

1.0 APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Application and property details

Fast-Track project name:

Downtown Carpark Site Development

Fast-Track application number:

FTAA-2512-1158
BUN60460864, LUC60460865, DIS60460866 and WAT60460867

2.0 Technical Specialist Memo – Urban Design

To:

Sarah Wilson – Lead Planner & Adonica Giborees - PPL

From:

Mustafa Demiralp – Principal Urban Designer

Qualifications
& Relevant
Experience:

I hold a Bachelor of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture and a Master of Urban Design. I have over 17 years of experience in urban design across both the private and public sectors in New Zealand. I have prepared urban design assessments and technical advice for resource consent applications, plan changes, and fast-track applications, and have been involved in a wide range of projects, including structure planning, master planning, and medium to high-density residential developments. I am currently a Principal Urban Designer at Auckland Council, where I provide urban design advice on resource consent and private plan change applications, and contribute to hearings and assessment processes for large-scale residential, mixed-use, and subdivision developments.

Preparation in
Accordance
with the Code
of Conduct:

I confirm that I have read the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 – Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses ([Code](#)), and have complied with it in the preparation of this memorandum. I also agree to follow the Code when participating in any subsequent processes, such as expert conferencing, directed by the Panel. I confirm that the opinions I have expressed are within my area of expertise and are my own, except where I have stated that I am relying on the work or evidence of others, which I have specified.

Signature:



Date:

29.04.2026

3.0 Executive Summary / Principal Issues

This memo provides an urban design assessment of the amended fast-track proposal for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Downtown Carpark site at 2 Lower Hobson Street, Auckland city centre. The proposal would replace the existing eight-storey parking structure with a substantial mixed-use precinct comprising two towers, three podium elements, new public open spaces, and a new laneway network.

Overall, the proposal would deliver significant improvements in urban design terms when compared with the existing condition, particularly through a stronger podium-tower composition, more activated street edges, a more permeable internal public realm structure, and a generally high standard of architectural design.

The proposal presents high urban design merit overall. Positive aspects include the regeneration of a highly prominent and underperforming city centre block, a strong and legible podium-tower built form, generally slender tower forms, highly activated and pedestrian-oriented street frontages, a permeable laneway network centred around Te Urunga Hau (The Urban Room), generally good CPTED outcomes, and positive residential amenity within Tower 2.

The amended scheme generally retains the principal strengths of the earlier resource consent scheme, notwithstanding some simplification and reduction in parts of the public realm interface and tower articulation.

The most significant urban design concerns remain the extent of the departure from the planned waterfront transition under the Harbour Edge Height Control Plane (HEHCP), the outstanding wind impacts in some pedestrian areas, the lack of continuous verandah cover and less successful public realm outcome and pedestrian amenity along Customs Street West, and the shading effects on the most valued public open spaces at certain times.

The amended scheme reduces some of the refinement of the earlier tower form, particularly through the reduction and removal of chamfered elements to Tower 1, which results in a less refined and slightly heavier architectural expression. The introduction of the hotel drop-off arrangement, together with the exclusion of the earlier Albert Street and AON House interface upgrades, also reduces some of the public realm and legibility benefits achieved in the earlier scheme.

A further important issue is the information gap relating to shading. While the shading effects on St Patrick's Square are limited in isolation, the absence of a clear comparative assessment identifying the shading generated by the additional upper-level bulk limits a full understanding of the incremental effects of the amended scheme, particularly in relation to public open spaces and pedestrian amenity. This remains a material issue for the panel's consideration.

Overall, the proposal is a high-quality urban design response, although the concerns and information gaps identified above remain relevant to the panel's assessment.

4.0 Documents Reviewed

I have reviewed the Assessment of Environmental Effects and Statutory Analysis prepared by Barker & Associates, together with the relevant appendices identified in that report, as they relate to my urban design review. The appendices most relevant to my assessment include:

- Appendix 3_MUL UrbanDesignMemo#15
- Appendix 9A Architectural Drawings, Parts 1-6
- Appendix 9B Landscape Drawings
- Appendix 9C Architecture and Landscape Report, Parts 1-3
- Appendix 9D Existing and Demolition Drawings
- Appendix 9E Shading Analysis, Parts 1-3
- Appendix 11 Urban Design Assessment
- Appendix 12 Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Appendix 12A Graphic Attachment Parts 1-6
- Appendix 22 Rules Assessment
- Appendix 24 Proposed Consent Conditions
- Appendix 28 Environmental Winds Report
- Appendix 37 St Patrick's Square Public Space Audit
- Appendix 39 CPTED Assessment
- Assessment of Environmental Effects and Statutory Analysis prepared by Barker & Associates, dated 18 December 2025.

