

Richard Knott Limited

Urban Design | Masterplanning | Built Heritage
Town Planning | Landscape and Visual Assessment

To: Huddart Parker Building Limited; Keith Mackenzie

From: Richard Knott

Date: 6th April 2022

Re: Replacement Digital Sign
Huddart Parker Building

1. Introduction

This memorandum provides an independent peer review of the proposal to reinstate a sign on the existing structure at roof level on the Huddart Parker Building, 2 Jervois Quay, Wellington.

The building is a scheduled heritage building in the Wellington City District Plan (in that it is included within the Chapter 21 Appendix – Heritage List: Areas, Buildings, Objects, Trees and Maori Sites). It is also located within the Post Office Square Heritage Area. The building is not included on the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taongathe 'New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero'. There are various other heritage listed items in the local area.

I understand that the sign was first constructed in 1963 and consisted of an area dedicated to advertisement and an area dedicated to the weather forecast. The intention is to upgrade the existing structure and to add a 13.7m(w) x 4m(h) digital sign face; this is a similar dimension to the maximum size static sign which could be accommodated on the sign structure as existing. As was previously the case, the sign will at times include an area showing weather and time information. The images shown on the new digital face will have a minimum display time of 8 seconds, with a 0.5 second dissolve between images.

For brevity, this memo does not set out full details of the proposal, as these are already well covered within the AEE and other application documents.

I visited the local area on the 7th February 2022.

This review:

- Provides comment on the *Huddart Parker Building – Signage, Wellington Central, Wellington - Assessment of Effects on Historic Heritage*¹ prepared by Archifact
- Considers the visibility of the sign structure and proposed sign

2. Qualifications and experience

I hold the following qualifications:

- *Post Graduate Diploma Building Conservation, School of Conservation Sciences, Bournemouth University (2002)*
- *Master of Arts Urban Design, University of the West of England (1995)*
- *Bachelor of Planning (1989)*
- *BA(Hons) Town and Country Planning (1988)*

I am a full member of the New Zealand Planning Institute and the UK's Institute of Historic Building Conservation. I am also an elected full member of the Institute of Highway Engineers and a Chartered Town Planner (Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute).

I have worked in the areas of special character, heritage, urban design and planning since 1989 and throughout my career I have led projects relating to special character areas, conservation areas and heritage buildings.

To expand my knowledge and understanding of global best practice in historic heritage, special character and visual impact matters, I have undertaken overseas continuing professional development courses. In 2016, I

¹ Huddart Parker Building – Signage, Wellington Central, Wellington - Assessment of Effects on Historic Heritage, Archifact (31 March 2022).

attended the University of Southern California Fundamentals of Heritage Conservation summer school and in 2019 I attended the Planning Institute of Australia landscape and visual assessment training.

I am a qualified hearing commissioner, with a chair's endorsement. I have sat as independent planning commissioner (panel member and/or Chair) at hearings for Hamilton City Council, Whangarei District Council, Taupo District Council, Tauranga City Council, South Wairarapa District Council and Auckland Council on over 40 hearings. I often sit on hearings panels when specialist historic heritage, special character or urban design expertise is required.

I have provided independent advice on over 50 digital signs and billboards on sites across New Zealand. I am very familiar with the issues associated with digital signs. I provided expert advice to the Embassy Theatre Trust in relation to their application to vary conditions on their consent and at the subsequent Environment Court mediation (where the matter was resolved).

3. Peer Review of the Archifact Assessment

I have read the Archifact report and consider that it is:

- a) Based on a sound and well-accepted methodology.
- b) Addresses all matters which I would expect it to consider.

I consider that the description of the building and the local area in the Archifact report to be accurate.

I also accept and support Archifact's assessment against the 21D.3.1.5 assessment criteria.

I accept Archifact's overall conclusions.

4. Visibility of the Sign Structure and Proposed Digital Sign

I explored the local area whilst on my site visit to identify key viewpoints of the existing sign structure and the proposed digital sign.

The most significant viewpoints are:

- Locations in Customhouse Quay to the north of the site.
- Locations in Grey Street.

All photographs RKL 07.02.2022. Camera Fujifilm X-E2S with 35mm lens. This provides the equivalent of a 53mm lens on a full frame camera i.e. the traditionally accepted lens which provides a realistic representation of the world seen through the human eye.²

Locations in Customhouse Quay to the north of the site

In considering the Customhouse Quay viewpoints (which include views from within Post Office Square), I consider it significant that the sign frame remains on the building and that, as noted in the Archifact report, the WCC heritage inventory record includes recognition that the *'building once held community sentiment and connection for the temperature display and clock that was a prominent feature'*.

In close views the sign is well above the view of pedestrians passing through the Square and along Customhouse Quay. It is only in more distant views that the existing sign structure and proposed digital display will become visible.

Representative views are shown in Figures 1 and 2. In these views the sign structure, and the proposed sign, will be viewed against the backdrop of the existing tall buildings located to the south and south-west of the site. As such, the sign structure, and proposed new sign, do not break the skyline. In addition, at the distance required to easily view the sign structure and proposed digital display, the sign represents a relatively small feature in relatively expansive view.

In view of the above, I consider that the proposed digital sign which will be fixed to the existing sign structure, will not be a dominant feature in views from Customhouse Quay and Post Office Square and will appear as an

² <https://www.bhphotovideo.com/explora/photography/buying-guide/the-one-lens-every-photographer-should-have-and-use-the-50mm>

integral part of the wider urban context. As such, I consider that it will not have a more than a minor effect on the heritage significance of the Huddart Parker Building or the Post Office Square Historic Heritage Area.

Locations in Grey Street

A representative view is shown in Figure 3. From locations in Grey Street the sign structure is already seen as extending above the existing building. The sign structure has been a feature of the building since 1963. Given the historic existence of the sign structure, and that this same structure will be utilised for the new digital sign (albeit that it will be strengthened), the addition of the digital billboard face will have little impact on this view, with the face being viewed at an angle and the existing structure still being visible. The same is also true of a view from the south-west from Customhouse Quay as shown in Figure 4.

In view of the above, I consider that the proposed digital sign which will be fixed to the existing sign structure, will not be a dominant feature in views from locations in Grey Street and will appear as an integral part of the wider urban context. As such, I consider that it will not have a more than a minor effect on the heritage significance of the Huddart Parker Building or the Post Office Square Historic Heritage Area.



Figure 1: View of the building from the north (from west side of Customhouse Quay)



Figure 2: View of the building from the north (from east side of Customhouse Quay)



Figure 3 (left): View of building from the west along Grey Street (from close to intersection with Lambton Quay)



Figure 4 (Right): Partial view of the upper level of the building and existing billboard structure from the south-west in Customhouse Quay

5. Conclusion

I have found that the Archifact's Assessment of Effects on Historic Heritage is based on a sound and well-accepted methodology and address all the matters which I would expect it to consider.

Having visited the site, I accept and support Archifact's assessment against the relevant policies and assessment criteria of the Wellington City District Plan and consider that the proposed digital sign, which will be fixed to the existing sign structure, will not be a dominant feature in views from locations in Customhouse Quay or Grey Street and will appear as an integral part of the wider urban context. As such, I consider that it will not have a more than a minor effect on the heritage significance of the Huddart Parker Building or the Post Office Square Historic Heritage Area.



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