

# VICTORIA UNIVERSITY DESIGN GUIDE – TABLE OF CONTENTS

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# 1.0 Introduction

## The Place of the University

Victoria University occupies a prominent place in both the social and physical fabric of Wellington city. Not only is it the region's premier institution of tertiary education and the centre of activity for over ~~12,000~~ 23,000 students and staff, but it is also a striking physical presence on its site overlooking the central city and harbour.

Since its incorporation nearly one hundred years ago as a college of the University of New Zealand, Victoria has grown with vigour and now almost fully occupies the original site. This growth is placing great demands on the resources of the university today as it responds to an increasing public demand for tertiary education.

## The Future of the University

The university plans to develop its important public role of research and educational service, and its future success depends on being able to expand its services and facilities to meet the public and political demand for an increase in the number of students and for educational excellence.

Much of this increased demand will be accommodated by intensifying facilities on the main campus site. Because of extreme pressure on space, however, steps have already been taken to extend the university into other parts of the city and allow some students to be taught part of their course at other tertiary institutions.

The university has acquired a presence ~~on The Terrace in the Arco Valley~~ through the purchase of the ~~HNZC Mitchelton School site at 320 The Terrace~~ to provide for long term growth and a connection to the central city. ~~The residential properties are used for student accommodation. The Mitchelton School site, now used for storage, will be adapted to also provide small scale propagation facilities for the University Grounds Section and the School of Biological Sciences.~~

Intensification of the development within the main campus will continue to take into account not only its position at the edge of the central city, but also its location within existing residential areas. The character of those residential areas that are already being used for student accommodation will be maintained.

## The Campus

The Kelburn campus area can be logically divided into two areas, each of a different character and serving different uses. These are:

- the main teaching areas to the east of Kelburn Parade, to the west of Kelburn Parade adjoining Glasgow Street, and to the west of Fairlie Terrace (areas 1, 2 and 3)
- the residential areas to the north of Kelburn Park and the Cable Car, comprising Weir House and Trinity Newman Hall of Residence, and to the south of Kelburn Parade and east of Fairlie Terrace the old School of Architecture site, accessed from Fairlie Terrace and Landcross Street (areas 4 and 5).



## 2.0 Intention of the Design Guide

As specified in the District Plan rules, all new building development within the precinct is a Controlled Activity in terms of the design and appearance, siting and height of buildings. This Design Guide provides the standards or criteria against which controlled elements will be assessed.

The general intention of this Design Guide is to allow the essential development of the university to occur in a planned and controlled manner, recognising and respecting the environmental qualities that give this area its unique character.

This Design Guide starts from the premise that both design guidelines and good design are site specific. No single rule or ideal provides a solution for every situation. For this reason suggestions and guidelines have been developed for each part of the site in order to respond to the unique conditions of each area and achieve site-specific development objectives.

The guidelines establish a three-dimensional framework within which development can take place, with the intention of imposing the minimum amount of control necessary to achieve the set objectives and promote a development responsive to the needs of both the university and the wider community.

The intention is to set out the general principles for development of the campus, not to arbitrarily restrict the development potential of the university. The guidelines are intended to give both a degree of certainty as to the form of appropriate development and the freedom of interpretation to allow an alternative design response if it can be shown to meet the area specific objectives of this guide. Variations from certain guidelines will be considered if it can be demonstrated that the variation offers an alternative means of satisfactorily achieving the Guide's urban design objectives.

The illustrations in the Guide are intended to support the text by explaining principles. They are not intended to represent actual design solutions.

## 3.0 Analysis: Main Campus

### Area 1: Kelburn Parade East

The heart of the university, this comprises the main bulk of teaching, administration, library, recreation and student facilities.

The view from the central city of Kelburn and the university is dominated by the horizontal mass of the Cotton and Rankine Brown buildings. These important skyline elements, arguably built to the limit of appropriate scale, signal the existence of the university to the city below.

Characterised by high and medium-rise development, the campus comprises buildings significantly larger in scale than those in adjacent residential areas, which are primarily one or two storey dwellings.