5.0 Specialist Assessment

5.1 Location and Context

The site at 2 Lower Hobson Street occupies a prominent waterfront-edge block within Auckland's city centre, bounded by Lower Hobson Street to the west and Customs Street West to the south. It is located close to Quay Street, Britomart, the City Rail Link, major bus interchanges, and ferry terminals; and sits within a highly strategic part of the city centre where significant commercial, residential, and public transport activity is concentrated.

The site is currently occupied by the existing Downtown Carpark building, an approximately eight-storey parking structure with a monolithic form, limited articulation, and little meaningful engagement with the surrounding streets. Its ground-floor interfaces are largely inactive and provide poor pedestrian amenity, limited passive surveillance, and a weak relationship with the public realm. This is further compounded by the presence of multiple vehicle crossings along Customs Street West, which interrupt the street edge and pedestrian experience. Overall, the existing building results in a poor urban design outcome in a highly prominent city centre location.

5.2 Proposal

In very general terms, the proposal involves the comprehensive redevelopment of the Downtown Carpark site into a mixed-use precinct comprising two tower buildings, three podium elements, four basement levels, new public open spaces, and a new laneway network. The development is proposed to accommodate a mix of commercial, residential, hotel, food and beverage, and retail activities, together with associated servicing, parking, landscaping, and public realm upgrades.

5.3 Past Involvement

I have been involved with the proposal since the pre-application stage and have attended numerous meetings with the applicant as the design has evolved. I also attended and provided the coversheet identifying the scope of urban design assessment for the first three Technical Advisory Group (TAG) panel design review sessions run by Eke Panuku (Auckland Urban Development Office). I previously prepared a detailed urban design specialist memo on the earlier resource consent version of the proposal, dated 30 May 2025, and a subsequent urban design addendum dated 12 June 2025 in response to the operative provisions of Plan Change 78. This memorandum updates or supersedes those earlier findings in light of the amended fast-track proposal.

I have also reviewed the applicant's subsequent urban design response to Council's recent feedback (Appendix 3_MUL UrbanDesignMemo#15).

5.4 Height and Massing

5.4.1 Transition and Integration with the Surrounding Urban Form.

North - Waterfront and H8.6.5. Harbour Edge Height Control Plane

The Harbour Edge Height Control Plane (HEHCP) is intended to manage building height at the western end of Quay Street by providing a transition in height from the core city centre to the waterfront. This standard is currently infringed by the proposal:

- T1 at a maximum infringement of 88.8m along the northern façade, reducing to 44m along the southern façade over a depth of 44.1m
- T2 at a maximum infringement of 49.2m along the northern façade, reducing to compliance at the southern façade over a depth of 49.2m

The proposal adopts a broad stepped approach, with the tallest built form (T1) located toward the southern part of the site and lower elements toward the north. In principle, this establishes a degree of transition across the site. However, the transition achieved remains materially steeper than that anticipated by the AUP, as both towers significantly infringe the Harbour Edge Height Control Plane and bring substantial height and bulk closer to the waterfront than envisaged by the planning framework.

Figure 1 (attached below) from my original R.C assessment illustrates this relationship in form-based terms. Under the wider built form expectations of the City Centre zone, a tower of similar height to Tower 1 could potentially be achieved in the next block to the south, beyond Customs Street West, at approximately 180m from the centre line of Quay Street. By comparison, the proposed Tower 1 is located approximately 97m from the centre line of Quay Street. This narrows the intended transition

band by approximately 50% and brings a tower of this scale approximately 86m closer to the waterfront than anticipated. In practical terms, this removes a step in the intended height transition south of Customs Street West and results in a more abrupt escalation of built form toward the harbour edge.

In this regard, I make the following observations:

- The proposal achieves a degree of transition through the placement of taller built form to the south and lower built form to the north.
- However, the transition is materially compressed relative to that anticipated by the Harbour Edge Height Control Plane.
- The proposal brings substantial height and associated bulk closer to the waterfront than envisaged by the AUP, effectively introducing a tower of this scale approximately one block closer to the harbour edge.
- This results in a departure from the planned built form transition for this part of the city centre.
- While the podium levels will define much of the immediate street experience, the upper-level massing remains relevant in terms of the proposal's relationship to the waterfront edge and the wider transition in urban form.
- The tower chamfers contribute positively to the architectural expression of the scheme, but do not materially offset the extent to which the transition toward the waterfront has been narrowed.

