

20 August 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Sarah Duffell; I am employed by WCC in the position of Senior Urban Design Advisor RMA in the Urban Design team. My main task in this role is to undertake urban design assessment of resource consent applications against the design-related provisions of the District Plan.
- 1.2 I have a Bachelor's degree in Regional Planning with Honours (Massey University), and a Master of Arts in Urban Design with Merit (University of Westminster). I have 18 years of experience as an urban designer, mostly within the field of design review. This is preceded by ten years of experience as a planner in both New Zealand and the UK.

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2.0 Background

- 2.1 This report provides advice on urban design aspects of the proposal by Ryman Healthcare to construct a retirement facility at 26 Donald Street, extending through to Campbell Street in Karori.
- 2.2 I am familiar with this part of Karori. I have visited the application site on several occasions since the application was first lodged.
- 2.3 I have reviewed the original application lodged in March 2020 and subsequent updates following a Section 92 request for further information on a range of matters. This review is based on the updated package of application reports and drawings received July 2021.
- 2.4 Documents reviewed as part of this assessment for the proposed Rymans Healthcare Retirement Village at 26 Donald Street include:
- Urban Design Report dated 16 July prepared by Andrew Burns at McIndoe Urban Ltd (UD Report)
 - Visual Simulations Revision 8 Viewpoints 01 – 15 dated 4 June 2021
 - Set of RC drawings dated 18 June 2021 & Rymans Architectural Design Statement
 - AEE dated September 2020 prepared by Mitchell Daysh

3.0 Assessment

- 3.1 One of the options available when presented with an application is for the consent processing authority to adopt any or all of the application, meaning that the adopted reports or adopted parts of those reports become the position of the consent processing authority.
- 3.2 Having read the urban design report prepared by Mr Burns (McIndoe Urban), I find the structure and discussion of it to be generally logical and agreeable as an urban design assessment of the proposal. There are substantial portions of it where the WCC UD team would be likely to come to the same or similar conclusions.
- 3.3 The format of this assessment is therefore a table-format review of Mr Burns' report by its various sections, indicating whether the various parts can be adopted in full, adopted in part, or adopted with additional comments. Additional comments are added where required, although it should be noted that in all cases these just add to the view of Mr Burns rather than dispute it.
- 3.4 **The review is included in Appendix 1 of this report.**

3.5 Conclusion – applicant’s Urban Design assessment

- 3.6 The Urban Design Assessment prepared by Mr Burns is a thorough document that considers a number of matters indicated as relevant by both the District Plan and the Residential Design Guide. Its conclusions are both reasoned and reasonable.
- 3.7 There are a number of matters on which further comment is given although in no instance does the view of the WCC Urban Design team contradict the conclusions reached by Mr Burns. The design and nature of signage is recommended to be further clarified but would be a suitable matter for inclusion as a consent condition.

4.0 Other Urban Design-related assessment

- 4.1 There is unavoidable cross-over between urban design advice and the advice of other subject experts such as heritage, landscape architecture and vehicle access. In general, where this occurs the WCC Urban Design Team considers that any highly specific advice of the WCC subject experts in those areas should generally be favoured but that general considerations should be included in a balanced decision.
- 4.2 The following assessments have also been specifically considered when writing this report. Although relevant to urban design concerns, their detailed evaluation has been undertaken by other WCC experts:
- Heritage Technical Report and appendix drawings by DPA Architects Ltd.
 - Landscape & Visual Effects Assessment Report dated August 2020 and addendum dated July 2021 prepared by R.A.Skidmore Urban Design Ltd (LVE Report)
 - Indicative Landscape Plan Revision S, dated 14 July 2021 prepared by Sullivan & Wall Landscape
 - Final Arboriculturists Report dated 26 May 2020 prepared by Tree Management Solutions

4.3 Heritage

- 4.4 I have read the report by Moira Smith, WCC Heritage Advisor and the applicant’s heritage assessment by DPA Architects Ltd.
- 4.5 Although the College is not scheduled in the District Plan, it has been identified by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) as having significant heritage values and is listed in the New Zealand Heritage List Rāangi Kōrero as a Category 1 Historic Place.
- 4.6 DPA consider the buildings at the former Teachers’ College to be good examples of Modernist/Brutalist architecture in New Zealand, whereas HNZPT consider the campus to be *“one of New Zealand’s finest examples of brutalist architecture, consisting of an integrated grouping of multi-storey buildings and landscape features”*. Of note is that many of the buildings referred to in this statement have already been demolished under prior consents.
- 4.7 I note Ms Smith’s inclusion of a point outlined in the 2018 Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) assessment of the site that the original layout of buildings and spaces on the site *“made best use of its undulating landscape to assure sensitive placement within the residential suburb of Karori.”* The current application, while possibly not achieving the level of original heritage protection that would have been desirable, at least refers to this previous arrangement of buildings in the new layout.
- 4.8 I also agree with Ms Smith’s view that loss of so many of the original buildings is regrettable but that retention and seismic upgrade of several original buildings in the new proposal is supported as a link to the site’s history. Because many of these retained buildings and features are on the Donald Street side of the site around the Allen Ward VC Hall, Tennant Block and street side

courtyard, there will be continued visual reference to the past use of this site as part of the streetscape of this area which is an agreeable Urban Design outcome.

