

# Urban Design Assessment

## 61 Molesworth Street, Wellington

On behalf of Prime Property Limited

14/07/2021 – Submission to EPA

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Background and Scope .....	3
Documents and information considered in this review .....	3
Assessment methodology .....	3
The Site .....	4
Brief description of the proposal .....	4
Urban Design Assessment .....	5
1. Design coherence .....	5
2. Relationship to context .....	6
3. Siting, Height, Bulk and Form .....	7
4. Edge treatment .....	9
5. Façade composition and building tops .....	10
6. Materials and detail .....	11
7. Design Excellence .....	12
Summary .....	13

# Introduction

## Background and Scope

This urban design assessment has been undertaken as an appraisal of the proposed new office building at 61 Molesworth Street, Wellington for Prime Properties Ltd.

It has been prepared by Tim Robinson, Senior Urban Designer and Associate Principal at Jasmax, and reviewed by Alistair Ray, Head of Urban Design and Principal at Jasmax.

Tim Robinson has over 20 years of urban design and architecture experience from the UK and New Zealand. He was a member and chair of Hobsonville Point Design Panel for 8 years and registered with the UK Architects Registration Board for 18 years.

Alistair Ray has over 20 years of urban design experience from the UK and New Zealand. He is a current chair of the Auckland Urban Design Panel and the Hobsonville Point Design Panel, and chair of the national committee of the NZ Urban Design Forum.

Although Jasmax are the architects for this building, neither Tim nor Alistair has not been part of the design team.

## Documents and information considered in this review

The following documents and drawings have been considered in this review:

- Resource Consent Application Design Statement by Jasmax – July 2020 – Rev D.

## Assessment methodology

When conducting an urban design assessment, it is important to follow a recognised methodology or assessment framework in order to avoid questions of inappropriate subjectivity. In this case, the development site is located within the “Wellington Central Area” and is therefore covered by Wellington City Council’s “Central Area Urban Design Guide” (CAUDG) (Last amended 12 September 2012).

Wellington City Council's District Plan requires all new buildings within the Central Area to be assessed against the design criteria contained within the CAUDG. This set of assessment criteria therefore forms the assessment methodology for this Urban Design Assessment.

The intent of the CAUDG is:

*To achieve high quality buildings, places and spaces in the Central Area of the city.*

This will be achieved by ensuring buildings:

- are coherently designed
- make a considered response to context
- address heritage values
- establish positive visual effects
- provide good quality living and working environments
- integrate environmental sustainability principles, and
- provide conditions of safety and accessibility

To achieve this, the CAUDG contains 6 urban design matters, with specific objectives and guidelines. These are:

1. Design coherence.
2. Relationship to context.

3. Siting, height, bulk and form.
4. Edge treatment.
5. Facade composition and building tops.
6. Materials and detail.

These matters will be used as the basis for this assessment. Many of these design matters overlap in scope. To avoid repetition, issues already covered under those headings are cross-referenced, where appropriate.

## The Site

The site is located at 55 - 61 Molesworth Street in the central are of Wellington. The site is part of a block defined by Molesworth street to the east, Collina Terrace to the north and east and a Cathedral parking lot to the south. The Resource Consent report captures key attributes of the site as follows:

- This is a prominent site with 360-degree views to the harbor, city and town greenbelt. It is location at the transition between the broader higher rise commercial setting to the north and east of the site and the lower rise Parliamentary Precinct to the south.
- The site is also well connected to State Highway 1, public transport routes, including the central train station and ferry terminal and is also conveniently located with excellent walking and bus connections to central Wellington.
- The Heritage identified themes have been focused on the Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, which is adjacent to the site on the southern boundary. Careful consideration is needed in respect to overall bulk and massing, proportions of the bell tower, street level smaller elements composition and alignment, and the buildings materiality.
- The character of the surrounding buildings is low to higher rise with an external appearance primarily of masonry facades with punched or strip windows.

