

SUBMISSION ON PUBLICLY NOTIFIED PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE NO. 79

Re: Operative Auckland City – Central Area Section 2005 – Queen Elizabeth Square
UNDER CLAUSE 6 OF THE FIRST SCHEDULE TO
THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991

TO: Auckland Council (“Council”)

SUBMISSION ON: Proposed Private Plan Change 79 (“Plan Change”) to the Central Area Section of the Auckland Operative District Plan (“District Plan”)

NAME: Urban Design Forum New Zealand (“UDF”)

Scope of submission

1. This submission relates to the whole of the Plan Change and, more specifically, to the protection of public spaces in Central Auckland.

Nature of submission

2. The Urban Design Forum (UDF) welcomes the opportunity that notification of this Plan Change provides to make submissions relating to proposals and plans to redevelop an area of Downtown Auckland.

However UDF is concerned that the scope of submissions that relate specifically to the notified Plan Change is necessarily limited just to the area of Queen Elizabeth Square (QESq) and specific matters, despite the fact that the development of QESq clearly overlaps with, is integrated with, and is part of development proposals affecting a much wider area of Downtown Auckland, and which are of enormous public interest. UDF submits that the purpose of the Resource Management Act would be best served through promulgating and notifying a Downtown Precinct or Quarter wide Plan Change. Such an integrated approach would avoid issues associated with incrementalism and allow for a holistic consideration of architecture, urban design and planning matters that arise from this redevelopment including public space and public transport. Furthermore, UDF notes with considerable concern that while the s.32 analysis supporting the Plan Change references the matter of public space provision to replace the loss of QESq – neither it, nor any other process that UDF is aware of, ensures that provision to a commensurate standard. UDF cannot support an incremental measure that relegates compensating public space provision to sometime in the future, particularly when the paucity and scarcity of available opportunities is considered.

3. The Plan Change request relates to land currently owned and managed by Council that is subject to a conditional sale agreement pending road closure

and the change of zone to city centre zone to provide development potential on QESq land. According to Item 13 of the Auckland Development Committee agenda for the meeting held 11 June 2015, to achieve this purpose the Plan Change proposes to change the District Plan as follows:

- Amend Planning Overlay Maps 1-7
 - Amend the text of Part 6 – Development Controls (multiple additions to the text)
 - Amend Figure 14.2 (Central Area open space facilities and locations) by removing the ‘Existing Public Open Space’, ‘Pedestrian Routes / Open Spaces to be enhanced’ and ‘Queen Elizabeth Square’ text from the subject land.
 - Amend Figure 14.2A.6 (Concept Plan – Queen Elizabeth Square) by removing the concept plan from the subject land.
 - Amend the text of Part 14.2A.8.7
4. UDF understands that the land that is the subject of the Plan Change is part of a substantial redevelopment under the control of Precinct Properties of an area of downtown Auckland that is bounded by Lower Queen Street, Quay Street, Lower Albert Street and Custom Street, and which is located at ground level above a section of the planned Central Rail Link (CRL) project.
 5. UDF notes that this Plan Change presents the first opportunity for public submissions relating to any aspect of the proposed redevelopment.
 6. While UDF supports the CRL project and could support the level of development of QESq that is envisaged by the Plan Change, UDF’s support is conditional upon the provision of commensurate public space elsewhere, and the protection of other public spaces from effects arising from the provision of bus and other public transport infrastructure in the area with the planned removal of the Lower Queen Street bus terminal and the planned introduction of at-grade light rail infrastructure on Lower Queen Street.
 7. UDF supports District Plan explanations in Section 3.6 about such issues: “Council intends the Central Area to be a safe and attractive environment that exhibits excellence in urban design. The impact of private development on public spaces, and built and streetscape character is of prime concern to the Council as this directly affects the quality of the environment. The design and appearance of new development will be influenced by the Plan controls in order to ensure that new buildings do not adversely affect public spaces.”
 8. UDF notes the existence of Central Area “Precincts” in close proximity to the subject land at QESq and the Downtown redevelopment area, including Britomart, Quayside, Viaduct and Wynyard Quarter. UDF submits that precinct wide plan change processes that were carried out for those precincts – in accordance with the District Plan – identified public spaces and places, and ensured their protection and those using them from the adverse effects

of buildings and other activities within those precincts. UDF submits that the whole of the Downtown redevelopment, including the provision of public space, and including proposals for public transport should be the subject of a Precinct Plan Change for the whole area. This would be consistent with the District Plan, give effect to the RMA and the Auckland Regional Policy Statement (ARPS), and be consistent with provisions contained in the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan ("PAUP").

9. UDF generally agrees with the supporting s.32 assessment of effects to be considered as part of this Plan Change. These being:
 - Provision of open space in downtown Auckland
 - Streetscape character
 - Shading
 - Wind
 - Heritage and archaeology
 - Cultural effects

10. UDF generally agrees with the May 2014 Auckland Development Committee report about QESq by officers from Auckland Council's Built Environment Unit (now the Auckland Design Office) which states:

Queen Elizabeth Square functions primarily as a passive space, a thoroughfare to pass through rather than a space to linger. It is generally regarded as an unsuccessful space. This can be attributed in part to the lack of active built frontage onto it and the visual and physical severance to lower Queen Street created by the entrance to the underground rail platforms and glazed canopy that defines its eastern perimeter. Perhaps more critically, it is the orientation of Queen Elizabeth Square that is its greatest drawback being cast in shadow by 1 Queen Street for significant portions of the day.

11. UDF notes that the Plan Change in part responds to Auckland Council decisions that when QESq is developed then the eastern edge of Lower Queen Street should be built to a minimum height with verandahs and suchlike, and that the shade controls that presently protect QESq shall be removed allowing for the shading that is likely to be cast from the tower proposed at the corner of Lower Albert and Custom Street West. However UDF finds itself unable to respond meaningfully to these proposals because they are essentially presented in a vacuum. No information is provided about how Lower Queen Street will be used by public transport or by other modes of transport which will affect the way pedestrians interact with buildings on either side of Lower Queen Street, and how the public space that is left will be used. UDF submits that meaningful submissions could be prepared if a Precinct wide plan change was promulgated and notified, which would allow an integrated assessment and consideration of effects and outcomes.

12. UDF submits that a significant adverse effect of allowing and proceeding with the Plan Change is that integrated planning for the area will be impeded, that integrated consideration of transport effects and land uses will be avoided, and that giving effect to the RMA in regard to the provision of scarce public space will be impossible.

Conclusion

13. UDF does not support the Plan Change in its present form for the reasons set out in these submissions.
14. UDF would welcome a Precinct wide plan change for the downtown west precinct, that would include provisions set out in the Plan Change that is the subject of these submissions. This Precinct wide plan change should include provisions relating to transport planning, particularly provisions for bus stops and bus interchange services. It should also incorporate commensurate public space provision that replaces any of QESq that is lost consistent with the statutory planning framework that relates to central Auckland generally and to downtown west in particular.

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