SELWYN DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAN CHANGE 29: DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE BUSINESS 1 ZONE

BACKGROUND REPORT

A discussion of issues and options relating to the design and layout of business development in Selwyn



January 2011

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the need for improved design in the District's town centres and other commercial areas.

It considers the social and economic costs and benefits of a poorly designed urban environment and concludes that there are significant costs which must be born by both the residents and the future occupiers of commercial space. It recommends new measures (District plan provisions) to ensure that a higher standard of development is produced by future developments

The paper also reviews the evidence for the value added by good design (creating connections and a high quality public environment). It finds that there is considerable economic and social value created and that this falls both to the site owner and to the wider public.

This paper is designed to provide a summary of issues and evidence for the Councils *Commercial Design Guide* and plan change 29 *Design and Layout of Commercial Development.*

It follows the production of the paper "Towards a Higher Standard of Design in Commercial Business Zones" in 2009 which defined many of the issues under consideration.

2.0 THE ISSUES

2.1 The Importance of Centres

Town centres are more than a place where shops and facilities may be located: they are a civic heart; a venue for public life and a focal point for a community.

Centres are defined by the quality of the retail and commercial tenants, public space, and the interface between that space and surrounding buildings. "Public" space may be located on private land or it may be traditional public space such as roads and reserves; but what matters is the use of space not its ownership. People will gather and move according to the use of land and quality of the environment, not its ownership.

A successful and vibrant town centre is a complex and rich mix of uses such as amenity space, community uses, shops, restaurants, outdoor dining and stalls, places to rest, offices and housing. The more different uses there are, the more reasons to visit the centre and the more reasons to stay there.

Commercial development is an important component in this mix. It brings people in, adding life and vibrancy; reasons to visit the centre and creates an anchor for the public life of a town. It is re-inforced by good public space, community services and other activities which add reasons to visit the centre and allow residents the convenience of being able to accomplish daily errands in a single trip.

A successful centre is both desirable as a place where people can get access to goods and services and also desirable in its own right, as a vibrant and interesting place to experience the life of a town, for activities such as people-watching, outdoor dining or enjoying the distractions of a busy and varied street or square.

This type of vibrant and functional centre is achieved through the co-ordinated investment of public and private resources. For instance, a vibrant public square that supports the activities listed above cannot be achieved on land separate from the commercial centre; it must be integrated with that development.

There has (in New Zealand as well as the District) often been an artificial separation between the investment in public amenity space (reserves) and that for the centre. In the District this can be seen in Rolleston where the public square (Clock Tower) is across the road from the commercial centre (rather than within it) and as a result is little used. Meanwhile, the shops front car parking and there is very limited high quality amenity space in the commercial area. Rolleston does not have a civic "heart", because there is no suitable space for it. As a result it is not a place to visit to participate in public life; it is simply a place where people can run errands.

This shows the importance and value of a centre's economic and social function to the community. These two facets should be considered together as commercial activities generate most visits to a town centre; without this economic function, the social value of a centre is diminished. As a general rule, the lower a centre's economic function, the lower its social value as there will be fewer people visiting and less vibrancy and activity.

2.2 Issues for Town Centres

This section considers the many uses of a town centre and how they can work together to add up to a multi-dimensional place. It is an attempt to unpack the elements which create a high quality town centre as described above.

2.2.1 Commercial Success

Most new development in a town centre will be undertaken by private developers. This development is also likely to be that which drives most people to visit the centres. The commercial success of a town centre is critical so that a community can meet its needs; as well as to encourage the vitality and vibrancy which is a side effect of a successful centre. A town centre will not succeed unless there is a successful commercial element; it is the only attraction which will bring in enough people to give the centre enough "critical mass" to succeed.

However, it is important that this commercial imperative does not over-ride all other considerations so that a vibrant mixed use centre cannot be achieved. A poorly integrated centre (such as a mall or a "megacentre") will not spread benefits beyond its immediate site. This poorly integrated development means that the community can be deprived of the opportunity to access wider benefits of a centre (such as a vibrant place to spend time).

There are commercial benefits in ensuring a well integrated centre with good pedestrian connections. For instance, retail will benefit from cross-shopping by people visiting adjacent retail developments, libraries or other community facilities, or people who work within the centre. It also benefits from the creation of a vibrant centre which encourages people to spend more time and visit more often. There is strong evidence relating to the value that is created by good design and this is disucussed in Appendix 2.