## Brief description of the proposal

A resource consent is sought by the applicant, Prime Property, for a new building to replace the previous structure damaged in the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake. The proposal is for a 12-storey office building with ground floor retail and one floor of basement parking and end of trip facilities, comprising 25,020m<sup>2</sup> of GFA / 21,885m<sup>2</sup> NLA.

The design is articulated as a two-storey plinth which addresses the street and cathedral boundaries with a language of solidity with incised openings and canopy elements, surmounted with glazed box. Pedestrian entries face the site corner at Molesworth Street and the church, with vehicle entry off Molesworth Street adjacent the entry to Collina Terrace.

Large commercial office floorplates are a key design driver, with a central circulation core and views outwards in all directions through a variety of glazing configurations dependent on context.

This high element is stepped in roofline profile and in plan as a response both to the proportions of the church bell tower and to southerly wind exposure. The overall height exceeds the basic permitted height above ground levels and utilises the Design Excellence provisions to achieve maximum height.

# Urban Design Assessment

Each of the urban design matters identified in the CAUDG will be considered in turn (recognising that some elements duplicate and cross-over each other).

A brief description of each of the 6 design matters and the corresponding objectives or guidelines will be followed by an assessment of the proposal against each of the design matters.

## 1. Design coherence

*“A new building or public space should have its own inherent design integrity and coherence”*

*“The notions of design coherence and relationship to context are over-arching principles that underlie all the objectives and guidelines”*

### Summary

The ‘design coherence’ objective seeks to ensure that the new development exhibits design integrity and coherence. This requires that the site planning, form, massing and external appearance of new developments are based on an integrated design concept. The aim is to deliver a compositionally coherent outcome that is concept-driven and context-specific, and which appropriately addresses all the Design Guide requirements.

### Objective (O1.1):

To ensure each design solution is coherently designed, demonstrates design integrity, and integrates all relevant design criteria in the best possible way.

### Guidelines references:

‘Internal consistency and integration’; design composition with overall coherence that integrates the various design guide requirements.

### Assessment:

#### *Design Coherence*

The conceptual diagram for the proposal is illustrated in the “Design Drivers” section and reinforced in the street-level contextual views in the Planning section. There are two complementary elements with contrasting conceptual approaches in form, proportion, use, plan, façade treatments and materiality.

The lower element provides for an approach which can create positive street edge conditions with a human scale and presence, enables horizontal proportions to be established towards the lower elements of the church (wings and entrances), articulates the different uses and activities in this part of the building, and enables reception, delivery and parking entrance programme areas to be resolved within the plan.

The upper element maximises commercial floorplates and amenity outlook while being articulated with vertical proportions and plan stepping which relate to the church bell tower. The glass box is further attuned to context with a raised central roofline volume which relates to the church’s cardinal axis (the nave), and with elevational treatments which both reference the cathedral with verticality and express differences between elevational orientations (north/south versus east/west).

Overall, the conceptual approach is judged to be simple and strong, enabling successful integration and response to the variety of design guide requirements which follow.

## 2. Relationship to context

*“Relating to context means understanding and responding in a considered way to conditions beyond the site.”*

*“All development should consider multiple contexts. These include the local street environment and the wider neighbourhood. When a development is large relative to its neighbours, is prominently located or accommodates an activity of public significance, the context of the city itself needs to be considered.”*

*“A successful relationship to context arises where the defining characteristics and patterns of the context are identified, understood, and responded to in a considered way.”*

### Summary

The ‘context’ objectives call for development that recognises and builds upon the specific characteristics of its setting. The related guidelines encourage development that maintains established and valued neighbourhood patterns, refers to positive precedents, and enhances the local sense of place.

#### Objective (O2.1):

To recognise the unique qualities and sense of place of every urban setting, and respond to and enhance these with new development.

#### Objective (O2.2):

To maintain or enhance the quality of the settings of individual heritage buildings, including those in heritage areas.