Although of greater height and larger scale than most nearby buildings, the university development (like adjacent residential development) tends to follow the contours, with most facilities built along the slope. The resulting spine **along the top of this site** is more or less parallel to the underlying ridge of the Central Terrace area above and behind the university.

**Building forms and types around the 320 The Terrace site are mixed although with the exception of buildings adjacent to streets that are ‘off the grid’ (and aligned with curvilinear contours), there is general consistency of orthogonal alignment of buildings to the street grid. Existing local development is typically two storey detached dwellings and two and three storey multi-unit development. Victoria House presents a taller medium-rise building as does the vacant McLean flats to the south of the site. Kelburn campus buildings overlooking the site also sit within this medium height range of circa 5 storeys.**

The view of the university from the north is focused on the Hunter building, which plays an important role in establishing the identity of the university. This is visually the most intricate and historically the most significant of all the large buildings on campus. Not only is the Hunter building an important local landmark with senior status within the university, it is furthermore significant because of its relationship to the only substantial sunny open lawn in a campus generally lacking such spaces. The green carpet of the lawn acts as a foil to the red brick of the Hunter building and, together with the adjoining massed trees above Salamanca Road, visually links the campus with Kelburn Park.

Although cross-site pedestrian accessways connect the university with the city via Mount Street, the campus is not well served by convenient pedestrian connections to the Te Aro flat area. The need for connection may become increasingly important with the potential for further expansion of the University into central city premises.

Current (and any future) development at the south end of the

campus is highly visible from the residential areas of Brooklyn and the Aro Valley. Unless steps are taken to mitigate such effects, future development in this area could visually dominate the view to the north from these areas.

The building edge along Kelburn Parade gives strong definition to an important arterial road through the university. This space, defined by long, often blank walls, acts primarily as a channel for traffic and, due to noise, wind effects, scale of building elements and lack of activity at edges, has a character that does not generally encourage use by pedestrians.

The site at 320 The Terrace extends Area 1 down to The Terrace. The key design opportunities here are to provide for significant expansion of the university contiguous with the Kelburn campus, and to develop a secondary “front door” and better connection between the campus and city centre and Te Aro. In doing so the landscaped escarpment which is prominent in views from Te Aro should be made more visible and enhanced, and a high quality entrance space should be developed at the edge of The Terrace.

The immediate context of 320 The Terrace is characterised by large scale university buildings above and to the west, and a mix of residential activity around including Victoria House hall of residence, multi-unit developments and a number of detached dwellings. Proximity of the site to dwellings necessitates careful consideration of residential amenity across the boundary and is reflected in carefully set permitted activity standards

This site is below the established part of the Kelburn campus and currently does not provide for pedestrian access up to that. In order to provide for reasonable connectivity through what is a very long urban block at the edge of the city centre, a safe pedestrian connection between The Terrace frontage of the site and the upper portion of the campus is desirable.

A local landscape feature is the vegetated escarpment at the rear of and above the site. This is part of the wider swathe of vegetation extending north and south which also includes a significant number of large detached dwellings. This pattern of buildings within heavily planted steeply sloping sites characterises most steeply sloping parts of the inner city suburbs. Building on and/or up part or parts of the vegetated escarpment is therefore appropriate but remaining vegetated areas should be appropriately managed to remove the existing high proportion of weed and weed species trees and provide for ongoing landscape management on the site.

## **Area 2: Kelburn Parade West**

Linked by a pedestrian overbridge to the existing heart of the campus, this area includes high-rise faculty offices, lecture theatres, and a line of old dwellings converted to university use, one of which has associated open space and houses the university marae.

This area is characterised by a mix of types and scales of building. These range from the tower/podium design of Von

Zedlitz and Bernard Murphy buildings, to the two-storey formerly residential villas that occupy most of the Kelburn Parade frontage. Larger-scale buildings immediately to the north of the university include a six-storey slab block apartment building, and the four-storey apartment block "Chevening" on the intersection with Salamanca Road.