2.2.2 Public Space

A multi-purpose town centre needs to provide space for public activities. These may be a market square, space for outdoor dining, or non-commercial activities such as sitting and resting or people-watching. Successful provision of these activities will encourage more people to visit and to stay in the centre for longer. More importantly, such space can provide a venue for public life.

Good community space needs to be located where people will use it, either conciously or unwittingly (because they happen to be in the centre for commercial reasons). There is no point in locating a space for people-watching where there are no people to watch. Larger developments need to provide some space on site, in the same way that a shopping Mall will provide a food court, or benches to rest on.

The Council has a responsibility for traditional public space like streets. It may undertake work to enhance these, and may endeavour to provide public squares and other reserve space in the town centres.

The quality of the interface between this form of space and the surrounding uses is vital. Varied and well detailed building frontages with a high proportion of glazing will enliven the space. They will add visual interest and contribute to the safety of

the space as it will be overlooked. Busy shops with entrances facing the square will add vitality because they will increase the comings and goings of people in the area.

Good Quality Public Space (Timaru)

By contrast, blank walls or car parking will detract from the space as they are a lost opportunity for "interest". This is not just a matter of aesthetics; it is also about the amount of and type of activity that takes place (refer to appendix 4).

2.2.3 Community Facilities and Co-Location.

As well as integrating community space, a good centre needs integrated community facilities. These may be provided by the Council, such as libraries or a community park, or they may be provided by other agencies (for instance a childcare centre or a vet).

These facilities will all attract people in their own right and help to provide critical mass for the centre. And the centre will help to bring people to the facilities, increasing their patronage.

This has real benefits for the community (as well as commercial benefits) because of the convenience of being able to achieve as much as possible in a single trip. There are other benefits in the form of a reduced reliance on private vehicles (if all business can be undertaken on a single trip then public transport and walking are more feasible options), and a reduction in vehicle mileage travelled (which has economic benefits, reduces emissions of greenhouse gases and increases community resilience to shocks such as spikes in the price of oil).

2.2.4 Walkability and Access

> *"The most compelling argument for promoting policies that encourage and insist of freedom of movement for pedestrians is for the sheer pleasure of journeying through their own city" (Jan Gehl)*

The issue of walkability is affected by both the amount and directness of walking routes provided, and the physical environment on those routes.

People are also progressively less inclined to walk as distances increase, so it is important that routes are direct.

It is also important that they are attractive. A walk through a busy street lined by shops and cafes can be an exhilarating experience, whilst a walk beside a car park or blank wall feels like a drag. The link between the amount of use a walkway generates and how attractive it is has been well demonstrated (refer to 2.2 in appendix 2). Significantly, research shows that links must be both direct and attractive to be well used.

Good (left) and Bad (right) walking environments

A walk through a car park is both unattractive and requires a certain amount of risk, or at the very least a certain amount of concentration on the potential dangers from manoeuvring cars. It is particularly stressful for people with children.

International studies (for instance Gehl, 2005) have shown the value of active frontage. It increases the number of stops and the amount of activity (by seven times in the case of the Gehl study). It provides a further 13% increase in activity (the number of people on the street) because people move more slowly through a landscape which engages them. People are doing more than passing through active streets; they are enjoying them.

Streets are often designed to work from the point of view of motorists who are travelling through the centre at a speed of 50kph. They do not have time to read the detail in buildings. For retailers to target them, signs must be larger. Detailing in buildings becomes less significant. The visibility of car-parking becomes important. But pedestrians still use the streets at 5kph and experience a centre at a human level.

Providing for pedestrian access is therefore a matter of providing direct routes to and between places people wish to go and making sure that those routes are safe, visually attractive and interesting, at a more intimate scale than required by motorists.

This will require pedestrian requirements to be considered from the start, rather than as an afterthought. Buildings must be designed to reach out to the pedestrian realm and must not inhibit the movement of pedestrians, for example by requiring them to skirt round a car park.

More comment on walkability is provided in Appendix 3.

2.2.5 Walkability and Commercial Success

Retailers often underestimate the importance of walkability and become fixated on car parking. Studies in New Zealand typically show that a third of customers will walk to a town centre and that they will spend the same amount as car users, yet the significant needs of this important group are typically ignored in commercial design which is focused on the needs of car drivers. Detailed analysis of the importance of walking is provided in Section 4 and Appendix 3.

The need for walkability is not limited to those who arrive on foot. In a larger centre there are benefits from allowing people to walk around the centre and between adjacent developments. Poorly designed linkages will reduce the distances that people are prepared to walk and may encourage them to drive between anchor tenants. This is undesirable in its own right (because it increases traffic) but it deprives the intervening shops of passing trade. People walking through a centre may make intermittant stops and they may be tempted into doing so on an unplanned basis.

