by the interaction of the Bypass and the rectilinear city grid.

New building design in this area can be innovative. Although new buildings should recognise their context, it is not necessary to replicate the style and type of heritage buildings. Contrasting building styles and types may in fact be appropriate – but only where they reflect local diversity and contribute to the quality of the street by maintaining its characteristic strong, active edge.

## Design references

Buildings along the Bypass must refer to two primary contexts: the city grid, and the edge of the Bypass itself where it deviates from the city grid. Facades of buildings should be orientated to the city grid.

Where the Bypass is angled across the Te Aro grid, building frontages should face the Bypass and be built to its edge. Generally, however, the remainder of the building should relate to the city grid.



# Location-Specific Guidelines

## 1 The National War Memorial Area

The National War Memorial is a monument of national as well as citywide significance. It is important to retain this significance, and to respect the formal and spatial composition of the Carillon and National War Memorial as a whole. Its symbolic status must also be recognised and maintained.

The War Memorial comprises free-standing buildings set in formally landscaped space. The buildings' visual impact derives from their contrasting scale and verticality, axial planning, and position at the northern end of a ridge. The memorial's visual prominence is accentuated by its location on an axis aligned with the Massey University building to the south, and running parallel to the Mt Cook ridge line.

Currently, the visual drama of the Carillon is abruptly terminated by heavily trafficked Buckle Street, which compresses and cuts through the space at its foot. This creates a narrow, vehicle-dominated public space that is insufficient for the physical scale and the symbolic importance of the Carillon. The original building concept envisaged an avenue extending along the central axis and cutting through Te Aro towards the north. This avenue has not been built and never will be. Instead, it is intended to establish a linear park space directly opposite the War Memorial.

The shape and qualities of buildings at the northern edge of this space are particularly important. They should define the space and, in their siting and composition, refer to the north-south axis of the War Memorial and Carillon. Structures that complement the War Memorial, and do not overshadow its significance, are required.

The existing brick buildings on the corners of Buckle & Tasman Streets (Police Barracks) and Buckle & Taranaki Sts (Defence Building) provide strong corners to this otherwise vehicle-dominated frontage.

### Objectives

- (TA) OI.1** To retain the landmark significance of the Carillon and National War Memorial, and respect its symbolic status.
- (TA) OI.2** To maintain an unobstructed ridge-top setting for the National War Memorial and good visual connections with the city.
- (TA) OI.3** Maintain and enhance the built edge to the Buckle/Taranaki St intersection.



*The National War Memorial*

## Guidelines

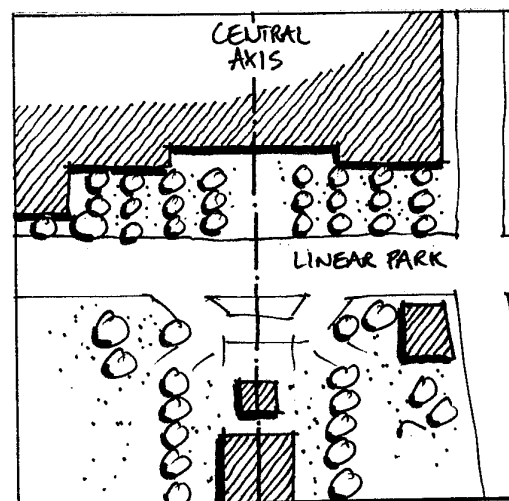
**(TA) GI.1** Maintain a significant contrast in height between the National War Memorial and any development to the north and west of this building. In particular, appropriate visual connections to the city need to be maintained from the raised entrance plaza of the National War Memorial.

- To the north, development directly opposite and within 15 metres either side of an extension of the central axis of the National War Memorial should not exceed two storeys in height. This height restriction should apply as far north as the northern boundary of the Mount Cook School.

**(TA) GI.2** Provide a building setback from the Buckle St street boundary directly opposite the Carillon, ensuring that this is symmetrical about the axis of the National War Memorial.

**(TA) GI.3** Respond to the axial composition and symmetry of the National War Memorial complex when designing buildings, related spaces and landscape elements opposite the memorial:

- Ensure any façade directly opposite the War Memorial is of secondary importance to it.
- Ensure the planting and landscape treatment at this edge is bold and simple. It should explicitly relate in species and theme to the established planting and treatment of open space around the War Memorial.



*Indicative landscape plan showing a public linear park fronting private development. This plan is a concept only and does not represent a final agreed design for the National War Memorial Park.*

## 2 Arthur Street

Arthur Street provides a link between the commercial activities on Taranaki and Cuba Street. Vehicles can access the south side of the street by means of a slip lane. This part of the Bypass will continue to attract pedestrians and street edge activity due to its location between two important commercial areas and the ready availability of public street-side parking.

