

MOUNT COOK PRECINCT DESIGN GUIDE – TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1.0 Introduction

The Mt Cook Precinct gains its distinctive character from the public significance and institutional character of the activities within its boundaries, and the scale and type of buildings these activities occupy.

The activities within the precinct are of a special nature and most are likely to remain in their present locations. Their nature is inconsistent with inner suburban activity, calling for special provisions that acknowledge this special nature.

The three main activities in the precinct are the National War Memorial, the Wellington Campus of Massey University and the Wellington High School and Community Institute.



Public Significance

The north of the Precinct, the area bounded by Taranaki, Buckle and Tasman Streets is differentiated from its immediate context by its notable visual presence and the public significance of most of its buildings and spaces. The Carillon is a prominent landmark and its role is that of New Zealand's National War Memorial. It provides a setting for events associated with this role. The former National Museum building is now the main building and front door to Massey University at Wellington and is of recognised heritage significance, as is the Mt Cook Police Station and retaining wall along Tasman Street with its characteristic convict-produced arrow-stamped bricks.

Wellington High School and Community Institute has an important role as a major provider of secondary education and as Wellington's principal venue for general community education and night classes.

The Massey University campus extends from the Main Building via a walkway to the east of the Wellington High School and occupies the site of the former Wellington Polytechnic to the south of Wellington High School. Massey University at Wellington provides a wide range of applied degree programmes with many having national standing and significance including programmes within the Wellington School of Design and the Wellington Conservatorium of Music.

The Campus is conveniently located at the edge of the city centre and attracts students from both the city and its suburbs as well as significant numbers from outside the Wellington region.

Future of the Mt Cook Precinct

The National War Memorial will retain its symbolic significance. The area around the War Memorial and the main University Building to the south will remain a significant area of publicly accessible recreational open space of particular benefit to nearby residents. Its openness and heavy planting will continue to be the essential foil to the monumental mass of these important pavilion buildings.

Wellington High School and Community Institute may be expected to develop over time. Such development is likely to be beside or more probably behind the main complex of buildings on Taranaki Street, replacing temporary or outmoded buildings in the area.

The University is adapting to a changing emphasis in the demand for courses, rapidly increasing numbers of students and growing competitive pressure from other institutions. These challenges must be met while maintaining high standards of vocational education, training and applied research.

Some of the increased demand can be accommodated by more intense use of existing facilities, but further large-scale development will eventually be required. The need for expanded facilities is seen to be best served by strengthening the nucleus of the University and making more effective use of space currently occupied by low-scale temporary building.

Good access to core central services is essential to most of the education programmes offered. The effective functioning of the library, study hall, students' clubs and amenities, specialist advisors and campus interactions relies on their being on campus. Any development should take into account the regulatory requirements for both efficient and effective educational service delivery, the place of the University in the community and the character of its setting.

Even though use of the existing sites is as intensive as possible, it is likely that the University will eventually be required to expand beyond its current boundaries. This expansion is envisaged to be close and to the east of the main campus, generally in the direction of Adelaide Road.

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 essential development to occur in a planned and controlled manner, recognising and respecting the environmental qualities that give the 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, following analysis of the identified areas within the precinct, suggestions and guidelines have been developed, some of which have general application, others of which are area-specific. This is in order to respond to the unique conditions of each part of the precinct while satisfying both general and site-specific development objectives.

The three distinct areas into which the precinct is broken down are:

- **The Main University Building and High School site.** The National War Memorial, Main University Building and grounds, Wellington High School and Community Institute, and all other areas excluding the main University Campus.
- **The main University campus.** The main University campus is bounded by Wallace and Tasman Streets, Finlay Terrace to the south and Wellington High School to the north.
- **The University King Street site.** The University site between Tasman and King Streets.

The guidelines establish a flexible envelope 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 institutions that occupy the precinct and the wider community.

The intention is to set out the general principles for development and not to restrict development potential for these institutions arbitrarily. The guidelines are intended to give both a degree of certainty as to the form of appropriate development and sufficient 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 they can be demonstrated to offer an alternative means of satisfactorily achieving the urban design objectives of this Guide.

Illustrations in the Guide are intended to support the text by explaining principles, and are not intended to represent actual design solutions.

3.0 Analysis

The Main University Building and High School Site

The area is dominated by buildings and constructions of citywide and local landmark status several of which are of heritage significance. Such buildings include the National War Memorial (including the Carillon), the Main University Building, the Mt Cook Prison and associated brick wall, and the Wellington High School complex.