While the existing dwellings that have been converted to university use in this area are not individually of architectural distinction or historical interest, collectively they relate to the scale and character of the adjoining residential area.

The road frontage to Kelburn Parade is generally undeveloped, characterised by service areas, asphalt paving and parked cars.

The north end of the site has the potential for infill development without impeding the light and views of adjoining properties, as most residences are located considerably above the level of Kelburn Parade.

### **Area 3: Kelburn Parade South**

This area is physically remote from the existing centre of the campus, with only a tenuous visual link to the elevated site at the corner of Fairlie Terrace and Kelburn Parade.

University facilities are generally located in buildings converted from existing large dwellings. None of the buildings are of any individual notable character, with the possible exception of the existing villa at number 89 Fairlie Terrace.

The area is considerably below the neighbouring residential development to the north, and generally slopes steeply to the south, with an open space at the centre formerly used as the School of Architecture car park. Some of the area at the southern boundary of this zone is below the level of the ridgetop in the university residential area immediately to the south. A considerable volume of development could be inserted there without impinging on nearby residential views or protruding above an extension of the Central Terrace ridgeline. The former Architectural Sciences Laboratory building, for example, although contrasting in scale and character with most of its neighbours, is generally unobtrusive, sited as it is in the bottom of a depression on the south boundary of this area.

The area is characterised by substantial open space between and behind buildings. As a result of generally steep contours, this space is generally undefined, unformed and undeveloped other than with informal landscaping.

## 4.0 Objectives: Main Campus

Future development should satisfy a number of broad urban design intentions drawing directly from the preceding site-specific analysis, and with reference to the District Plan's general objectives for institutional precincts. These intentions represent the "spirit" of the Design Guide.

### Massing

- O1** To minimise the visual impact of any development as viewed from the city, and mitigate adverse visual effects on surrounding residential areas.
- O2** To avoid visually dominating nearby residential areas.
- O3** To allow adjoining residential properties to receive reasonable sun and light.
- O4** To maintain a visual connection from the residential area of Kelburn to the city below, notwithstanding any extension south of the horizontal mass of the existing University "wall" development.
- O5** To allow the visual expression of the university's "centre of gravity" with a vertical mass that may contrast with the horizontality of the existing development.
- O6** To promote a balanced relationship between buildings and open space on the escarpment on 320 The Terrace that avoids the domination of built form over open space.

### Scale

- O1** To achieve a transition in scale between large institutional and smaller residential buildings at the interface with neighbouring residential areas.
- O2** To maintain the existing characteristic scale of street walls and degree of street enclosure.

### Skyline

- O1** To ensure that any extension to the presence of the university on the skyline when viewed from the city is articulated to reduce its visual mass and to contrast with the unbroken parapet line of the existing University "wall".

## **Views**

- 01** To substantially maintain important views of the city and harbour from residential areas.
- 02** To maintain views of the Hunter building from the cable car, Rawhiti Terrace, Kelburn Park and the city in general.
- 03** To avoid the total enclosure and restriction of views from nearby houses.
- 04** To minimise any detrimental visual impact of large numbers of parked cars.

## **Circulation and Connections**

- 01** To improve public access to and within the University.
- 02** To connect to the existing circulation structure of the city.
- 03** To make the circulation routes for pedestrians (the main group of users of campus facilities) as safe, convenient and pleasant as possible.

## **Elevational Modelling**

- 01** To achieve development which is consistent with the visual character of the existing campus, and which relates to the level of intricacy of nearby residential buildings when it directly borders a residential area.

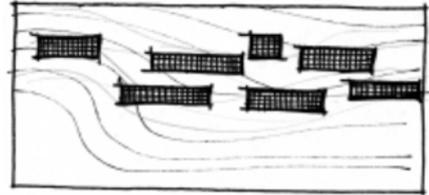
## **Open Space and Landscape**

- 01** To develop a high quality landscape on 320 The Terrace, recognising the prominence of VUW's elevated position in the city-scape, including the visibility of the vegetated escarpment.