### Objective

**(TA) O2.1** To rebuild the northern street edge with buildings that front the Bypass.

## Guidelines

- (TA) G2.1 Seek to develop street edge quality, including by providing frequent and extensive connections between building interiors and the street.
- (TA) G2.2 Develop narrow building frontages and frequent entrances. These will enhance the diversity of activity in Arthur Street, and the fine-grained quality of activity and building form around upper Cuba Street in general.



*Existing south side of Arthur Street*

## 3 Between Cuba and Willis Streets, including the Victoria Street Intersection

Relocated and renovated heritage buildings are grouped along the north side of the street here. The relatively narrow frontages and low heights of these buildings create both intimacy and a fine grain of development.

The curve of the Bypass makes buildings on its south side more prominent when looking along the street. Buildings at the Victoria Street intersection are also highly visible from vehicles travelling along that street. Because of their high visual profile, it is important that such buildings define the corners and curve of the street, and are of high visual quality.

## Objective

- (TA) O3.1 To avoid visually dominating relocated heritage buildings, and maintain an appropriate setting for them.
- (TA) O3.2 To create positive built edges that address and activate adjoining public space (both street edge and public open space)

## Guidelines

- (TA) G3.1 Respect the scale and setting of adjacent relocated heritage buildings. Consider building bulk setbacks and scale transitions to avoid visual domination of these buildings and the garden spaces around them.
- (TA) G3.2 Recognise the importance of buildings on prominent sites by means of visual features or special qualities that respond and contribute to views along the street.

- (TA) G3.3** On the southern edge of the Bypass, between Cuba Street and Victoria Street, the existing cadastral grid with its north/south alignment should be recognised. Buildings should be aligned to reinforce the north/south pattern, with a resultant stepping of the building frontages along the street face to reflect the stepping of the buildings on the north side of the Bypass.



*Staggered building set-backs on the northern edge of Karo Drive*

- (TA) G3.4** The height, bulk and scale of buildings on the southern side of the Bypass, between Cuba Street and Victoria Street, should recognise their built context especially those buildings across the Bypass to the north. This may be reflected in the fine grain, complex nature of the frontage, the consistency of the street edge, or the lightness, quality and type of materials used.

- (TA) G3.5** Encourage development of a vertical nature (such as terrace housing and work/live units) to encourage narrow frontages that reflect the fine grain and generally vertical nature of buildings in the area.



*A rich urban street with fine grain*

- (TA) G3.6** Ensure that all public frontages are appropriately addressed, including frontages to public open space. At ground level this should be in the form of frequent entry points and/or shop fronts to the street edge, and windows and gates opening out to open space. Upper storeys to all frontages should have windows and openings that face the public realm to enhance connection and casual surveillance.

- (TA) G3.7** The provision of car parking (or manoeuvring spaces) between the building and the street edge is inappropriate.



*No parking between buildings and the street frontage*



## 4 Intersection with Willis and Abel Smith Streets, and Upper Willis / Webb Street

These locations are characterised by existing retail activity, concentrations of heritage buildings and relatively intensive pedestrian traffic. They are important crossing points for people travelling on foot between Te Aro and Mount Cook, and Brooklyn and the Aro Valley. These intersections are where people strongly experience the special character of Upper Willis St.

In terms of physical character and townscape Willis Street and Abel Smith Street marks a transition from the predominantly commercial buildings of the central city to more domestic scale residential buildings of Aro Valley.

The area of Willis Street, Abel Smith Street and the corner of Webb and Victoria Streets (within the Te Aro Corridor), contains buildings and trees that contribute positively to the area's character, townscape and amenity.

### Objectives

- (TA) O4.1 To rebuild and enhance the built edge at the challenging, highly visible Willis St/Abel Smith St/Karo Drive intersection.
- (TA) O4.2 To maintain the physical character of Upper Willis Street as a transitional zone between the commercial character of the central city and the residential nature of Aro Valley.

### Guidelines

- (TA) G4.1 Accentuate connections between buildings and the street edge at ground level, especially along the Willis Street frontage.
- (TA) G4.2 Accentuate the importance of Willis Street by locating primary building frontages along them.
- (TA) G4.3 Have regard to maintaining references to earlier patterns of development and consider positively the retention of all or parts of existing buildings that have character or townscape values.



*Typical upper Willis Street retail*

**(TA) G4.4** Use verandah posts at these frontages to continue the pattern established along these streets.

**(TA) G4.5** Activities at the ground floor of buildings are part of the street scene here. Shop interiors should be made visible to passers-by, without compromising the characteristic baseboard and window frame pattern of existing older shops.



