

AUCKLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

REGIONAL PLAN COASTAL: PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE 3

**EVALUATION OF SUBMISSIONS
RELATING TO URBAN DESIGN ISSUES**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Auckland Regional Council has requested Chow:Hill Architects Ltd. to advise them on submissions to the Regional Plan: Coastal, Plan Change 3, relating to the urban design concepts informing the proposed redevelopment of the Wynyard Quarter.
- 1.2 Plan Change 3 amends the Regional Plan: Coastal to address the management of the coastal marine area (water space and wharves) around the Wynyard Quarter. The Plan Change provides for changes in the area expected as a result of the redevelopment of the former Tank Farm, which is addressed by the proposed plan change to the Auckland City District Plan (Central Area Section).
- 1.3 Chow:Hill Architects were engaged by Auckland Regional Council in 2006 to advise on the implications of Auckland City's urban design framework for the coastal marine area. Prior to that, Joanna Smith was part of the urban design team preparing that framework for Auckland City, along with consultants Transurban Ltd and R.A. Skidmore Urban Design Ltd.

2.0 Submissions

- 2.1 A number of submissions to the Coastal Plan Change relate to urban design issues on the adjacent land in the proposed redevelopment of Wynyard Quarter. Some of those submissions in fact relate to Auckland City's District Plan and are beyond the jurisdiction of the coastal plan. However, Auckland Regional Council is seeking advice on the land use components affecting the wharves and water-space, in particular the Marine Events Centre, development on Wynyard Wharf and the proposed Te Wero bridge.
- 2.2 Auckland Regional Council has identified the submissions relating to the urban design topics as:

Issue	Submission #
Height limits	General: 2/2, 4/1, 18/1, 25/12, 51/3 Marine Events: 3 /4, 14/13,
Wynyard Wharf development	9/4, 19/4, 19/9, 19/10, 32/9, 33/11, 33/12, 9/5
Marine Events Centre	9/2, 14/7, 14/8, 26/1, 27/1, 28/1, 29/1, 31/1, 21/1, 22/1, 21/2, 22/2, 26/2, 27/2, 28/2, 29/2, 30/2, 21/4, 22/4, 26/4, 27/4, 28/4, 29/4, 30/4, 24/2, 24/10, 24/12
Appendix J: urban design criteria	28/8, 53/2, 53/3, 59/1, 59/29, 59/31
Parking and offices on wharves	32/5, 32/6, 32/7, 32/8
Te Wero bridge	9/3, 12/1, 13/17, 14/3, 14/4, 19/6, 33/4, 33/9, 34/4, 34/5, 34/7, 45/14, 46/1, 46/2, 46/4, 57/15, 3/1, 5/1, 6/1, 14/5, 14/6, 19/5, 34/6, 46/3, 54/9

- 2.3 Auckland Regional Council is seeking general responses to these submissions and recommendations for any amendments to the Plan Change. Specific advice on carparking is being sought from Flow Transportation Specialists Ltd.