The National War Memorial, including the Carillon and the Main University building, are both monumental, pavilion-type buildings which rely on contrasting scale, sheer bulk and their position on a ridge top in open space for their visual impact.

The National War Memorial and the Main University Building are planned on an axis running parallel to the Mt Cook ridge top. This and their development as pavilion buildings surrounded by open space serves to accentuate their monumentality.

The visual potential of the Carillon is abruptly terminated at the north end of the site by a heavily trafficked Buckle Street, which compresses and cuts through the space at its foot. This creates a vehicle-dominated, transverse linear public space which is abbreviated and insufficient relative both to the physical scale and the symbolic importance of the Carillon.

The Carillon is a landmark of citywide significance, visible from Newtown to the south, from the Central Area and from the inner suburbs of Mt Victoria, Brooklyn and Kelburn. Particularly when lit at night, it is an important marker for orientation within adjacent parts of the city.

The view of the Carillon from the street around the Buckle and Taranaki Street intersections helps to establish a visual link between the central city and the National War Memorial. This view is partially (and not unacceptably) constrained by the two-storey buildings on the corner of Buckle and Taranaki Streets.

The Carillon is the focal point of a significant vista along Webb Street. The visual effect of this vista is enhanced by the relationship of the horizontal band of planted open space that is visible at the base of the Carillon, to the planted ridge of Mt Victoria that can be seen in the background.

Various Ministry of Defence buildings on Taranaki Street are positioned close to the street edge, are of a scale consistent with much of Upper Taranaki Street, and serve to define the Taranaki and Buckle Street corner. While representative of the buildings of their era, they are not of exceptional townscape or heritage significance.

The heavily planted area around the Main University Building allows pedestrian access but, particularly along Tasman Street, looks relatively visually impenetrable. The size and density of the bank of trees obscures views of the Main University and War Memorial buildings and may be expected to discourage pedestrian use.

The Mt Cook Prison and associated nineteenth-century wall extending south along Tasman Street acts as a local landmark, and strongly defines the intersection of Tasman and Buckle Streets.

Even though it contains a number of very large buildings, the High School and Community Institute complex off Taranaki Street is visually unobtrusive because of the way the building mass is proportioned and articulated, and the way it is positioned against the base of a dominant landform.

Main University Campus Site

The heart of the University is its main campus site, which comprises the main bulk of teaching, administration, library, recreation and student facilities.

The University is set in an area that is characterised by a diversity of building scale and form. It is adjacent to one and two-storey timber-framed and clad housing at one extreme, and the large-scale concrete masonry constructions of the Main University Building and High School at the other. Tasman Street is characterised by a mix of housing and low-rise, wide frontage community services and light industrial building.

The main campus lacks a physical presence when viewed or approached from the city. Much of the campus is set below the ridge which extends south from Buckle Street and on which the Carillon and large-scale buildings of the Main University Building site.

The existing buildings at the north end of the main campus are low in scale relative to both the Main University and the adjacent Wellington High School and Community Institute.

Entrances and routes through the campus are neither obvious nor clearly defined.

This central part of the University is located in a very long city block with limited opportunity for cross-site pedestrian access.

The campus lacks a strong central open space and a sense of overall coherence. The potential exists, particularly around those areas currently occupied by single-storey relocatable buildings, for the development of a planned sequence of linked open spaces that could provide convenient and attractive access and that could improve the image and amenity of the campus by providing outlook from buildings and space for recreational and other activities.

The Wallace Street edge of the campus contrasts with the residential development on the other side of the street. This contrast is primarily due to difference in the size and variety of both buildings and building setbacks. Building entrances and fronts are not visually predominant at the street edge although several campus access points have been established here. Gardens of varying size and shape and carparking areas, many of which are characterised by a number of mature trees, are provided between these buildings and the street.

Finlay Terrace and parts of Tasman Street are characterised by development of a residential scale and the near total retention of the original dwellings constructed on the site.

The residential buildings nearby have the form and detail of modest dwellings of their time, and are characterised by additive forms - shallow-pitched lean-to roofs over additions, bay windows, porches and verandahs. Wall cladding is, almost exclusively, painted weatherboarding. The majority of buildings have hip roofs, and the remainder are gabled. Most roofs are clad in corrugated iron.

The existing residential buildings in this area, viewed as a group, display some visual unity because of their similar scale, age and construction. Nevertheless, there is an absence of obvious repetition, and within the unity a consistent visual variety can be seen, due to the changes and additions which have occurred over time, and variations of form, detail and siting.

