Before a Board of Inquiry

Basin Bridge Proposal

Under the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act)

In the matter of a Board of Inquiry appointed under section 149J of the Act to consider the New Zealand Transport Agency's notice of requirement and five resource consent applications for the Basin Bridge Proposal.

Summary of Evidence of Gavin Craig Lister for the New Zealand Transport Agency (Landscape)

Dated 2 April 2014
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this summary statement is to summarise my evidence in chief dated 25 October 2013 and rebuttal evidence dated 21 January 2014.

Structure of this summary statement

1.2 This summary statement covers the following:

a My role in this Project;

b The significance and character of the Basin Reserve area;

c The adverse landscape effects of the Project;

d The measures taken to avoid, remedy and mitigate adverse effects;

e The positive landscape effects;

f My review of the alternatives that were considered;

g Matters raised in submissions; and

h Matters raised in evidence that I responded to in rebuttal.

Role in Project

1.3 I was engaged to provide an independent review of the design quality of the Basin Bridge Project's (Project) landscape components (i.e. by someone not involved in the design process), and an overview of the project’s landscape effects. My evidence is complementary to the more detailed evidence of Ms Deyana Popova and Mr Kevin Brewer.

1.4 The significance and character of the Basin Reserve area (or ‘precinct’) derives from its strategic location at the junction of north-south and east-west routes; the distinctive spatial form of its topography, surrounding streets and buildings; the character of the Basin Reserve itself as a landmark cricket ground; its character as a large roundabout; and its historical associations. The character has evolved over time in response to changing circumstance. Important changes include the original layout and idea of a
maritime basin connected by canal to the sea; the re-purposing of the basin as a recreation reserve; the subsequent clustering of institutions around the reserve; the emergence of the Basin Reserve precinct as a strategic junction following the construction of the Mount Victoria tunnel; its subsequent re-configuration as a ‘roundabout’; and the ‘blight’ that has affected the area because of the long-standing roading plans and uncertainty.

1.5 The **Project** entails grade separation of westbound SH1 traffic from local north-south traffic. I understand from the evidence that such grade separation is necessary for both the east-west SH1 traffic, and for the local north-south network as a necessary component of the proposed ‘growth spine’.

1.6 There will be some unavoidable **adverse effects** on the landscape qualities of the Basin Reserve precinct as a result of the Project, Such effects include the following:

a Effects on the character of the Basin Reserve precinct including erosion of the rectilinear spatial definition and nature of the perimeter streets. Such effects will be greatest in the north-east corner of the precinct than on the north side of the Basin Reserve;

b Visual amenity effects of the Bridge itself. Once again, such effects will be greatest in the north-east corner;

c Potential views of the Bridge from within the Basin Reserve itself, although such effects would be effectively remedied by the proposed ‘Northern Gateway Building’ (*NGB*);

d Effects on views and the sense of connection between Kent and Cambridge Terraces and the Basin Reserve; and

e Visual amenity and privacy effects from nearby properties, the most affected of which are those in lower Ellice Street.

1.7 Measures incorporated into the proposal that will substantially **avoid, remedy and mitigate** potential adverse effects comprise the following:
a The alignment of the Bridge on the north side of Buckle Street consistent with the urban grid (such alignment cannot be maintained in the north-east corner which consequently contributes to the greater adverse effects in that area);

b The Bridge design which in visual terms means it will be lighter and more elegant in appearance compared to some other bridges, and brighter beneath the Bridge;

c The new building and three-dimensional ‘green screen’ which will reinstate the corner of Kent Terrace and Ellice Street, ‘key’ the Bridge into the Kent Terrace streetscape, and mitigate visual effects from the Grandstand Apartments;

d The ‘Northern Gateway Building’ and additional trees which will screen the Bridge from within the Basin Reserve; and

e The streetscape design within the precinct’s perimeter streets, including the alignment of street trees to help define the perimeter and soften views of the Bridge.