West - Viaduct Harbour Precinct

To the west, the proposal interfaces with the Viaduct Harbour Precinct across Lower Hobson Street. This is a more sensitive edge, given the lower-scale waterfront character of the precinct and the lower permitted height on the opposite side of the street. In this context, Tower 2, rising to approximately 162m, introduces a substantial change in scale across Lower Hobson Street, and the transition is not gradual. I note that while the transition in overall bulk remains pronounced, the H8 City Centre Zone does not prescribe a specific transition control in this location beyond the HEHCP.

At the same time, elements assist in moderating this contrast at the street level. The P2 podium height, at approximately 30m, sits closer to the scale anticipated on the western side of Lower Hobson Street and helps establish a more coherent and human-scaled street edge. The tower element is also set back approximately 4.5m from Lower Hobson Street, and the overall separation to the Viaduct edge is approximately 37m. These dimensions provide a level of spatial relief and help visually separate the taller built form from the immediate public realm.

Overall, while the change in scale across this edge remains pronounced, the proposal incorporates mitigation at the podium and street level to assist in reducing the immediate dominance of the tower form. The transition to the west is therefore sharper than ideal in broader built form terms, but the street-level experience is moderated to a degree by the podium height, tower setback, and width of the intervening public realm.

East - Downtown West Precinct

To the east, the site interfaces with the broader Downtown West precinct context, where the established and anticipated urban form is characterised by large-scale commercial development and tall buildings, including Commercial Bay and the PwC Tower. In this direction, the proposal sits more comfortably within its context. The scale, height, and intensity of development are more consistent with the existing and planned built form pattern, and the proposal reads as a continuation of the city centre core.

The eastern side of the site is also influenced by the presence of the existing AON and HSBC towers within the same block, which already establishes a high-rise commercial setting. In this respect, the proposal integrates more readily with the eastern urban form than it does with the more sensitive waterfront edge to the north or the lower-scale precinct context to the west. Overall, the relationship to the east is considered compatible in terms of scale, intensity, and general built form character.

South - Customs Street West

To the south, the interface condition is notably more compatible with the scale and built form of the proposed development. The southern frontage of the site addresses Customs Street West, a generous street corridor with southern blocks approximately 30 to 90 metres apart, beyond which lies the Special Height Area of the City Centre Zone where similar or greater building heights are anticipated. For these reasons, this edge is not considered to be a sensitive interface. The proposed towers would align with the expected intensification in this part of the city, and the transition to the existing and future urban form is more appropriate than at other interfaces.

5.4.2 H8 City Centre Zone Built Form Controls

Maximum Tower Dimension

The proposal infringes the maximum tower dimension control for Tower 1, which is identified at 57.81m above 28m compared with the 55m average maximum required by the standard. This is an exceedance of approximately 2.81m, or about 5.1%, and in my view remains minimal. While it contributes to some increase in upper-level bulk, particularly alongside the reduced chamfer treatment when compared with the R.C version, in my view, the low percentage increase in this dimension is not expected to materially alter the overall tower-podium outcome or the general perception of Tower 1 as a relatively slender high-rise form.

The rule is also technically engaged where parts of the podiums extend above 28m. In my view, this is a technicality rather than a substantive departure from the intended built form outcome, and the proposal still achieves the desired podium-tower form sought by the standard.

Tower Setback

The proposal infringes the tower setback component of Standard H8.6.24. Tower 1 provides a 5.5m setback rather than 6m, which is a minimal shortfall of 0.5m, or around 8.5%. Tower 2 has a greater shortfall, providing a 4.5m setback. In my view, these departures do not materially undermine the intended podium-tower outcome. While Tower 2 is only 4.5m set back from Lower Hobson Street, it is approximately 25m set back from Customs Street West, which significantly reduces its presence

and creates a greater sense of openness at this corner, allowing the podium to define this intersection more strongly. This is reinforced by the wide road reserve of Lower Hobson Street and the stepping back of Level 8, assisted by the use of external columns, which helps moderate the transition from podium to tower.