University King Street Site

This site offers significant potential for unobtrusively expanding the University. It has been used for educational purposes for many years and is currently occupied by surface carparking and several low-rise relocatable buildings.

This area is characterised by a mix of types and scales of building ranging from the single-storey cottages in Myrtle Crescent to the north and the two- and three-storey backs of neighbouring dwellings, to the wide-frontage light industrial buildings on King Street, generally of two storeys but to a maximum of three.

The density of development varies greatly. Adjacent site uses include a combination of vacant sections and commercial buildings which substantially cover their site.

The site drops substantially from its west boundary adjacent to Tasman Street down towards King Street and is positioned at the back of and below most adjacent residential buildings. This would allow a substantial number of infill buildings to be inserted here relatively unobtrusively.

The topography of the site, sloping down to King Street, offers good sun exposure and a view over the roofscape of nearby buildings, including views towards Government House and the central city.

This site is conveniently close to the main campus and offers good vehicle access via King Street to the arterial route of Adelaide Road and the central city.

The potential exists for both physical and visual connections between Adelaide Road and the main campus. This may include through site access for pedestrians and the expression of obvious signs of the campus presence in this area which can be clearly seen from Adelaide Road.

4.0 Objectives

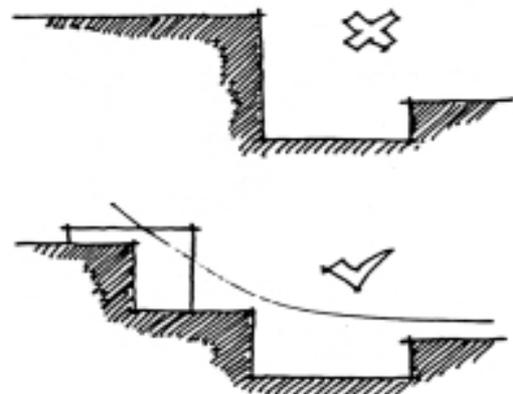
Drawing directly from the preceding site-specific analysis, and with reference to the District Plan's general objectives for institutional precincts, there are a number of broad urban design intentions that future development should satisfy. These represent the "spirit" of the design guide.

Massing

- 01** To maintain the monumental visual effect of the National War Memorial and the Main University Building.
- 02** To ensure that any new development to the north of the High School and west of the Main University Building is of a scale and form that does not detract from the visual significance of Main University Building as viewed from the western edge of Taranaki Street.
- 03** To ensure the formation and definition of an appropriately scaled public open space in front of the Carillon.
- 04** To ensure that adjacent new development relates to the scale of the existing institutional buildings extending south along the ridge of Mount Cook from Buckle Street.
- 05** To allow the presence of the University, as viewed or approached from the City, to be established.
- 06** To maintain reasonable sun and light access to adjoining residential properties.
- 07** To create a coherent sequence of high quality open spaces between buildings.

Scale

- 01** To maintain the significant contrast in height between the National War Memorial and Main University Building and any development to the north, east or west of these buildings.
- 02** To achieve a generally smooth transition in scale between large institutional and smaller residential buildings at the interface with neighbouring residential areas.
- 03** To maintain the existing characteristic scale of street walls and degree of street enclosure.
- 04** To ensure that the scale and articulation of building form at the interface with residential properties is generally consistent with that of adjacent development.

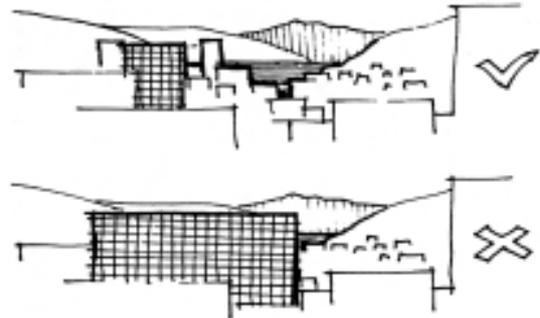


Skyline

- 01 To retain the landmark significance of the Carillon in order to maintain the symbolic status of this monument, in accordance with the intent of the National War Memorial.
- 02 To allow the expression of the presence of the University on the skyline in such a way that excessive visual impact on adjacent residential areas is avoided.

Views

- 01 To maintain a reasonable degree of long-range outlook to sky and surroundings from adjacent residential development.
- 02 To maintain an unobstructed view from Webb Street of the Carillon and the open space at its base.
- 03 To minimise any detrimental visual impact of large numbers of parked cars.