#### Guidelines references:

Consistency or contrast; positive precedents; achieving consistency; developing an authentic sense of place.

#### Assessment:

##### *Sense of Place*

The precinct around this site is noted as being varied in built form and character, and the site is located at a transitional point between the distinct government and parliament area to the higher rise setting to the north and east. The ages of surrounding buildings are highly varied, with scatterings of older villas as well as many later twentieth century buildings. The elevation of the land, lower heights of older buildings to the west and south, location of the site at the head of Pipitea Street, creates exposure to distant views in all directions, as well as ensuring the site contributes to the skyline from locations such as Oriental Parade.

The adjacent church on the southern side is by far the strongest element informing the sense of place. The church formally addresses the forecourt of parliament and is entered from that southern approach, presenting a relatively blank rear elevation and car parking area to the north and boundary of this site. The height of the bell tower, length and height of the nave, lower side aisles and stepped low forms for chapels and ancillary accommodation, together with a distinct materiality and punched-opening language are important character elements. Naturally, the church forms a powerful object within the surrounding urban fabric.

This strong neighbour suggests that a strongly assertive design response would not be necessary nor an appropriate strategy for promoting sense of place. How the proposal responds sensitively and respectfully to this adjacent character element is one of the most important questions for this assessment and is considered throughout the following sections.

##### *Heritage*

Maintaining and enhancing the heritage values of the cathedral is arguably not a simple case of either following consistency nor contrast. The proposal draws upon both strategies, taking cues from the proportions and materiality of the church while not attempting to mimic.

This approach is apparent in the respectful horizontal lines and heights, and in the tonality of materials used to finish the plinth element. The location of the entrance ensures that boundary between the sites is active, occupied and treated as with primacy despite the church elevation being a secondary aspect. While not overt, there are parallels between the interior layout of the church and the spatial sequence and openings of the lobby space.

It is also present in the vertical massing proportions and façade articulation of the upper glazed form and the plan stepping at the southeast corner, which talk to elements on the church including the form and detail of belltower openings, orientation of longer smooth wall extents on the sides of the naves and proportions of buttress forms.

It is clear the design acknowledges and engages with the heritage elements of the neighbouring site. The relationships noted above are successful in instigating a relationship which aims to be respectful, and which prioritises the importance of the church as a key object in the city fabric.

The most difficult heritage-related question for this design is whether the height, bulk and form proposed are appropriate in relation to the church, given that it is taller than the church including its belltower. A second important question is whether the façade composition and materiality of the glazed upper element appropriately balance contrast and consistency in creating a backdrop to the church.

### **3. Siting, Height, Bulk and Form**

*“The siting of buildings should allow for intended activities while also acknowledging neighbouring buildings, reinforcing valued patterns of public space, and creating positive open spaces”*

#### **Summary**

The ‘siting, height, bulk and form’ objectives, which relate to the overall scale, form and massing of new development, call for buildings that complement existing patterns of alignment and respond to and contribute positively to the scale of adjacent buildings and the amenity/quality of adjacent street/public spaces, while ensuring good on-site amenity for internal spaces. Enhancing the informal pedestrian network and pedestrian permeability is another objective.

#### **Objective O3.1:**

To complement existing patterns of alignment, and achieve a positive scale relationship with adjoining buildings and public spaces.

#### **Objective O3.2:**

To respect the setting of heritage items and identified heritage areas.

#### **Objective O3.3:**

To create coherent patterns of buildings that contribute to the amenity of neighbouring public spaces.

#### **Objective O3.4:**

To ensure that reasonable levels of ventilation, daylight and outlook are maintained in a building’s habitable spaces, should development on adjacent sites be built to the maximum standard.

#### **Objective O3.5:**

To enhance the informal pedestrian network within the Central Area by encouraging the retention and enhancement of existing pedestrian thoroughfares, and promoting the creation of new thoroughfares where they would enhance walkability and permeability for pedestrians.