1.8 **Positive landscape effects** comprise the entry plaza in front of the Basin Reserve gates on Kent / Cambridge Terraces, and the extension of the National War Memorial Park (‘**NWM Park**’) to Cambridge Terrace.

1.9 The Basin Bridge Project will also be a ‘stake-in-the-ground’ with regards the ‘blight’ that has affected the Basin Reserve, particularly on the north and north-east parts of the precinct.

1.10 The **Urban and Landscape Design Framework** (‘**ULDF**’) is sound for the following reasons:

a The design principles are based on a thorough understanding of the context and potential effects of the proposal, the principles have been given effect to in the design, and the design execution is of a high standard; and

b The design principles and plans are sufficiently clear and detailed for the ULDF to provide a good foundation for detail design.
1.11 **Conditions** have been proposed based on ULDF. The most relevant conditions with regards landscape matters are DC9 to DC12 which require design in general accordance with the ULDF and Schedule 1. The latter is a refined version of principles drawn from the ULDF. I had input to refining Schedule 1, in part in response to Ms Weeber’s comments. I consider the conditions in conjunction with Schedule 1 and the ULDF provide a sound basis to manage the detail design and implementation.

1.12 Of the **alternatives** that I reviewed:

a. The at-grade options that retained the existing layout more or less (i.e. ‘do-minimum’, Basin Reserve Roundabout Enhancement Option (‘BRREO’)) would maintain the existing character of the precinct (more or less), but I understand would not effectively address transportation issues, in particular north-south multimodal transport;

b. The long tunnel option (between Taranaki Street and Paterson Street) would similarly maintain existing qualities of the precinct, but I understand was ruled out because of cost; and

c. The proposed Option A is the best of the other grade-separated alternatives that I considered in landscape terms. This includes Option B and Option X.

1.13 Matters raised in **submissions** that I responded to include:

a. It is the specific design and effects of the proposed Basin Bridge that should be appraised –not the generic effects of other dissimilar overpasses;

b. Concerns that the ultimate Bridge design may differ from that depicted in the application should be addressed by way of conditions;

c. While the Bridge and NGB will affect views and sense of spatial connection between Cambridge and Kent Terraces and the Basin Reserve, such effects are offset by improved street level views into the Basin Reserve pitch itself through the ground level of the NGB; and
d The bridge will not sever Wellington on an east-west line: Overall the north-south connections will be improved and the pedestrian/cycle bridge will improve east-west connections.

1.14 Matters that I responded to in my rebuttal evidence include:

a The Project is not focused on private vehicle use. On the contrary I understand it to address multi-modal circulation;

b The Project will not ‘dismantle’ the Basin Reserve roundabout. The Basin Reserve will continue to operate as a roundabout;

c The Bridge is not a ‘motorway’. It is to be two lanes wide, includes a pedestrian/cycle path, and is part of a 50kph route that is largely within street corridors;

d The Bridge will not subdue or ‘fill’ the topography. If anything, the manner in which the Bridge spans the Kent and Cambridge Terraces valley and enters the tunnel beneath the Mt Cook ridge will highlight the topography;

e The Project will not limit views of the Carillon in any meaningful way. Rather, it will open up new views of the Carillon, and the extension of NWM Park will enhance the approaches to the Carillon;

f The NGB will not destroy an order within the Basin Reserve that is set-in-stone. The existing arrangement of elements around the Basin Reserve has evolved in response to both external context (streets) and internal functions (layout of the cricket pitch). I understand the NGB will likewise sensibly respond to the function of the Basin Reserve as a cricket ground, and it will respond as a gateway to the external Kent and Cambridge Terraces axis;

g The NGB is a better solution than a screen erected on the Bridge to screen traffic because the NGB will screen both the moving traffic and the Bridge itself, and it means the mitigation can be incorporated within a structure that has functional use for the Basin Reserve. While the NGB will have its own adverse effects on the spatial connection between Kent and Cambridge Terraces and the Basin Reserve as discussed
above, it also provides the opportunity to improve street level views to the pitch.

Dated 2 April 2014

Gavin Craig Lister