Circulation

- 01 To improve pedestrian access to and through the grounds of the institutional facilities both for users of the institutions and for the general public, while maintaining the security of facilities and the safety of the campus community.
- 02 To develop and enhance the cross-site pedestrian link between Tasman Street and Main University Building.
- 03 To connect to the existing pedestrian circulation structure of the city.
- 04 To prioritise in the design of circulation routes safety, convenience and amenity for pedestrians as the main category group of users of campus facilities.

Elevational Modelling

- 01 To ensure that the scale of modelling of buildings bordering a residential area relates to or is generally consistent with that of the residential buildings.
- 02 To maintain and enhance the sense of place that derives from the detailed character of buildings and landscaping.
- 03 To project the presence of people and activity out onto the streets and main circulation routes of the various institutions.

5.0 Guidelines

Massing

G1 The visual emphasis of an unobstructed ridge top setting for the National War Memorial and Main University Building must be maintained.

G2 The general extent of building mass is partly defined by the Location and Height Control Plan. New building development will be expected to comply with provisions and guidelines relating to height.

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.

G3 Buildings on the identified University sites should generally conform to the location and height control plan.

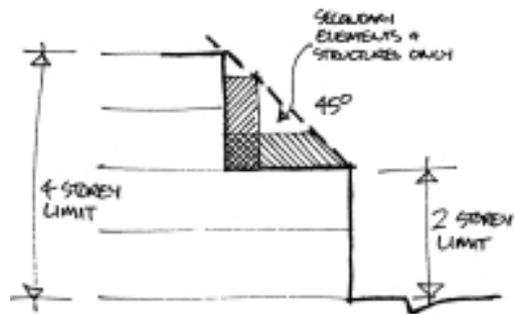
G4 Projections such as roof top architectural features or essential service or plant rooms protruding above the indicated heights should be designed as a positive architectural feature or an integral part of any building and should not compromise the objectives of this Design Guide.

G5 The maximum height above street level of the edge of buildings at street frontages subject to the qualifications of G9 and G10 should generally be as shown on the location and height control plan.

G6 Development adjacent to the Main University Building must relate to its existing formal planning, with the major axis of such development, when it is located to the south of the existing building, being in a north-south direction.

G7 In the nominated area at the centre of the University Main Campus, buildings may rise to a height of around eight storeys. This is provided that:

- Views across the campus are reasonably maintained, typically with use of tower rather than slab type building forms.
- The building is based on a coherent design concept, which relates to its immediate context, and includes the building top as a clear and integral part of that overall composition.
- Potential visual domination as it may exist is addressed by articulation of building form to reduce visual bulk, and a level of complexity in modelling of the facades that recognises viewing distance.



height control at boundaries

G8 Development in the centre of the University King Street site shall not exceed 21m above street level at the adjacent edge of King Street (refer to indicative cross section right).

G9 While the maximum height of the University development immediately fronting Tasman Street is two storeys, buildings to a height above adjacent street level of four storeys over an aggregate width of not more than 20 per cent of the street frontage may be considered.

Development immediately along the Tasman Street historic brick wall is not permitted.

G10 Development along the Buckle Street frontage immediately to the rear of the existing brick corner building will be limited to one storey at the street edge, while it may rise to two storeys 10 metres back from this edge.

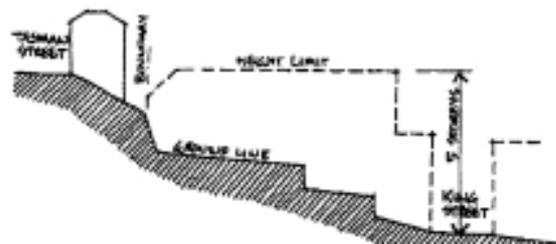
G11 Buildings should be designed bearing in mind their role in defining, shaping and enclosing open spaces. The shape, orientation and scale of such spaces and their linkage with other spaces, buildings and the circulation systems within any institution are considered from the point of view of providing and maximising the amenity of a coherent open space system.

G12 The edge of Buckle Street opposite the Carillon should be developed with building that recognises the major axis of the Memorial and Main University Building and defines a positive open space at the foot of the Carillon.

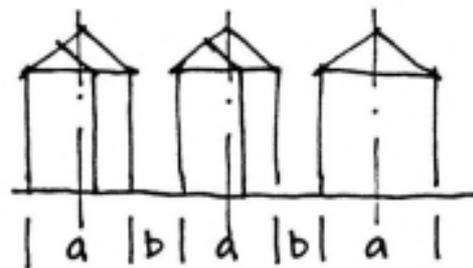
Scale

G1 The scale of any new development connected to and located to the south of the Main University Building will relate to the scale of the existing building and its characteristic articulation of form.