4.9 **Landscape and Visual Impact assessment**

- 4.10 The applicant's LVA report (August 2020) and addendum (June 2021) have been reviewed by the Council's consultant Landscape Architect, Angela McArthur. I have read all the relevant reports.
- 4.11 In respect of the LVA report and its review, I note that there is a lot of crossover in assessment content between urban design assessment and visual impact/landscape assessment. Ms Skidmore frequently makes comment on matters such as building form and detailing and the relationship between buildings and spaces, and Ms McArthur has considered the character provisions of the Residential Design Guide (RDG).
- 4.12 Ms McArthur's report outlines the assessment methodology used for assessing the landscape and visual effects, pursuant to the guidance given by the NZ Institute of Landscape Architects (Best Practice Notes 2010). A consistent terminology is therefore established between the reports of both assessors in regard to the **magnitude of change** and the **effect of change**. Both reports make a distinction between the degree of change being experienced from the public realm (streets, parks etc) and from private properties. Mr Burns' report covers the issue to some extent as well.
- 4.13 Following changes to several aspects of the proposal, there is an addendum to Ms Skidmore's original report in which she comments specifically on the exterior changes to Buildings B01B, B02 and B07. I generally agree with the following statements she makes about the specific buildings:
- B01B - "design changes result in a more nuanced approach that will better integrate the building forms with their surrounding context"
 - B02 - "façade treatment now relates more strongly to the grain and rhythm of the surrounding residential built environment..."
 - B07 - "The design changes seek to achieve a more nuanced contextual fit, by creating a finer grain of visual components within the building form."
- 4.14 As noted by both the experts in this matter, change itself does not necessarily constitute an adverse landscape or visual effect. What matters is the magnitude of visual change. All the applicant's reports and the WCC landscape advisor appear to agree that the magnitude of change on the site will be high, and that there are both public and privately-owned spaces that will be affected by this. However, there does not seem to be complete agreement as to whether a high magnitude of change constitutes a negative effect or whether it might to a degree create a positive effect, and for some locations the respective reports draw differing conclusions.
- 4.15 The Urban Design Team will not comment on the specific conclusions drawn by the relevant experts, but the following points are noted:
- The design changes to buildings B01B, B02 and B07 achieve a better contextual relationship
 - The proposal will appropriately reinforce the prominent and distinctive character of the site
 - The site layout responds to the topography, history and nature of the surrounding context
 - The degree of change on the site is high, especially when considering the streetscape environments of Donald Street, Scapa Terrace and Campbell Street
 - In most locations, there is the opportunity to introduce mitigating measures such as transition of bulk, setback and landscaping to moderate the visual effects of the buildings.
 - There are several properties on Scapa Terrace where a drainage requirement will prohibit landscaping on the applicant's site, but this would presumably not affect the ability of Scapa Terrace property owners to increase screening on their own sites if they desired. In this area, the building achieves setback and bulk transition.
 - The 'windfall' nature of this site indicates that a degree of change is to be expected. In most cases, this is adequately managed.

4.16 Ms Mc Arthur also comments on the proposed site landscaping – a matter which the Urban Design Team is happy should be assessed in this instance by a qualified Landscape Architect. She notes that several matters related to landscaping should be required as conditions of consent, which removes these matters from further Urban Design assessment and is an agreeable approach.

5.0 Summary and final conclusion

5.1 This proposal has been extensively reviewed by a number of subject-relevant experts with a degree of crossover between various experts commenting on urban design-related matters. There is not complete agreement between these experts particularly in terms of the LVA reports. **However, the applicant's and WCC Urban Design advisors share a similar view on the main urban design aspects of the proposal and the applicant's UD report can be ADOPTED.**

5.2 It is not unreasonable to expect a residential-type development to emerge on what was previously undeveloped land that has a residential zoning.

5.3 Due to the size of the site, the degree of change being experienced within the context is great, however the site layout and building form still communicate a type of residential use that would not be unexpected within a suburban context.

5.4 The new buildings on the site have been designed, massed and located in accordance with the required setbacks and use other measures such as architectural variation orientation and bulk transition to reduce effects on adjoining properties.

5.5 Site layout, new building mass and placement and use of pre-existing buildings on the site are respectful of the previous use in terms of the community's understanding of the site and the desire to retain some of the site's heritage.

