

### SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE

**Sarah Duffell, Senior Urban Designer RMA, City Design Team**

**6 December 2022**

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.
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 19 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.
3. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses as contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014 and I agree to comply with it as if this hearing was before the Environment Court. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. I confirm that the issues addressed in this brief of evidence are within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.
4. My initial report was written to help inform the decision on whether or not to notify the application. Because there was no subsequent change to the proposal between that point and notification, the planner advised that no additional urban design report was necessary prior to this hearing.
5. This supplementary evidence covers the material since put forward by both the applicant and submitters, in terms of content that relates to urban design matters.
6. I have read the evidence relating to urban design matters than has been written for this hearing, and read all the submissions received.
7. I have visited the site again on 6 December (yesterday) at around lunch time, at which time there were two food/drink carts operating, the newsagent was open and there were 14 people using the

various seating and the grass area within the space. There was also a steady stream of people using the crossing between the CBD and waterfront. I note that Mr Knott, in paragraph 6.4 of his evidence, considers the space to be *“an area dominated by traffic and pedestrian and cycle movement, rather than being a pleasant urban environment, enclosed and activated by attractive buildings.”*

8. Although I do not disagree with Mr Knott’s general assessment about the physical attributes of the space, based on yesterday’s visit and my own personal experience I find Post Office Square to be a well-used space and an important location for crossing between the CBD and the Waterfront. While most people’s experience of the place is of moving through it, there are amenities and places for sitting when the weather is good. Its quality as an urban space should not be downplayed.
9. I have read the fourteen submissions to this application and note that eleven are in support and three are in opposition.
10. Of the eleven supporters, I note that ten are heavily focussed on the matter of a previous sign including information on local time and temperature. The third-party advertising content of the previous sign is barely mentioned, therefore I don’t feel it unreasonable to consider that for the submitters, this aspect of the sign was more of a ‘sideline’ to the time/temperature information.
11. On the previous sign, the time and temperature display was the part of the sign that altered, with the third party content remaining static (but illuminated at night). On the new sign, the third-party content will be the portion of the sign that alters more frequently, and it will appear as a solid screen of information rather than the more visually permeable previous sign.
12. As I have stated in my initial report, the application does not propose to ‘reinstate’ the previous sign, and I feel that the submitters might misunderstand the scale and visual impact of the proposed third-party content when considering their somewhat nostalgic recollections of the previous sign as presented in the submissions.
13. Furthermore, as stated in my initial report, the information the previous sign conveyed is now readily available via media such as mobile phones and in-car displays. It is not unreasonable to assume most people would now favour these. I therefore do not consider that replacing the time and temperature display function in this location would be a reason to support the application. I also don’t agree with Mr Knott’s view that the previous sign might be successfully digitally replicated in digital format to provide a visual link to the history of a sign in this location.

14. I am therefore inclined to prefer the views of the three submitters who find the sign incompatible with the context, the heritage building on which it is positioned, and with the wider amenity views of the city.
15. Prior to the hearing today the Commissioner has asked for comments on any similarities or differences between this sign and the one recently granted consent for the Embassy theatre, which is also a listed heritage building. From an urban design perspective, I advise the following.
16. The position of the Urban Design team at pre-application stage was that signs on the Embassy could possibly be supported. When the application was lodged, Urban Design were able to support the signs and were not further involved in the subsequent decision or objection hearing.
17. The Embassy sign is installed on a flat elevation surface of the building rather than above the parapet on a free-standing structure. It is not a skyline element. The location is well above the decorative primary façade, on a rear part of the building that is stepped well back from the primary façade, and there is also vertical separation between these two elements. Placement of the signs considered the architectural detailing of the façade they are attached to. It is my view that placement of the Embassy sign on a façade helps a great deal to reduce the visual prominence of it within the wider context.
18. The morphology of the setting (size, shape and proportions of spaces) for the Embassy sign and this one is different. The Embassy sign is seen at the termination of long vista and the viewing catchment is constrained largely to Courtenay Place, with further obstruction of the sign created when the street trees are in leaf. The site is located in an area where evening entertainment and a substantial amount of outdoor lighting are part of the local character, and where a sign might be considered more appropriate as an accent to a night-time entertainment precinct.
19. The sign was granted consent for a limited period of 8 years, and was supported because it made possible an expensive project to upgrade the main front entrance doors. The result was not only a more authentic experience of the original building at ground level, but much improved entry conditions for theatre users in a location with a physically constrained and windy setting – which is also a direct benefit to the local street area. It is my understanding that the Embassy sign is not intended to fund works to the building in perpetuity.
20. In my view, these differing matters make this sign not directly comparable with the one under consideration on the Huddart Parker building.

21. In respect of the possibility of a different type of sign being located on the existing frame, the Urban Design views would align with those of the Heritage Advisor Ms Chessa Stevens which can be found in paragraphs 103 and 104 of her report dated 15 November 2022.
22. I am happy to answer any further questions the Commissioner may have.