#### **Guidelines references:**

Street edge definition and building alignment; height and scale relationship; building bulk; natural light, outlook and ventilation; positive open space; wind effects on public space; and, pedestrian block permeability.

#### **Assessment:**

### *Building scale and massing*

The previous section discussed how the design takes cues from the adjacent church to establish a positive relationship with that heritage element, ending with the question of whether the building's height, scale and massing was appropriate as a backdrop for the cathedral. This question must also be asked of the form from other directions.

In terms of expectations of height set by the Plan, the site has an allowable height of 43.80m, which aligns roughly with the very top of the spire feature, and a further potential allowance of 6.57m in return for achieving 'Design Excellence'. The site is rectangular, some 52m x 40m, with the longer axis running north-south. The basic allowable building envelope is therefore close to but not quite cubic.

The proposed massing is largely within the total of allowable plus Design Excellence height above ground level, with exception of a small area of low intrusion inwards from the central area of the southern boundary. There are several taller buildings nearby, and particularly along this side of Molesworth Street. While the proposal is taller than most of these, by the two storeys provided for by the Design Excellence mechanism, the building does not feel out of place with these contextual elements. Critically, it is worth asking whether reducing the building by two floors to stay within the allowable height would significantly benefit the relationship with the cathedral. This assessor does not believe so; the proposal would still be taller than the mass elements of the cathedral, being up to the height of the top of the spire feature. The overall form would be more cubic, which is likely to result in unsatisfactory vertical to horizontal proportions, a squat upper element atop the plinth.

The floorplate occupies most of the site footprint, broken into three sub-elements which align broadly with the north-south axis of the church nave, and which vary in plan and overall height. Further manipulation of massing occurs with the stepped plan at the south-eastern corner in response to the cathedral's vertical forms, to improve wind conditions and to highlight the entrance location. This overall strategy creates both street edge definition and a transition to the setback nature of the cathedral.

From these massing articulations results a building which gives the impression of a relatively simple glazed box, with most of the attention to form-making visible to the southern aspects, from south-west to south-east viewing angles. This is appropriate given the importance of the cathedral as a neighbouring landmark and ceremonial public place. The massing and height relationship with the cathedral is generally successful through the gentle referencing of forms and proportions; this is helped by the falling topography, which helps to ensure the proposed building remains a subservient backdrop behind the cathedral as the viewer moves away. At closer quarters the massing proportions of the proposed building reveal their inspiration more clearly, while the height of the proposed building does not dominate, and the belltower remains standing distinct and separate.

The tripartite linear elements are manifest from the northern aspect where they will rise over the Red Cross building and Magyar Millennium Park.

From the east, and particularly along Pipitea Street, the stepped corner creates a completely different massing perception, with one larger almost square face with two layered vertical elements to the left. The plinth reads most strongly from this aspect, underlining the tower element more than it does in the cathedral aspect. The intermediate roofline created by the 'layered' (stepped) corner helps to minimise the sense of this longer side reading as a box.

The western side of the massing is the simplest and most challenging as a mass, reading as a large unarticulated face with a setback linear element across the roof level. This elevation is also relatively close to the existing small-scale dwellings in Collina Terrace with a private boundary and shared driveway between. This simplicity of massing asks for more design development as the project proceeds; while it is not inherently unacceptable in scale and proportion, especially in light of the rising land to the west, it is dependent upon façade detail for success if it proceeds as currently illustrated.

### *Heritage*

The response to neighbouring heritage buildings has been covered in Section 2 and in the comments immediately above.

### *Contribution of building's form to adjacent public open spaces*

Three public open spaces are near to the building – Magyar Millennium Park; William Colenso Square, and the space at the front of the New Zealand Rugby Union building.