Tower Separation

Although the 0.8m reduction in separation between Tower 1 and Aon House is numerically identifiable, it equates to approximately a 6-7 percent shortfall in overall separation. In my view, this difference is not likely to be perceptible in the built outcome at this scale. A separation of approximately 5.6m from each tower face can still be considered to provide a reasonable level of outlook on both sides, as well as visual relief between these two commercial towers.

H8.6.24A Maximum east-west tower dimension

The proposal complies with the maximum east-west tower dimension standard for the tower elements, with Tower 1 at 37.5m and Tower 2 at 22.61m. The infringement instead relates to the upper part of Podium 1 above 28m. This reads as approximately one additional storey above the datum anticipated by the standard and, in my view, does not represent a dramatic shift in mid-rise scale in this context. The podium-to-tower relationship remains proportionate; the upper portion of the proposed podium includes some permeable elements and roof-terrace areas that help break up the mass, and the additional height occurs above primary pedestrian eye level without altering the ground-floor interface or building alignment. I therefore regard this as a technical infringement rather than a substantive departure from the intent of the standard.

For the wider immediate context, while the road reserves to the south (Customs Street West and Fanshawe Street) operate at multiple levels in certain locations, the combined horizontal separation between the site and the block to the south (approximately 45m at the narrowest point) remains substantial in City Centre terms and proportionate to the proposed 34.4m high podium.

H8.6.25 Building frontage alignment and height.

Podium 3, at approximately 15.3m in height, infringes this standard. The Lower Hobson Street frontage where P3 is located is predominantly defined by Podium 2, which comprises approximately 77m of the approximately 85m total frontage, as measured from the drawings. Podium 3 defines only a very limited portion of this interface, is slightly offset from the street alignment, and does not raise any urban design concerns.

Built Form Controls Summary

Taken together, the relevant infringements to the built form controls do not materially alter the proposal's overall podium-tower composition or undermine the achievement of relatively slender tower forms. While the amended scheme results in some increase in upper-level bulk, particularly in relation to Tower 1, the proposal still reads clearly as a strong podium base with tower elements above, and the intended built form outcome of the standards is, in overall terms, still achieved.

5.4.3 Wind Conditions

Wind effects remain an important urban design consideration for the proposal. The wind reporting confirms that, even with mitigation measures incorporated, some Category D wind conditions remain, including along parts of Lower Hobson Street, within the Urban Room under the bridge between Podium 1 and Podium 2, and at a localised point on Customs Street West. While the mitigation package has materially improved the wind environment overall, these residual outcomes indicate that further refinement may still be warranted in some locations from a pedestrian experience and public amenity perspective.

H8.6.26. Verandah cover and Customs Street West interface

While some covered areas are proposed along Customs Street West, these are fragmented in extent, vary in height, and are not located over the public footpath within the road reserve. In this respect, they do not provide the consistent street-edge weather protection anticipated by H8.6.26. The proposed cover area adjoining Custom Street West ranges approximately from 7.25m to 11.6m in height, which is also likely to limit its effectiveness for weather protection, particularly in relation to wind-driven rain. While these covered areas will still provide some amenity and partial shelter, they do not substitute for a continuous verandah outcome along the public street edge.

Pedestrian comfort along this frontage is further compromised by the proposed hotel drop-off arrangement, which weakens the public edge and introduces a less resolved pedestrian environment. In urban design terms, the provision of verandah cover along Customs Street West could have contributed positively to both pedestrian amenity and, potentially, the wind outcome along this interface.

5.4.4 Shading

The proposal's shading effects occur within a dense city centre environment, where shadows are layered across an already complex built form context, and many effects on surrounding streets and blocks are shifting, localised, and short-lived. However, the absence of a clear comparative assessment demonstrating the shading generated by the additional upper-level bulk limits a full understanding of the incremental effects of the scheme, particularly in relation to public open spaces and pedestrian amenity. From an urban design perspective, the most important effects are those on public open spaces.

The specific H8.6.3 non-compliance affecting St Patrick's Square is not considered significant, given the very limited duration, extent, and edge-location of the additional shade:

- Shading on both 22 June and 29 July is very short-lived, around 3 minutes.
- Shading occupies a very minor portion of the square. (June 22 – 0.03% of the square [based on an overall area of approximately 2000sqm], and July 29, approximately 1.1% of the total area.)
- The shade falls onto transitional areas on the edges of the square.