*Cuba Street frontages and verandahs*

## 5 Buller and Vivian Streets

The east side of Buller Street is located amidst buildings of very different scales: large scale structures on the city side of the Bypass, and the relatively fine grained and modular buildings on the west side of Buller Street.

Speeds at which observers view these buildings vary. Bypass users will be travelling at speed and have relatively long-range views. However, observers on Buller Street itself are able to view the buildings here at close range and for relatively extended periods.

Buildings at the edge of the Bypass and Vivian Street are also prominent when viewed by those entering the city from the north. Such visual prominence justifies giving special consideration to their appearance.



*Fine grained development in Buller Street*

### Objectives

- (TA) O5.1 To rebuild the eastern edge of Buller Street in a manner that respects the scale and form of adjacent buildings.

### Guidelines

- (TA) G5.1 Recognise the importance of buildings prominent in views from the Bypass by means of visual features or special qualities that respond and contribute to these views.

- (TA) G5.2 Ensure the dimensions of primary building forms, and the complexity of their elevations, respond to the contrasting contexts of this site.

- Consider using large and simple forms on the city side, and place the highest parts of the building here.
- Break up the form of any building on the Buller Street side of the corridor to relate to the dimensions of the dwellings along this street.

- (TA) G5.3 Define the edge of Buller Street, avoiding a concentration of garage doors at ground level.



*Consider approach views*

## 6 Oak Park Avenue

It is in this area that the Bypass changes from a city street into a motorway. At this point, buildings are no longer needed to define its edges. The park-like quality provided by the mature trees in this area is enhanced by additional tree planting proposed for new spaces above the Bypass. Here, existing buildings are not aligned to define spaces, even though facades are parallel with the adjacent street grid. This gives an effect of ordered intricacy and informality.

## Objective

(TA) O6.1 To reinforce the park-like setting of the Oak Park area.

## Guidelines

(TA) G6.1 Align main facades to the city grid.

(TA) G6.2 Front buildings onto open spaces, with frequent connections between them.

(TA) G6.3 Consider planting trees to reinforce the characteristics of this area and to reduce the visual impact of the adjacent motorway.

## 7 Willis and Ghuznee Street Intersection

The advent of the Bypass has removed heavy through-traffic formerly associated with the motorway off-ramp on Ghuznee Street. As such, the street's character and use is likely to change. As it becomes less dominated by traffic and more pedestrian-friendly, the pedestrian connection down from McDonald Crescent will also become more important.

St Peter's Church is an important local landmark, and a venue for community gatherings and events. Given the extent of likely change and the defining significance of St Peters, private development in this area should be integrated with a public space plan. Such a plan should consider changes in the nature and use of street spaces, as well as on the frontages of buildings.

The area directly across Willis Street from the Church has been zoned Open Space, so it is unlikely that there will be any significant new buildings erected on the site in the foreseeable future. If a new building is proposed opposite the main façade of St Peters, it should enhance the sense of space in front of the church. This could be achieved by a colonnade or setback at ground level, or by a major publicly-accessible atrium space providing the same effect. At the same time, the north-western corner of Willis and Ghuznee Streets should be strongly defined. A colonnade would mean a verandah at the street edge would not be needed, thereby visually linking any new building with existing buildings at this corner (none of which have verandahs). A colonnade would also provide shelter and a transition space at the entry to the building.

The dimensions of a colonnade or similar element should relate to the scale of St Peters' façade, and to the two storey buildings and verandas further along Willis Street. It should also allow public occupation of this space and views south along the west side of Willis Street to the corner of the Red Cross building.



*St. Peter's Church*

## Objective

**(TA) O7.1** To recognise the streetscape and landmark significance of St Peters Church.

## Guidelines

**(TA) G7.1** Ensure that new development complements and does not visually dominate St Peters Church.

**(TA) G7.2** When designing or locating any building across Willis Street from St Peters Church, establish a considered relationship with the church and its associated space. This will involve recognising the distinctiveness of St Peters, and enhancing the space in front of it.

**(TA) G7.3** Maintain a strongly defined street corner at the intersection of Willis and Ghuznee Streets, building to the street edge, but with a ground level setback along the Willis Street edge. This could take the form of a colonnade.

- Any setback should be in the order of 4-5 metres deep and 8-10 metres high.

**(TA) G7.4** Maintain and enhance a pedestrian connection between this area and McDonald Crescent. The following principles are important:

- This connection should be direct so that the entire space is visible and there are no opportunities for concealment.
- If any parts of the connection are hidden from the view of people entering it, a choice of escape routes should be provided at appropriately located decision points.
- The potential to overlook the pedestrian connection from adjoining occupied buildings should be maximised, particularly from those that are directly linked with outside space.