3.0 Height limits

- 3.1 Submissions relate to both general comments about height limits on the Wynyard Quarter (subject to plan changes to Auckland City's District Plan) to those more specific about the height limits on the Marine Events Centre proposed for the Halsey Street Extension Wharf.
- 3.2 Auckland City's plan change for Wynyard Quarter is based on a strategy of a main core height of 31m. in the centre of the precinct, stepping down towards the north to Jellicoe Wharf and the point park, and east/west to Beaumont and Halsey Streets. The plan also allows for a series of tower elements (up to 52m.) on identified sites along the Jellicoe axis, aligned with Quay Street, to establish a visual relationship along that axis.
- 3.3 The District Plan plan change is specific that the skyline of Wynyard Quarter remain subservient to that of the CBD, with the maximum heights lower than that of the CBD which also rises to the ridgelines. Visual assessments prepared as part of Auckland City's plan change note that the CBD skyline will still dominate from most long views, with the key ridgelines of St Mary's Bay and Ponsonby retaining their importance.
- 3.4 Auckland City's plan change is specifically allowing for taller "marker" buildings to create height variation to provide visual interest, enhance legibility (specifically along the Quay Street axis linking the precinct with the CBD) and relate to the city skyline. Within the plan change, provision is made for those taller elements to be subject to a Comprehensive Area Structure Plan with a detailed set of design assessment criteria to ensure those buildings are considered in the wider context of their setting.
- 3.5 Building height variation, combined with the FAR, will provide a greater variation in skyline which also characterises Auckland's CBD. The alternative of a single height limit can create "benching" - a more monotonous horizontal skyline, out of character with the rest of Auckland's CBD.
- 3.6 The Wynyard Quarter has been identified as an optimal location for intensive urban development, based on its good access to passenger transport and CBD infrastructure. A more intensive built form provides for a wide range of activities, in keeping with sustainable urban development principles, balanced by a network of public spaces to provide amenity and greater legibility to the precinct. A key change from current built form is the northern point park will become a large area of open space to replace the existing storage tanks.
- 3.7 Specific submissions related to the height of the Marine Events Centre on the Halsey Street Extension Wharf, suggesting it be no higher than the current America's Cup Bases (12m.) rather than the proposed 15m. above wharf level. As noted, the height strategy for the Wynyard Quarter is for the taller buildings to be centralised, stepping down to the water's edge east/west and north. Along the Jellicoe Street axis, the buildings step from 18.5m. at Site 15 (to the south of the proposed Marine Events Centre) to 25m. and above moving west. The proposed 15m. height is therefore not inappropriate for the wharf given that it steps down from surrounding buildings and is set back from the water's edge by 15m. on the western side and 20m. on the eastern side (noting that the seaward 10m on each side is to be a public walkway).
- 3.8 The coastal plan change also specifies that buildings on the extension wharf "are designed and located to contribute to the wharf's key role in a marine events precinct" and that they are "of a design that reflects their maritime use and location". Given that current practice typically requires an internal stud height of 12m. for multi-purpose exhibition or conference centres, the 15m. height above wharf level is a minimum to accommodate the function of the marine events centre.

4.0 Wynyard Wharf development

- 4.1 Several submissions were received opposing commercial development (other than marine or fishing related activities) on Wynyard Wharf as well as one suggesting a road be provided on the wharf itself (separate response prepared by Flow Transportation).
- 4.2 The proposed plan change requires a resource consent for any new building on Wynyard Wharf. Buildings and structures will be designed in accordance with Appendix J Urban Design Criteria in the Coastal Plan Change. The policies require integration with any Comprehensive Area Structure Plan approved for the adjacent land.
- 4.3 The rationale for development on Wynyard Wharf is to support marine related activities and open up the currently inaccessible wharf to public access. A key objective of the Wynyard Point redevelopment is to retain a strong marine industry in the precinct, and development on this wharf supports this strategy. The design strategy suggests low-rise buildings with activities to support the use of the wharf for the fishing fleet and large vessels.
- 4.4 Occupied ground floor frontages, with office or retail uses, help to activate the streets or promenades and support pedestrian activity. Buildings are restricted to the southern end of the wharf, with the northern end designated for recreational activities related to the northern park. The edges of the wharf and areas between the buildings will be retained a public accessways.

5.0 Marine Events Centre

- 5.1 Submissions relating to the proposed marine events centre are generally concerned about the centre becoming a general purpose events centre (and its impact on surrounding uses). Additional submissions suggest that the centre be located south of Te Wero bridge on the existing America's Cup sites.
- 5.2 The policies in the Coastal Plan Change recognise that the eastern side of the precinct has a greater focus on public entertainment and recreation activities as well as the continuation of port and marine activities. The emphasis on public use and enjoyment, as a base for marine-related events, is recognised in the rules with the need to consider the visual effects and operation of other uses.
- 5.3 An events centre appropriate for marine-related activities has been identified as an important component of the water-based activities in the Viaduct Harbour, requiring the proximity to the water's edge, the CBD and public transport. It is anticipated that the events centre can be used for other events to generate more life and activity around the waterfront.
- 5.4 The effects of those events, including noise, traffic management and temporary structures, will be managed by the rules in the proposed plan change. The temporary effects on other industries, such as fishing or port activities will also be managed as part of the events management regime, regardless of whether the event is marine-related or a more general public event. It is considered that any adverse effects from events can be mitigated.