However, broader public open space sensitivities remain relevant. In particular:

- St Patrick’s Square in mid-winter between 11.00 am and 12.00 pm
- Takutai Square at 5.00 pm during the equinox
- Te Komititanga in mid-summer at 5.00 pm

A common feature of these shading occurrences is that they affect the last remaining sunlit portions of those spaces at the relevant time. While not all of these effects fall within the strict sunlight admission standard, they remain part of important urban amenity considerations.

I acknowledge the applicant’s clarification in the Urban Design Memo dated 30 March 2026 (Appendix 3_MUL UrbanDesignMemo#15), that some of the identified shading effects arise from parts of the proposal not above the HEHCP, while in one instance, the source is less clear. However, the absence of a clear comparative assessment demonstrating the shading generated by the additional upper-level bulk still limits a full understanding of the effects of the infringing elements of built form. I note the applicant’s position that these effects are limited in extent and duration and are therefore of low or negligible significance. However, the applicant’s shading methodology is rather broad and I consider that the significance attributed to the identified shading effects on these three public spaces understates their city centre context and urban amenity relevance.

The applicant’s methodology focuses on the shading duration, extent, recurrence and relevant AUP sunlight control; this is acknowledged. However, in my view, these factors should be balanced against the qualitative public realm value of the affected space, the timing of use, and whether the shading removes the last remaining sunlight. In my view, some of these occurrences remain relevant in public realm terms of use, particularly because they affect valued public spaces at times when they are used and where sunlight in the city centre environment is a premium.

This is particularly relevant in relation to Te Komititanga, which the recent City Centre Public Life Survey¹ identifies as the most intensively used public space in the city centre, with peak weekday movement occurring between 5 pm and 6 pm.

From an urban design perspective and in my experience working in the city centre, the relevance of these effects is not only their limited quantitative extent, but also the fact that they occur in valued and actively used public spaces where sunlight is a premium in the city centre environment.

5.5 Site Planning and Public Realm Design

The proposal continues to present an overall positive outcome and a substantial improvement in site planning and public realm terms when compared with the existing Downtown Carpark. The overall layout supports a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented environment, with active edges, internal pedestrian connections, and publicly accessible spaces integrated through the site. The broad structure of the scheme, including the Urban Room, laneway network, activated street frontages, and widened pedestrian realm, remains a strong urban design outcome and is consistent with the

¹ Urban Good, Auckland Council Urban Design Unit. *Tāmaki Makaurau City Centre Public Life Survey, Summer Edition 2024*. Knowledge Auckland, 2024.

strategic importance of the site within the waterfront context of the city centre. These elements significantly improve permeability, activation, and public amenity across the block.

The scheme continues to successfully relocate most servicing, parking, and back-of-house functions away from the primary public interfaces, allowing the ground and podium levels to contribute more positively to the public realm. Retail, food and beverage, lobby spaces, and pedestrian entries are generally arranged to support street engagement and passive surveillance. In this respect, the amended proposal largely retains the principal public realm strengths of the earlier scheme, although some areas present a less successful public realm outcome, particularly along Customs Street West.

Street Interfaces and Pedestrian Environment

The Lower Hobson Street frontage remains a strong pedestrian edge. It is highly activated, free of vehicle crossings, and benefits from residential lobby entrances, retail activity, canopy cover, and direct access to the internal public realm. This frontage continues to present a positive urban design response, with a more coherent and pedestrian-prioritised street environment than currently exists on the site.

The Customs Street West frontage also represents an improvement over the existing condition, but the outcome is more mixed than along Lower Hobson Street. While the proposal removes the current vehicle-dominated street edge and introduces a more open, landscaped, and publicly accessible frontage, the amended scheme now includes the hotel drop-off arrangement and does not achieve a continuous verandah outcome along this interface. These changes weaken the pedestrian quality of this frontage relative to the earlier RC version and mean that pedestrian comfort and street-edge amenity are less successfully resolved here than elsewhere in the scheme.

The proposed signage locations and sizes are appropriate and proportionate to the scheme and do not raise any urban design related concerns. This is consistent with the applicant's assessment that the signage zones are suitably scaled, located, and integrated with the proposed architecture.