Magyar Millennium Park is to the north, largely behind the Red Cross building but with a unique curving path which connects to the northeast corner of this site. The lower western wing in the tripartite linear building plan relates closely to the edge of the Red Cross building; the two plinth floors are relatively blank towards the park due to the location of the vehicle entrance and the boundary condition to Collina Terrace entrance lot. This plinth area would benefit from further articulation to recognise the relationship to the park and reduce the visual impact of the blank walls; however, this is offset in part by the proposed highly glazed elevations above.

William Colenso Square is to the south-east on the opposite side of the street, almost out of sight from the building at street level. The proposed building has minimal shading impact on the square due to distance and other buildings. The location of the proposed building entrance and the stepped plan and massing are oriented towards lower Molesworth Street and William Colenso Square, providing a clear approach from the southeast.

The NZRU square is directly opposite the proposed building on the other side of Molesworth Street. The location of the entrance, lobby and retail are beneficial to this square in terms of street interface and activity, and the lobby/retail spaces mutually benefit from the outlook and relationship to human activity. The glazed upper floors will provide a high level of visual engagement and overlooking to the square.

The stepped plan/massing is beneficial in terms of breaking up the massing presented to the square; to increasing the view of the cathedral by pulling back from the south-east corner of the site. The square retains around 4 hours of sun access in mid-winter. Most importantly, the stepped plan form is optimal for reducing wind effects on the square as well as around the proposed building's entrance and near the corner of Magyar Millennium Park.

#### *Protecting future amenity of the building*

The large floorplate layout can access 360-degree outlook, ventilation opportunity and natural light and features multiple distant view directions. This provides immediate benefit to occupants; and the central core location provides for potential easy subdivision of floors into four quadrants which all retain these benefits.

#### *Pedestrian routes*

This site is not characterised by a need to provide through-site linkages, with public and private movements possible around all four sides.

Overall, the proposed massing is judged to be well considered and attuned to the context of the site. The western presentation of massing is the least well developed and should be considered for further attention during design development.

## **4. Edge treatment**

*“The buildings that line the edges of streets and other public spaces establish their character and attractiveness”.*

### **Summary**

The overriding objective is to create building edge conditions that support pedestrian activity and enhance the visual interest, legibility, safety and comfort along the street frontages of new development. The related guidelines promote well-defined and active building edges, appropriate mitigation of servicing/carparking areas, enhanced building entrances and pedestrian shelter.

### **Objective O4.1:**

To create building edge conditions that support pedestrian activity and enhance the visual interest, legibility, safety and comfort of 3.0 Urban Design Assessment

### **Guidelines references:**

Building fronts/street frontages; active edges; servicing and car parking; and shelter and building entrance enhancement.

## Assessment:

### *Edge conditions and pedestrian activity*

The proposal includes building edge which responds to the specific conditions of the street interface. This includes building to the street line generally while forming a transition to the setback form of the cathedral; the location and configuration of the entrance, pedestrian forecourt and associated elements; the location and configuration of the lobby and retail spaces and the articulation of the plinth form and canopy towards the street. Cumulatively this should create a positive and engaging street edge condition; it also recognises the nature of the cathedral site and extends this treatment round to the interface with that site in an appropriately tuned manner.

The one element of the street frontage which is less resolved is the vehicle entrance from Molesworth Street at the northern end, adjacent to the entry into the private driveway of Collina Terrace. It appears that this is a necessary provision (assuming access is not permissible from Collina Terrace as was previously configured in the now-demolished preceding building), and the northern location is assessed as the least impactful location compared to the choices of being near the cathedral, or centrally located along the street frontage which impacts overall street composition and relationship to the NZRU public space. The northern location also ensures it is not prominent when approaching along Pipitea Street, and its height is combined into a façade opening shared with one of the retail spaces in a beneficial format.

However, the detailed arrangement of the entrance is not clearly illustrated and would benefit from greater clarity – for example how any garage door or barriers are integrated and treated. This location also generates the blank plinth condition towards Magyar Millennium Park, and this corner would also benefit from greater articulation of the plinth to both improve visibility/safety at the vehicle entrance and to enhance the appearance of the plinth from the park.