6.0 Appendix J: urban design criteria

- 6.1 Submissions relate to the appropriateness of the design criteria if applied to marine industrial, port-related or similar activities.
- 6.2 Throughout New Zealand, and particularly in recent plan changes in Auckland City, urban design criteria have become a key tool in outlining expectations for building design and performance beyond a simple rules-based approach. In general the proposed criteria relate to the impact of the building on the public realm, both streets and public spaces, and the provision of pedestrian amenity and safety. Additional sustainability requirements are noted as “where appropriate” in recognition of the sensitive marine environment and the importance of this precinct as a waterfront destination.
- 6.3 Industrial, passenger transport and marine-related activities can all be contained in buildings which have a beneficial impact on the public realm, as demonstrated by some of the more recent industrial structures developed in the Wynyard precinct and other parts of Auckland. The proposed design criteria are not arduous in terms of current architectural practice and provide sufficient flexibility for customised design solutions for any given site or use. As with most design criteria, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate the rationale for the design approach taken and a coherent design strategy that accomplishes the broader goals for more varied commercial use and wider public enjoyment of the precinct.

7.0 Wharves – parking and office uses

- 7.1 Submissions relate to development on Wynyard Wharf, in particular consistency with Auckland City’s District Plan change requirements for a comprehensive development area structure plan (CASP) and travel management plans.
- 7.2 Auckland City’s Plan Modification 4 places limitations on the amount of office activity to be established on any given building platform and the amount of carparking. It also proposes that new building heights are enabled only following the approval of a Comprehensive Area Structure Plan.
- 7.3 There is merit in requiring development on Wynyard Wharf to conform to the requirements for development on the adjacent land parcels. Amendment to Rules 25.5.9 and 25.5.30 requiring a comprehensive area structure plan and travel management plan for traffic generating activities, as per Auckland City’s Plan Modification 4, is a reasonable approach to ensure that the effects of both land and wharf-based activities are considered in a consistent fashion. However, it may be that a consistent approach can be achieved without requiring a comprehensive area structure plan for buildings on the wharf. It may be useful to consider whether all the district plan requirements of a CASP are relevant to the wharf situation or whether the same outcomes can be achieved through assessment criteria in the rules for new buildings and through appendix J. The specification of building platforms and accessway widths in the coastal plan already achieves some of the key requirements of a CASP.
- 7.4 From an urban design viewpoint, the plan change’s provisions regarding car parking on wharves are supported. The plan change currently limits car parking to vehicles directly associated with port activities and ancillary services, and states the wharves should not be used for general public car parking. Using these wharves as public car parks is likely to lessen their amenity value and their contribution to the pedestrian accessibility and attractiveness of the waterfront area. It is noted that Flow Transportation are also addressing the issues of carparking and transport demand.

8.0 Te Wero Bridge

- 8.1 Submissions relate to the appropriateness of a bridge link from Quay Street, its use for passenger transport (particularly buses) and the impact on marine traffic into the inner Viaduct Harbour. Flow Transportation is commenting on the overall traffic and transportation effects of the bridge.
- 8.2 Connecting the CBD to the redeveloped Wynyard Quarter is critical to the success of the commercial, entertainment and recreation activities of the precinct, requiring a direct pedestrian link along the Quay Street axis and beyond the downtown waterfront to Tamaki Drive. This main “waterfront axis” is a key organising element, with a continuous urban promenade from downtown to Jellicoe Street. Improving the connectivity of street networks is a core principle in creating urban environments that provide a choice of routes and encourage pedestrian movement. Encouraging pedestrian access and reducing dependence on motor vehicles into and around the Wynyard Quarter is part of the underlying ethos of both the District Plan and Coastal Plan changes.
- 8.3 Te Wero bridge has been envisaged as a landmark structure defining the entrance to the Viaduct Harbour. It has been the subject of a design competition, with rigorous functional and appearance criteria in the brief to ensure it allows efficient movement of both land and water-based transport, as well as an appropriate visual identity for the waterfront precinct. The continued operation of the inner Viaduct Harbour, and the marine and fishing activities have been taken into account in the plan change and the specifications for the Te Wero bridge. A management regime for both the bridge and the associated marine events precinct will take into account the operations of marine and fishing activities.
- 8.4 A resource consent will be required for the bridge, which will require consideration of the potential impact on boat access to the viaduct harbour, the open space and pedestrian use of Te Wero Island, and existing marine and /or fishing industry and activities adjacent. In addition, any such application will need to have regard to or address a range of other matters.