5.6 The architectural style chosen is contemporary and appears as a larger-scaled apartment-style form but with references to both residential features and the buildings being retained on the site. Overall, the relationship between these outcomes is an acceptable fit for the context.

5.6 Traffic, parking and servicing have been managed in an acceptable way and will not be visually dominant beyond the boundaries of the site. Access to the site is clear and logical.

5.7 The site layout allows for light and sun, and landscaped spaces between buildings. The proposed landscaping will be assessed by the Landscape Advisor.

5.8 Any outstanding UD matters can be managed by conditions. Urban Design would support the conditions requested by the WCC Heritage and Landscape advisors.

The proposal has Urban Design support.

If the application is approved, the following are recommended:

- a) Suggested conditions
 - *A condition that requires final UD team approval of the design and placement all gateway/entry signage.*
- b) Suggested advice notes
 - *None*

Report peer reviewed by : Farzad Zamani, Team Leader Design Review, Urban Design Team, 23/08/2021

APPENDIX 1: Review of applicant's Urban Design report

Section	WCC UD position	Additional comments
1.0 Introduction		
1.1 Overview	Adopt	
1.2 Scope and involvement	Adopt the part referring to the relevant sets of plans.	The balance of this section relates to the applicant's urban designer outlining the engagement with the project
1.3 Parallel assessments relevant to Urban Design	Adopt	
1.4 Approach to assessment	Adopt in part, with additional comments	<p>Activity status, zoning and discussion of windfall site are all acceptable. Emphasis on policy 4.2.1.5 allowing intensification of windfall sites subject to not detracting from the character and amenity of neighbourhoods is agreed and supported as a key principle for this site.</p> <p>Multi-unit design and relevance of the RDG to the proposal:</p> <p>Mr Burns' assessment states that the proposal to be assessed as a multi-unit development and the RDG used, but makes no further judgement on whether this is a practical approach for this site. I consider that assessing this development in the manner of a more typical multi-unit housing development is impractical and that more helpfully, it should be considered comprehensively based on its use type.</p> <p>Following from that, I agree with Mr Burns that character, site planning and building design are the most relevant topics for assessment.</p> <p>The UD assessment framework outlined is acceptable.</p>
2.0 Overview of the proposal		
Discussion	Adopt	
3.0 Urban Design assessment		
3.1 Character and Urban form		
Context and analysis of existing conditions	Adopt	
Residential context	Adopt	
Non-residential context	Adopt	

All specific street context assessments	Adopt	The streets context assessments cover Campbell Street, Scapa Terrace and Donald Street, along with an overall streets assessment. This is considered to adequately cover the streets considered most affected by the proposal.
The site – character, landform, vegetation	Adopt	
The proposal (character and urban form)	Adopt in part	Note that the visual presence of the proposed taller buildings will be similar within the context to those previously on the site. In terms of contrast v consistency, it's unclear what is meant by the reference to the setting having 'ongoing heritage value' but I do consider that it has local familiarity due to the long timespan of occupancy by an educational facility. I also agree with the conclusion that the buildings associated with prior use justify to a degree the continued expression of contrast on the site rather than a response that conforms more closely to the single-dwelling character of a lot of the residential surroundings.
Karori Road	Adopt	
Lewer Street	Adopt in part	This relates to Viewpoint 11 and Building B01B. I agree with Mr Burns' view that the outcome is of contrast but consider that the issue of whether the building has a more residential aesthetic than the previous buildings is marginal. The bulk, scale and form of the new building has more of an institutional- style appearance, aligned with what it is. However, I agree that the effect of this is moderated by the placement and setback of the building and when considered within the context of the overall site, this contrast is a tolerable outcome.
More distant viewing points	Adopt	
Donald Street	Adopt	
Campbell Street	Adopt, with additional comments	I agree that the principal challenge presented by B02 is optimising use of this previously vacant part of the site while establishing an acceptable relationship to context. The discussion around the height-to-width relationship between the building and Campbell Street is very agreeable and is a strong argument in favour of this building achieving a 'comfortable' relationship with the street physical characteristics of the street. Additionally, I consider that contrast with the surrounding development patterns is acceptable based on this type of use. Retirement complexes are frequently large-scale in nature and are increasingly rising to several storeys in height. Within the residential context, it's acceptable for a large-scale retirement village to look like a retirement village, which this does.
Scapa Terrace	Adopt, with additional comments	I am not completely agreed with Mr Burns' view that Scapa Terrace has a high level of visual containment which screens views beyond the dwellings. Particularly along the northern side, most of the houses are single-storey and set at street level. This creates a relatively open aspect northwards