## 5.0 Guidelines: Main Campus

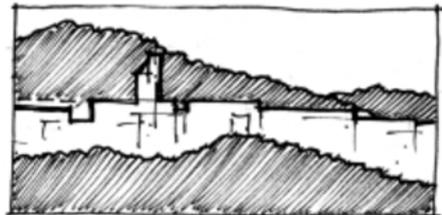
### Massing

**G1** The established precedent of developing with the major axis of slab-type building elements aligned with the overall contours of the site (parallel with the Kelburn ridge top) should be followed **except for that part of 320 The Terrace on and below the escarpment and fronting to The Terrace. On that easternmost component of 320 The Terrace, although adjacent buildings along The Terrace generally have walls aligned to the street grid, there is greater variation in the alignment of building elements.**



**G2** The maximum extent of building mass is defined by the building envelope described on the Location and Height Control Plans. New building development will be expected to comply generally with the height and building envelope provisions. In assessing applications, Council seeks to ensure that the stated objectives of the Design Guide are satisfactorily achieved. This intends to avoid the simplistic and often crude massing of buildings that can result from absolute adherence to such controls, to facilitate a wide range of design options and to encourage the high quality of architecture expected of an important public institution.

**G3** Apart from in the central area of the campus where a tower or point block may be located to express the potential "centre of gravity" of an extended campus and provide a slender vertical contrast to the horizontality of the adjacent building mass, development should be no higher than the existing University "wall" formed by the Laby, Cotton and Rankine Brown buildings.



**G4** In the nominated zone at the centre of Area 1, a tower with floor areas generally not exceeding 800m<sup>2</sup> at any level above RL 130m may rise above the standard building envelope to an approximate height of RL 160m, subject to its siting, sculptural qualities and plan configuration being such that it makes a positive contribution to the overall form of the campus and ensures reasonable maintenance of views across the campus.

**G5** Development to the south end of the existing University "wall" should generally be no higher than the existing University "wall" edge when viewed from the city, and should be articulated to reduce its apparent visual mass.

**G6** Rooftop architectural features and service or plant rooms which protrude above the identified building envelope should be designed as an integral part of any building

and should not compromise the objectives of this Design Guide.

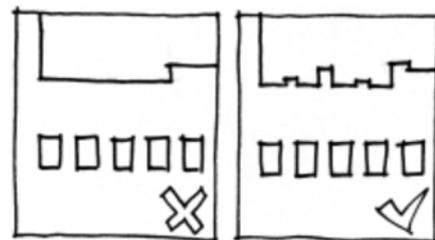
- G7** The maximum height above street level of the edge of buildings at street frontages, subject to the qualification of the next paragraph, should generally be:
- Kelburn Parade (both sides from Salamanca Rd to Glasgow St intersection): three storeys
  - Kelburn Parade (from Glasgow St southwards): two storeys
  - Fairlie Terrace: four storeys.
  - **The Terrace: 10 metres**
- G8** The nominal height of a "storey" in any area relates to the type of building in the proposed development and the precedent set by existing buildings on immediately adjacent properties.
- G9** The maximum height of development immediately fronting Kelburn Parade to the southwest of the Fairlie Terrace intersection is two storeys and to Fairlie Terrace is four storeys. Development may be considered to a height above adjacent street level of four and six storeys respectively by building elements with a width of between 7.5m and 10m over not more than 25 percent of the street frontage.
- G10** **Design buildings on 320 The Terrace and the spaces around them as an integrated whole to create positive open spaces that contribute to the quality and amenity of the campus.**

- G11** Any building mass on 320 The Terrace that faces The Terrace and runs longitudinally with the Terrace alignment (NNE-SSW) should achieve the following outcomes:
- Avoid the appearance of overly long and dominant forms and facades by restricting the maximum continuous length of the form/façade along any single building line to 30m.
  - Longer building forms/facades if proposed should include a visually significant step in the building line, emphasised by a similar articulation of the roof and eave lines.