Laneways and The Urban Room

The laneway network and the Urban Room (Te Urunga Hau), which acts as the central connection point of the laneway connections, remain among the strongest aspects of the proposal. They provide a highly permeable internal public realm structure, improve mid-block accessibility, and create a network of sheltered, activated pedestrian routes through a large city centre block. The Urban Room continues to function as a central public gathering space and orienting device within the site, framed by active uses and supported by strong visual openness and landscape treatment. These elements collectively represent a high-quality public realm outcome.

The proposal still provides for the east-west pedestrian connection through the site. While the east-west pedestrian connection is not provided at grade as anticipated by the precinct requirements (I205.6.2), this is a result of the existing level differences across the site, together with the constraints created by the established buildings on the site.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

The proposal continues to achieve good CPTED outcomes. The public and semi-public realm is highly visible and well overlooked, supported by active ground-floor uses, a high degree of glazing, and strong passive surveillance across the street edges, laneway network, and internal public spaces. Public and private domains are generally well defined, and entrances are legible and clearly expressed, supporting a clear territorial definition. The amended scheme also slightly improves this outcome at the first floor of Podium 2, where the extent of the plant room frontage has been reduced. Overall, the proposal presents a positive CPTED response and does not raise any material concerns.

5.6 Variation in Built Form

The proposal continues to present a high-quality and coherent architectural response. The overall podium-tower composition remains strong, and the scheme still achieves a clear distinction between base and tower elements through massing, material changes, façade treatment, and the use of open spaces between podium forms.

The proposal maintains a sculptural and legible built form, supported by a high level of façade articulation and a consistent design language across the development. These qualities continue to contribute positively to the visual interest of the proposal and to the quality of the city centre environment.

The built form is sufficiently articulated to avoid a monolithic or overly repetitive outcome, with clear differentiation between ground, middle, and upper levels, and a strong human-scaled podium expression to the surrounding streets.

The amended FTA scheme introduces some simplification when compared with the earlier R.C version. Most notably, the upper chamfers of Tower 1 have been reduced, and some of the lower chamfers have been removed. The comparison material provided by the applicant illustrates that these changes result in a slightly heavier and less slender tower expression, particularly when viewed from the harbour (refer to Figure 2, Appendices). In addition, the removal of parts of the earlier vertical expression and the simplification of some façade and podium elements reduce some of the sculptural refinement present in the earlier scheme. Notwithstanding this, the proposal still presents a high standard of architectural design overall and positive variation in form and façade composition.

The podium forms continue to provide positive visual variation and a strong human-scaled base. The different façade treatments across P1, P2, and P3, including the use of glazing, vertical fins, solid panels, and brick elements, create clear differentiation across the lower levels. The revised P3 form is somewhat reduced and simplified in scale and programme relative to the R.C. scheme, and the Urban Room canopy has also been reduced in extent and height. In my view, these changes do not materially change the overall merits of the proposal; the podium level still presents a well-articulated and visually engaging response, with meaningful breaks in built form and a continued distinction between public, semi-public, and private elements.

The two tower façades remain positively differentiated from one another. Tower 1 continues to read as the more neutral and commercial tower, while Tower 2 presents a warmer and more residential

expression through its tone, balcony treatment, and façade composition. Although the FTA amendments simplify aspects of Tower 2, including the removal of balconies from Levels 8 to 20 and replacement with inset façade panels, the tower still retains a distinct and more residential character. From the immediate surrounding context, the proposal continues to achieve a good level of visual interest and sufficient variation in form and façade composition to avoid an overly bulky or mechanically repetitive built form outcome.

Overall, while the amended FTA scheme is somewhat simplified when compared with the earlier R.C version, the proposal remains generally consistent with H8.8.2(1)(a) in relation to variation in building form and visual interest, including the use of articulation, material variation, façade differentiation, and a clear podium-tower composition.

5.7 Residential Amenity

The residential component within Tower 2 continues to present a generally positive amenity outcome. The units are mostly well oriented, with a predominance of east- and west-facing apartments and some north-facing end units. The number of south-facing units remains limited. In general, the layouts appear functional, and the tower form allows a good standard of outlook and aspect for high-density city centre development. Access is provided via an internal lobby and central core, avoiding the use of external access walkways or breezeways. Balconies are generally integrated into the façade rather than expressed as dominant cantilevered elements, which also contributes positively to the overall architectural composition.