		<p>that will be impacted by the dwellings along the applicant's south boundary.</p> <p>I note that the buildings on the applicant's south boundary are compliant with height and setback requirements, and further note that care has been taken in the design to moderate building bulk in this area by way of transition of volumes, orientation and landscaping. For Scapa Terrace properties, there will be an undeniable change in character that will be more apparent to houses on the north side than on the south due to proximity.</p> <p>Mr Burns includes a comprehensive discussion about the effect of this change, carefully analysing matters such as form and scale, visual dominance, separation, height relationships and any possible loss of privacy. I agree with his conclusion that "<i>the recognition of this site as a windfall site means that the District Plan anticipates some degree of departure from conventional suburban outcomes and a higher level of development density on the site.</i>" Mr Burns concludes that the adverse visual dominance effects will be minor.</p>
Conclusions	Adopt	I agree with the conclusions related to character and urban form (page 29 of the UD report.)
3.2 Urban Structure and Site Planning		
Context and analysis of existing conditions	Adopt, with additional comments	<p>As part of the previous use, access was available through the site between Donald Street and Campbell Street on an internal road. Whilst not a public road use of the road was not restricted. This is an aspect of the previous site condition that is not carried through to the new site layout.</p> <p>I agree with the observation that the availability and quality of local amenities, as well as their close location to the site, point to clear opportunities for higher density residential outcomes.</p>
The proposal	Adopt, with additional comments	<p>Discussion is generally agreeable. The report tends to focus on the benefits of the new proposal, while touching only relatively lightly on the more substantial issue of the degree of change facing Campbell Street. This includes not only loss of the previously more open though-block access, but the matter of introduction of a substantial built mass into this part of the site.</p> <p>Worth noting is that the proposal has undergone a number of substantial design revisions particularly to buildings B02 and B07 to address the concerns previously raised about contextual relationship.</p>
Conclusions	Adopt	I agree with the conclusions about Urban Structure and Site Planning (page 37 of the UD report).
3.3 Residential Amenity Effects		
Overview	Adopt	Mr Burns outlines in this section the ways in which he has interpreted the various requirements of the District Plan in relation to shading and sunlight. Having assessed this methodology, I consider it presents a logical and reasonable approach to sunlight access and amenity, which is agreeable to the WCC Design Review Team in this instance.

Scapa Terrace properties	Adopt	<p>The report notes that properties have not been visited to confirm the location of the principal outdoor living spaces, however I am comfortable with the assumption that these are at the rear of the houses abutting the applicant's site due to orientation and maximising privacy.</p> <p>The assessment is adequately detailed for each of the possibly affected properties.</p> <p>Urban Design is satisfied with the conclusions drawn, for both overlooking/privacy and sunlight shading.</p>
Donald Street properties	Adopt	<p>The assessment is adequately detailed for each of the possibly affected properties.</p> <p>Urban Design is satisfied with the conclusions drawn, for both overlooking/privacy and sunlight shading.</p>
Campbell Street properties	Adopt	<p>The assessment is adequately detailed for each of the possibly affected properties.</p> <p>In respect of the property at 29 Campbell Street, although this facility occupies a building that was a previously a house I don't consider the use as a childcare centre to be residential in nature. Therefore, it would not be reasonable to apply the usual privacy expectations of a private household to this property. I also agree that planting and distance would moderate any possible ability to look into the outdoor space on this site.</p> <p>Urban Design is satisfied with the conclusions drawn, for both overlooking/privacy and sunlight shading.</p>
Other properties	Adopt	
Conclusions	Adopt	I agree with the conclusions about Residential Amenity (page 49 of the UD report).
3.4 Architectural Concept and Building Design		
Design coherence and identity	Adopt	
Street frontages and entrance legibility	Adopt	
Planning and amenity	Adopt	<p>Also noted that due to the nature of the facility, there will be a high degree of on-site user familiarity for both residents and visitors.</p> <p>The assessment of each individual building for amenity is acceptable – I agree that in this instance, moderation of the usual expectations for multi-unit development is acceptable due to the nature of the facility and the observation that occupants have access to many other lounge and open space areas to help supplement any perceived shortfall in individual units. I agree that all the residential units will achieve comfortable, liveable conditions.</p>

Conclusion	Adopt	I agree with the conclusions about architectural concept and building design (page 55 of the UD report.)
3.5 Open Space Design		
Public and communal open space Private open spaces	Adopt	I agree that the design will result in an environment where residents all have access to quality open space. Service areas have been adequately integrated. Vehicle dominance has been reduced as required by the RDG.
Conclusion		I agree with the conclusions about Open Space Design (page 58 of the UD report).
3.6 Crime Prevention through Environmental Design		
All sections	Adopt, with additional comments	The application does not provide detailed information about signage, however this is a matter that could be addressed by a condition for later approval.
4 Conclusions		
All sections	Adopt	The conclusions reached in this section are acceptable.