- G12** Break down the mass of any buildings on 320 The Terrace by stepping forms down and across the site.

## Scale

- G1** The "module", or scale, of the articulation of building elevations should relate to both the scale of existing immediately adjacent development and the distance from which the new building will mainly be viewed.
- G2** An interval of between 7.5m and 10m measured horizontally should be expressed in the elevational

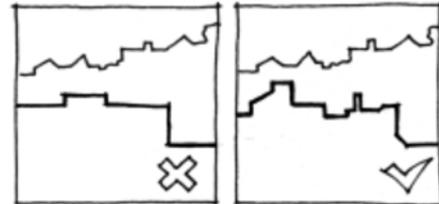


treatment of new development immediately adjacent to or fronting onto residential areas.

- G3 The scale modulation of horizontal runs of façade will be achieved with significant articulation of form which may or may not be emphasised with surface treatment and minor elevational detail.

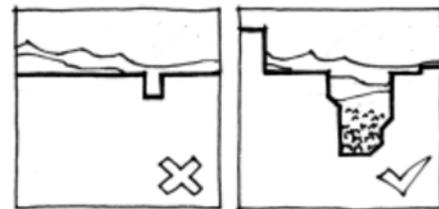
### Skyline

- G1 The skyline of development at the interface with residential areas should be articulated so as to reduce its visual mass and relate it to the reduced scale, forms and character of these residences.



### Views

- G1 Most development on a site such as this will reduce some views from residential properties to a greater or lesser degree. The loss of panoramic long-distance view may be compensated for by the partial maintenance of important views over or between buildings, augmented by visual interest and high levels of architectural quality in new development.



- G2 The view of the north west window of the Hunter building from the base of the flight of steps on the pedestrian accessway leading down from Rawhiti Terrace to Kelburn Parade (opposite the Hunter building) should be maintained.

- G3 Any detrimental visual impact of large numbers of parked cars should be either reduced by partial screening or eliminated by careful planning.

### Circulation and Connections

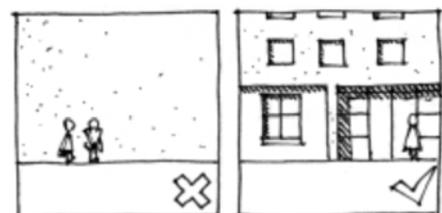
- G1 Existing through-routes should be enhanced. Future development of the campus circulation structure should allow for safe cross-site pedestrian links with connection to city streets and pedestrian pathways.

- G2 The impact of vehicle circulation on pedestrian use should be minimised by using detailed design measures to reduce vehicle speeds, improve pedestrian amenity and allow pedestrians to take precedence at vehicle entrances and on internal circulation routes.

- G3 Promote connections between the Kelburn Campus and The Terrace by facilitating a new university 'front door' and link to the city through 320 The Terrace.

### Elevational Modelling

- G1 Large, unbroken flat expanses of wall that are out of scale with adjacent buildings or which form the edge of spaces inhabited by pedestrians should generally be avoided. Such walls are acceptable only where they



make a positive contribution to the quality of user experience of the campus.

- G2** The degree of elevational modelling should respond to the viewing distance (or range of potential viewing distances) of the observer. Areas primarily and consistently viewed from close range should exhibit a fine grain of detail, while the modelling of building elements in a facade viewed from a distance should be of a larger scale which recognises that viewing distance.

### **Open Space and Landscape on 320 The Terrace**

- G1** Provide for the visibility of the vegetated escarpment between The Terrace and the campus ridgeline from the city by encouraging glimpsed views and view shafts between and over buildings onto areas of open green space.
- G2** Provide for views of the escarpment from Ghuznee Street, MacDonald Crescent and The Terrace by providing for visual connections onto upper level vegetated areas.
- G3** Progressively improve the landscape quality of the vegetated escarpment by removal of weeds and weed species trees and re-vegetate with appropriate native species.

*There is no change to any of the content of the operative Design Guide from this point.*