Overall, the approach to built edge conditions for the street and the unique cathedral boundary conditions are considered very successful, with only detailed matters giving rise to comment.

## 5. Façade composition and building tops

*“The composition of buildings determines their relation to context, their design coherence, and their suitability for a range of uses”.*

### Summary

The objectives under this heading call for creating facades and building tops that are coherently resolved and enhance human scale. The related guidelines refer to issues such as: relationship to neighbouring buildings; shopfronts, building tops and roofscapes; human scale and flexibility/adaptability. Many of the guidelines overlap with those under ‘design coherence’ and ‘relationship to context’.

#### Objective O5.1:

To ensure the façade and building top design is coherently resolved.

#### Objective O5.2:

To ensure that additions and alterations to heritage buildings maintain the heritage values of those buildings, their setting and any associated heritage area.

#### Objective O5.3:

To facilitate multiple and changing building uses, except where such change adversely affects the heritage values of heritage buildings or areas.

#### Guidelines references:

Relationship to neighbouring buildings; shopfronts, building tops and roofscapes; and human scale.

#### Assessment:

### *Coherent design of façades and building top*

The proposed design concept features four main approaches to facades; two for each of the main massing elements (public reception / retail plinth and upper offices), featuring different contextual responses. The clear, simple differentiation between a relatively solid base and a glazed office element is coherent and well suited to the overall massing and edge conditions.

The plinth base is expressed towards the street and cathedral with horizontal planes, wrapping around volumes with incised linear openings. The wrapping forms on the south speak to elements on the cathedral, and the plinth opens positively to the street and public realm as discussed above. The height and sill element of the window slot facing the street relates reasonably to human proportions while seeking to create a generosity of space within.

The Collina Terrace façade expressions are relatively solid as part of the plinth concept and respecting the private nature of these boundaries towards neighbours entering the Terrace. This is balanced with punched openings for the ground and first floor offices housed in the southern and western edges of the plan, with more generous double-height openings at the south of the western boundary near to the cathedral grounds.

The office tower element is fully glazed on all four sides. The southern and northern elevations are articulated with varying patterns of glass fin profiles which also provide ventilation performance. These elevations are also incised with deep vertical recesses which define the main massing forms. In contrast, the east and west façades are relatively simple smooth glazing planes. This differential treatment subtly relates to the character of the cathedral, with larger planes of simple wall surfaces higher on the nave sides and tower and focussed areas of vertical detail at windows.

The top of the building is characterised partly through the massing strategy discussed above, and partly by the continuation of the glazing treatment above the roof surfaces. The top storey occupying the central third of the footprint comprises an open enclosure in the northern end which conceals rooftop plant, and occupied office space in the southern end overlooking the cathedral and harbour.

### *Additions and alterations to heritage buildings*

No alterations or additions to heritage buildings are proposed.

### *Building adaptability*

The plinth features an important entrance sequence from the south east corner, along with a retail element entered higher up on Molesworth Street. Within this configuration there is scope for future flexibility of internal space, but the extensive length of the lobby space relates positively to the proportions of the public space outside of NZRU. The most important aspect of flexibility for the building is in the upper floors, where large floorplates and extensive glazing allow for internal reconfiguration with no changes to the exterior.

Overall, the approach to façades is coherent with and strengthens the massing strategy, relates well to the street and public spaces, and enables a high degree of flexibility within. The detailed execution of glazing on west and east facing façades will be important in achieving a successful visual appearance for these elevations.

## **6. Materials and detail**

*“Materials and detail are important in maintaining visual interest and a positive relation to context and heritage value”.*

### **Summary**

The main objective is to use materials and detail in a way that helps create visually interesting and physically robust buildings that reflect the conditions and context of their location. The related guidelines cover matters such as: *compositional coherence; visual interest; physical robustness; and façade transparency.*

### **Objective O6.1:**

To achieve qualities of visual interest and physical robustness consistent with demands arising from the building's location in the central city.