5.8 Conclusion

The proposal would deliver a substantial transformation of an underutilised and prominent city centre site, replacing the existing Downtown Carpark with a dense mixed-use precinct of significantly higher urban design quality. In overall terms, the scheme achieves a strong podium-tower composition, highly activated street edges, a permeable internal public realm structure, and a generally high standard of architectural design. The proposal would materially improve pedestrian amenity, public realm quality, and site activation when compared with the existing condition, and is broadly consistent with the City Centre Zone's expectation for intensive, high-quality redevelopment in this location.

The most significant urban design concerns remain the extent of the departure from the planned waterfront transition under the Harbour Edge Height Control Plane, the residual wind sensitivity in some pedestrian areas, the lack of continuous verandah cover along Customs Street West, and the shading effects on valued public open spaces at certain times.

While the amended fast-track version retains the core strengths of the earlier scheme, some aspects have been simplified or reduced, including parts of the public realm interface and tower articulation. In my view, these changes do not fundamentally alter the quality of the proposal, but they do temper some of the refinement and public realm benefits evident in the earlier RC version.

The key positive urban design outcomes of the proposal are:

- the substantial regeneration of a prominent and underperforming city centre site
- a strong podium-tower built form with generally slender tower outcomes
- highly activated street edges and a strong reduction in vehicular dominance
- a permeable laneway network and a high-quality Urban Room
- generally good CPTED outcomes, passive surveillance, and street/public realm visibility
- a high standard of architectural design, façade variation, and material differentiation
- generally positive residential amenity outcomes within Tower 2

The key urban design concerns and information gaps are:

- the extent of the HEHCP departure and the resulting compression of the intended waterfront transition
- residual wind sensitivity in some pedestrian areas, including Lower Hobson Street, the Urban Room, and Customs Street West
- the lack of continuous verandah cover along Customs Street West
- the reduced quality of parts of the public realm interface in the amended scheme, including the hotel drop-off arrangement
- the shading effects on valued public open spaces at certain times
- the lack of a clear comparative assessment demonstrating the shading effects of the additional upper-level bulk

Overall, the proposal presents high urban design merit and is generally supported from an urban design perspective. However, the concerns and information gaps identified above remain relevant to the Panel's final evaluation. In particular, the identified public realm effects associated with shading and wind require further resolution.

6.0 Section 67 Information Gap

A key outstanding information gap is in the shading assessment, regarding the absence of a clear comparative assessment identifying the incremental shading effects generated by the additional upper-level bulk of the proposal. While the applicant has noted that some of the identified shading effects on nearby public spaces arise from parts of the building not above the HEHCP, the material provided still does not fully demonstrate the extent to which the additional upper-level massing contributes to shading effects.

7.0 Recommendation

I maintain the key urban design recommendations previously identified in my earlier S67 urban design feedback.

In particular, further consideration and refinement are recommended in relation to:

- The detailed resolution of the Customs Street West frontage, including the weather protection outcome and the pedestrian interface associated with the hotel drop-off area
- Design responses that may further mitigate residual wind effects, particularly where these affect pedestrian amenity and public realm experience
- Further refinement of the hotel drop-off area to improve pedestrian amenity, spatial clarity, and the interface between pedestrian circulation and vehicle movement, including consideration of stronger landscape buffer and threshold treatment, as identified in my earlier S67 urban design feedback.

8.0 Proposed Conditions

Appendix 24, conditions of consent, covers conditions that are relevant to urban design and public realm, that include: 46, 48, 51, 53, 115, 134–138, and 140–141, which appropriately address final architectural detailing, landscape design, CPTED/surveillance, lighting, wind, hotel pick-up/drop-off management, and landscape implementation.

I recommend that **Condition 48** be further expanded to include the detailed design of the hotel pick-up/drop-off interface for delineation between pedestrian and vehicle areas.

Recommended New Clause for Condition 48:

The finalised landscape plans must include detailed design of the hotel pick-up and drop-off interface, including landscape buffer, paving differentiation, surface treatment, and any kerb, planter or level-change details.

Advice note:

- This information is necessary to clearly distinguish the public pedestrian route along Customs Street West from the hotel drop-off and waiting areas, while maintaining safe and legible movement for all users.

Planner to use and appropriate condition to ensure that **Conditions 48** and **Condition 136 clause(a)(vi)** are monitored together.