G2 The horizontal dimensions of the modelling of buildings, when immediately adjacent to or directly fronting onto a residential area, should relate to both the spacing and the horizontal dimensions of existing buildings in that residential area (usually, but not exclusively, in the range 7.5 - 10 metres).

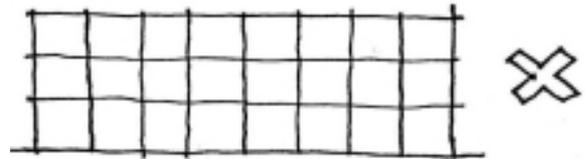


Height control at King Street: Indicative section

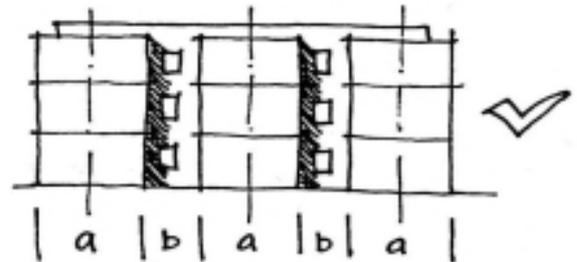


Existing Context

G3 The "module", or scale, of the articulation of building elevations should relate to both the scale of existing adjacent off-site development and the distance from which the new building will primarily be viewed.



G4 The scale modulation of horizontal runs of facade will be achieved with significant articulation of form, for example set backs or recesses, which may or may not be emphasised with surface treatment and minor elevational detail.



Articulation to Respond to Context

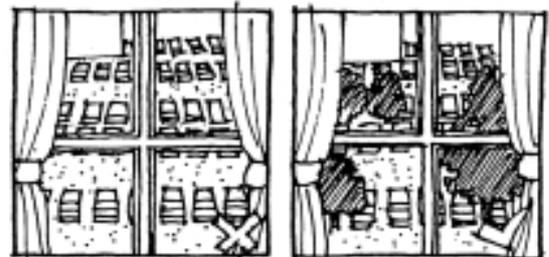
Skyline

G1 The skyline of development at the interface with residential areas should be articulated so as to avoid excessive visual impact and to relate to the reduced scale and residential forms and character of these areas.

G2 The Carillon is to remain the predominant vertical element on the skyline of the Main University Building and High School site.

Views

G1 While it is recognised that most development on or immediate adjacent to the Mt Cook ridge will reduce some views from residential properties, the loss of panoramic long-distance view may be compensated for by allowing for views over or between buildings, and by making sure that new development is of itself visually interesting and of a high architectural quality.



G2 Maintain the view from Webb Street of the Carillon and the planting at its base.

G3 Planting should allow views of the Carillon and Main University Building from adjacent streets to be maintained.

G4 Detrimental visual impacts of large numbers of parked cars, such as glare from windscreens and the unrelieved visual domination of outlook from adjacent properties, should be reduced to acceptable levels by partial screening or careful planning of carparking areas.

Circulation

- G1** Existing routes through the institutions should be maintained and enhanced or new and better alternatives put in place. Future development of paths on campus should allow for cross-site pedestrian links that connect with existing streets and pedestrian pathways.
- G2** The impact of vehicle circulation on pedestrian use should be minimised with the use of detailed design measures to reduce vehicle speeds, improve pedestrian amenity and allow pedestrians to have precedence at vehicle entrances and on internal circulation routes.
- G3** Existing pedestrian connections should be generally retained and developed in such a way as to enhance their character and amenity.
- G4** For safety and security reasons, planting and landscaping near major cross-precinct routes should be selected and maintained so that it minimises the opportunity for concealment.
- G5** Parking, garaging and vehicle accessways should be unobtrusive and integrated into the surroundings with appropriate landscaping.

Elevational Modelling

- G1** The elevational modelling of any new building associated with the Main University Building or main part of the High School should relate to the characteristic articulation of the existing facades.
- G2** Large unbroken flat expanses of wall that are out of scale with adjacent buildings or which form the edge of spaces used by pedestrians should generally be avoided. Such walls are only acceptable where they make a positive contribution to people's experience of the institutions.
- G3** 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 be developed with small-scale detail, whereas the modelling of building elements in a facade viewed from a distance may be to a larger scale.
- G4** Not less than a quarter of the ground floor wall area of buildings at the edges of streets or main circulation routes should comprise openings to generally occupied spaces. These openings should include windows and building entrances wherever these are appropriate and possible.

Appendix 1. Massey University Location and Height Control