**Objective O6.2:**

To respect and conserve original heritage fabric.

**Guidelines references:**

Compositional coherence; visual interest; physical robustness; and façade transparency.

**Assessment:**

*Visual interest*

This design concept deploys a simple strategy central to building character and individuality, and this approach is continued into the approach to detailing and materiality. The forms are rendered with finishes which are simple and clear, reinforcing their character in a direct, unfussy manner.

This is considered appropriate as a response to the nature of the cathedral form next door. The cathedral features an overall style of strong and direct forms, with a restrained embellishment of decorative elements compared to older church buildings.

The proposed design stands back from adopting this layer of decorative element other than the articulation of the north and south façades through the manipulation of the glazing plane in vertical profile fins and the inclusion of deep recesses between vertical massing elements, thus avoiding presenting only a smooth reflective surface to the cathedral and to the north sun. Would a more solid material approach to these upper façades be more appropriate in response to the cathedral? This would seem a much harder approach to pull off, seeking to create a more opaque backdrop which somehow does not compete with the cathedral nor underwhelm with ambition. A façade featuring patterning or articulation is always going to risk contradicting the cathedral. In the end, the subtly textured glass approach feels relevant and suitably deferential, with discreet references to the neighbouring landmark.

The plinth is robustly conceived as a more massive element, carved and articulated in response to human presence in forms and materials which refer to the cathedral but in a manner which is subjugated through the much lower scale of the plinth compared to the cathedral.

By choosing this approach, the building defers to the adornment of the cathedral, seeking to be a backdrop rather than the main attraction. While the massing strategy clearly aims for a consistency with the cathedral, it is in the characterisation of the façades and materials that elements of contrast are introduced; the proposed building seeks more to be fabric in relation to the object next door. The visual interest of this building will derive from the conception of the forms, reinforced by a consistent materiality, and the visibility of activity and interaction in the spaces it offers.

*Conserving original heritage fabric*

Returning to the two important questions posed in the Context section - whether the height, bulk and form proposed are appropriate in relation to the church, and whether the façade appropriately balances contrast and consistency in creating a backdrop to the church – this assessment arrives at the conclusion that they are both satisfactorily answered through the investigation above.

## 7. Design Excellence

Under rule 12.2.5.5 of the Wellington District Plan, design excellence is required for any building that is higher than the height standard specified for the Central Area.

The site has a maximum permitted height of 43.8m above ground level with a design excellence bonus of 15% (50.37m). The site also has a maximum building mass below 83,537m<sup>3</sup> with additional design excellence bonus of 15% (a total of 96,067m<sup>3</sup>).

The proposed design has a highest point of 50.3m above ground level, and a total of 88,724m<sup>3</sup> mass.

This assessment considers that this proposal achieves design excellence for the following reasons:

- The height of the building itself is not considered to have a material impact on the most sensitive contextual consideration, which is the setting of the adjacent cathedral.
- The design concept coherently integrates a massing approach which discreetly references the cathedral forms and is crafted to minimise wind effects while highlighting an entrance and street frontage configuration which is positively organised towards the cathedral and the public space on the opposite side of the road.
- The building edge conditions enhance the street and the unique private boundary conditions on other facades.
- The approach to composing and materially articulating elevations is well judged between consistency and contrast with the cathedral, creating a backdrop which both maintains the primacy of the cathedral as a landmark object and quietly defines a modern character and activities in a positive piece of urban fabric.

## Summary

This urban design assessment has evaluated the proposal against the design matters and objectives contained within the Central Area Urban Design Guide of the operative Wellington City District Plan.

The assessment finds that the proposal is consistent with the identified six design matters of design coherence; relationship to context; Siting/height/bulk and form; edge treatment; façade composition; and materials and details. It proposes this in the context of responding to the challenge of a landmark heritage neighbour.

It is considered that the proposal will result in a noteworthy addition Molesworth Street, the precinct and the city.