9.0 Supporting Documents

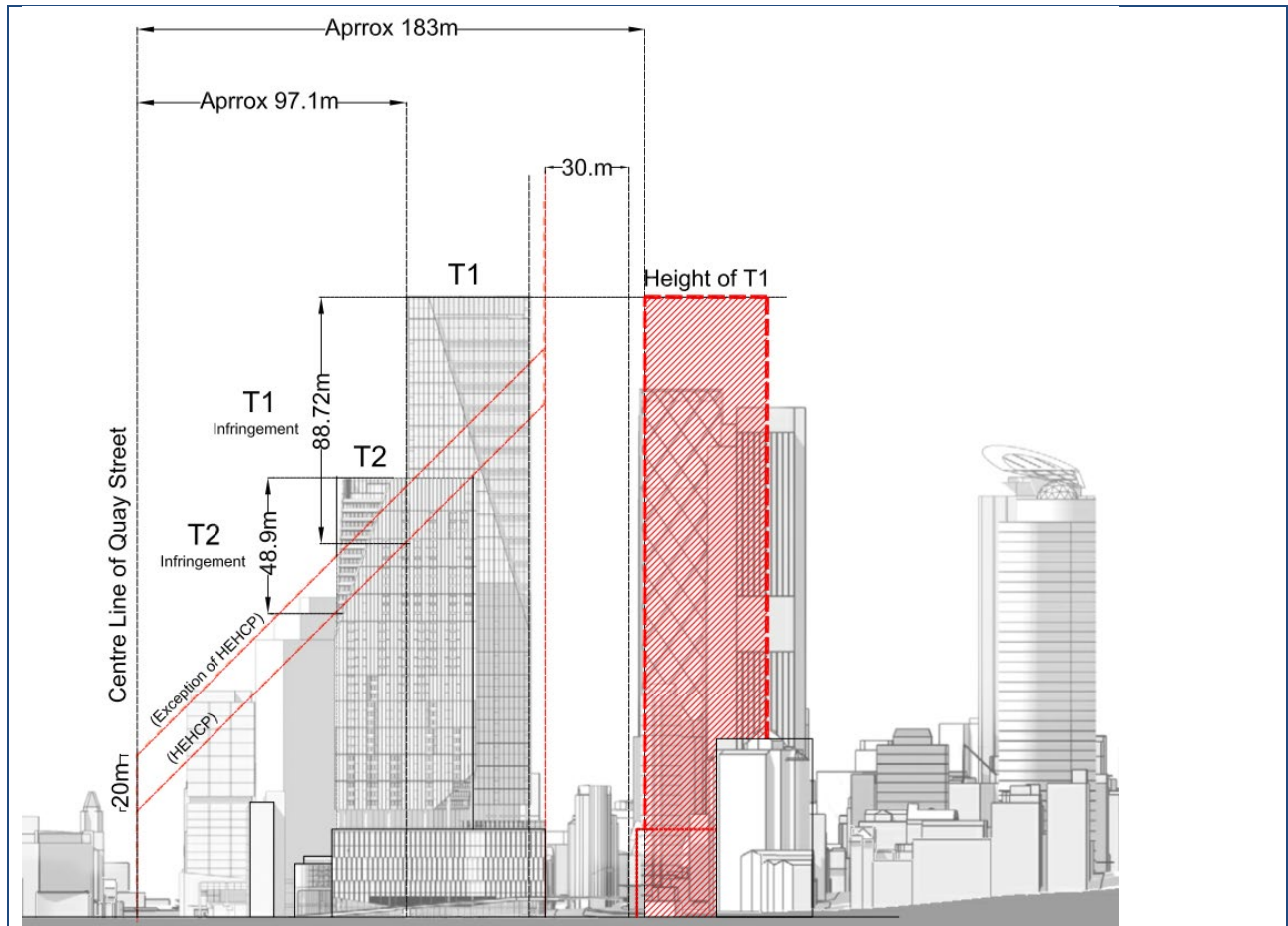


Figure 1. The extent of the proposed HEHCP infringements of T1 compared against a tower of a similar height (in red) that complies with other controls in this location.

RC2



FTA



Figure 2. The expression of the chamfers as experienced from the harbour. R.C And Fast Track Versions.

Appendix A. Urban Good, Auckland Council Urban Design Unit. *Tāmaki Makaurau City Centre Public Life Survey, Summer Edition 2024*. Knowledge Auckland.

2024.<https://knowledgeauckland.org.nz/media/mc5px5my/t%C4%81maki-makaurau-city-centre-public-life-survey-summer-urban-good-aug-2024.pdf>