

Willis/Victoria Urban Design Brief

This site specific design brief should be read in conjunction with all relevant District Plan requirements, including heritage rules and the Central Area Design Guide. The requirements of this brief are in addition to those in the District Plan.

Heritage Considerations

Council supports the protection of the heritage values of this site. Proposals that include the retention of the identified heritage values (ref' 2,3,4 below) will be considered against any alternative and contemporary design schemes that do not incorporate heritage protection but which offer the city an opportunity to achieve an innovative and creative landmark building or buildings which complement the existing built environment and the Council's broader urban design and economic development objectives. However, these alternative contemporary design proposals would have to be of significant status and merit for the Council to be prepared to waive or reduce heritage considerations, as detailed below.

- 1 Two buildings in the Willis Victoria Street block, 35 Willis Street and 58-60 Victoria Street (Ballinger Building) are listed as heritage buildings in the District Plan.
2. While not listed in the District Plan, there are other heritage buildings that should be considered as part of any redevelopment of the block. These are:
 - € 29-33 Willis Street, including the pedestrian arcade linking to 44 Victoria Street
 - € 37-43 Willis Street, including the first floor interior
 - € 45-53 Willis Street
 - € 44 Victoria Street
 - € 56 Victoria Street, including the interior ground floor ceilings, entrance, stairs and lift lobby.
3. Consideration will be given to façade retention only of the Willis Street buildings and 56 and 58-60 Victoria Street but must be to a minimum depth of one structural bay. 44 Victoria Street should preferably be retained in its entirety.
- 4 Information on the heritage values of these buildings is attached

Reason

- € *The properties in the Willis Victoria Street block collectively form a microcosm of Wellington's commercial history and architecture from the late 1870's (37-43 Willis Street) to the late 1950s (42-48 Victoria Street).*

Some of the properties occupy the first area of reclaimed land in Wellington, dating from 1852.

- € *The buildings collectively make a significant contribution to the streetscape of Willis and Victoria Streets and form a distinct heritage precinct in the city*
- € *44 Victoria Street is one of few examples of Modernist architecture in Wellington. The Victoria arcade is one of the building's most significant features, including a mural, fittings, cabinets, shop fronts and doors.*

Building Height

- 5 Building over the central portion of the site, may rise to the District Plan height limit (90m amsl).

Reason

- € *This site is part of the High City. To build high here reinforces the established urban form and the characteristic density and intensive activity of the city centre.*

Location of tall building

- 6 Any high building mass will be generally within lines parallel to Willis and Victoria Streets and established by the west and east facades of adjacent high-rise buildings – State Insurance Tower and Willbank House. The primary form of any tower should not protrude past the lines established by the facades of these adjacent high-rise buildings. (Refer to the attached Height Diagram.)

Reasons

- € *To relate new development to the context of high-rise buildings extending parallel to Willis Street along the centre of the block between Willeston and Mercer Streets.*
- € *To maintain quality and characteristic scale of existing street walls to Willis and Victoria Streets.*

- 7 Secondary forms may protrude past the alignment established by the facades of adjacent high-rise buildings (above a level of three storeys on Willis Street, and nine storeys on Victoria Street) if such forms:

- € are set back from the street edge, or otherwise maintain the predominant scale of the existing street walls; and
- € are significant architectural features that provide clear benefits to the public environment; and
- € assist integration of a tower element with the retained facades.

Reasons

- € *Secondary forms allow scope for modeling of building form and architectural quality.*
- € *Secondary forms of appropriate scale may act as transitional elements, mediating between the scale of a possible tower on this site and the relatively low rise street edges. An example of this effect is the atrium roof over the Willis Street entrance to the Majestic Tower, and its integration into the body of that tower.*

Buildings to reinforce existing street walls

- 8 Buildings on the Willis Street edge should be built to not more than three storeys. Overall heights at street edges should be determined with reference to the inter-storey heights of existing buildings.
- 9 Buildings on the Victoria Street edge should be built to not more than nine storeys (on the northern side of Chews Lane) and eight storeys on the southern side of Chews Lane.
- 10 Buildings on the site on the corner of Chews Lane and Victoria Street should be not less than six storeys high.
Reason
€ *To maintain the characteristic scale and continuity of street walls along Victoria and Willis Streets.*

Pedestrian Connections

- 11 Maintain and develop Chews Lane as the primary physical and view connection through the block, and a linkage between Willis and Victoria Streets.
Reason
€ *To enhance the vitality, public space quality and safety of Chews Lane as an important pedestrian link and connection between the city and the waterfront.*
- 12 Retain and enhance the existing Victoria Arcade, recognizing its alignment on the Police Station front entrance.
- 13 Consider potential for interconnection between Chews Lane and any other through site links (such as the existing Victoria Arcade), including potential for connection to State Insurance Tower's underground retail arcade.
Reasons
€ *To enhance the choice of routes for pedestrians in and around this part of the city.*
€ *To strengthen the leasing potential for accessible ground floor tenancies.*

Active edges to public spaces

- 14 Maintain active edges to all public spaces including Willis Street, Victoria Street and Chews Lane. Active edges will house activities of public relevance, most appropriately retail. They will include frequent building entrances and shop-front windows at ground level. Service entrances are acceptable in Chews Lane but should not dominate its edge.
Reason
€ *To maintain the visual diversity and vitality at the street edge characteristic of this central city location, and the safety benefits of informal surveillance.*
- 15 Maximise the opportunity for connection between internal activities and public space at levels above ground, particularly at the lowest four-six levels of any building. In

addition to windows, desirable features include balconies. Balconies could potentially be above the footpath (as at the Malthouse) if compatible with the heritage status of buildings.

Reason

€ *To enhance connections between interior and exterior activities and consequent visual interest at the street edge.*

- 16 Provide articulation and openings to the facades of any tower structure. While a building may have secondary facades, very large, visually prominent blank walls are not acceptable.

Reason

€ *To create visual interest in views from public spaces and adjacent buildings.*

Diversity of street edge architectural treatment

- 17 Maintain the characteristic level of diversity and complexity of street edge façade treatment.

Reason

€ *Willis and Victoria Streets are characterized by buildings with existing relatively narrow frontages, typically with a vertical emphasis. These buildings are also mixed in age and style with a range of tenants. This quality of diversity along the street wall provides visual interest.*

Spatial definition at street edge

- 18 Consider qualities of spatial definition and shelter at the pedestrian scale at all street edges. This might include extension of the existing colonnade effect along the Willis Street edge.

Reason

€ *To provide conditions of shelter and comfort and a sense of human scale at the street edge.*

- 19 Allow for extension of street trees to that portion of the Willis Street frontage north of Chews Lane.

Reason

€ *To strengthen the existing street tree landscaping of Willis Street.*

Use and activity

- 20 In principle, diversity of activity is desirable. This diversity might include a mix of retail, offices and residential accommodation.

- 21 Aim to maintain the characteristic diversity of a mix of retail tenancies at street level, particularly along Willis Street and Chews Lane.

Reason

€ *Diversity adds interest and vitality to both the street and the wider neighbourhood.*