Conventional shopping centre design places anchor tenancy at the end and at key locations and encourages people to walk between them, stopping at intervening shops as they pass. If people are discouraged from making these trips then that is a disadvantage to the centre, but it particularly affects the variety of the retail offer as it makes small shops, which find it harder to attract customers in their own right, less viable. Further comment on this is provided by Tim Heath.

2.2.6 Vitality

The term “vitality” essentially refers to the amount of energy and excitement in a town centre. A beautiful place which is empty of people will always seem sleepy and dull. A centre that is full of people going about their business has an inherent excitement. An important component of a town centre, for the sake of its public life, is that there are people in it, whether walking around, sitting or whatever (but not enclosed inside a vehicle).

In New Zealand, this can be exemplified by the difference between Wellington and Christchurch city centres. Wellington has limited space and a critical mass of people (mostly office workers) are squeezed into a relatively small area which is well served by well-patronised public transport. This environment creates ideal conditions for busy streets as people are naturally present (they do not have to be enticed out of their cars). The result is a centre with a palpable sense of energy.

Christchurch, by contrast, has a more dispersed pattern of development and struggles to achieve equivalent amounts of vitality. In their study of Christchurch, Gehl Architects (2010) note that *“There are almost no people walking in Central City compared to other cities.”(p16).*

The significant benefit of vitality is that it greatly adds to the enjoyment of a centre and encourages people to visit and to visit for longer. It may also broaden the

appeal of a centre away from people shopping for specific items to people shopping for leisure.

2.2.7 Mixed Use

Mixed Use refers to a number of different uses occuring within a single site or building. For instance, it may be offices and shops. Higher density residential use within a business zone is also thought of as mixed use.

Mixed use is desirable because it increases the variety of use in a centre. There are more reasons to visit the centre, bringing more people in, and the different uses can be supportive. An example of this is that way that office uses can support cafes and shops in a town centre.

Residential use within a business zone is highly desirable because it extends the active life of the centre into the evenings (there are people around at all times) and can provide critical mass for business and public transport in the centre. It also offers a different (less car dependent) lifestyle option which can suit some people, especially those who enjoy the buzz of a town centre.

To date there is limited mixed use in the districts centres (there are some flats in Lincoln), but it is something which would be desirable as the centres mature. As was noted by CABE/DETR (2001)*"Mixing uses leads directly to higher user and occupier satisfaction and was fundamental to the social economic and environmental value added by the most successful case studies."*

It is likely that residential mixed use would only establish in areas with high amenity, as it requires an attractive and lively town centre to substitute for the lower ambient amenity (for instance more noise and less space). Successful mixed use areas are those which have an attraction, a reason to live there, such as apartments in Sumner. The creation of vibrant town centres is fundamental to the success of mixed use.

2.2.8 Car Dependency

Centres which are designed primarily for the convenience of car users have substantial hidden costs, both for those car users and also for all other users of the centre. Where designing for cars takes priority over other users, people are discouraged from using alternative transport and rates of car use increase. This means that designing for cars will lead to increased dependence.

Issues related to car dependence include the cost of running a car as well as the cost of fuel, and the impact on the design of business zones from large areas of parking. It reduces the community's resilience to events such as spikes in the price of oil.

There are other hidden costs associated with car use. For instance, car parking comes at a cost in terms of the purchase of the land required and the installation of hard-surface, and this cost is passed on to all users of business activities, not just car users.

Where development can show a reduced demand for parking, through a travel demand strategy, then Council is able to reduce the required rates of parking (Draft Plan Change 12). This will not be possible for development designed around car use.

2.3 Universal Issues

2.3.1 Attractive Design

Many of the outcomes expressed above are affected by the design of development. Well designed buildings and public spaces are desirable in their own right and are an essential component in creating the pleasant space that the community desires.

Good design is derived from the design of buildings and their relationship to the surrounding space.

The Council's Commercial Design Guide provides some guidance and examples of what is considered good design.

Some of the elements are:

- Larger buildings that are broken up into a series of smaller modules.
- Taller buildings that are integrated with neighbours by a transition in scale.
- Frontages which contain a high proportion of doors and windows (active frontage).
- The maintenance of a continuous building line.
- Shops and offices are built to the street boundary.

The last two of three are particularly important to frame and define the street boundary. A continuous built frontage, with active frontage, creates a traditional street scene (provided it is faced by a similar building). This encourages walking (there is a continuously changing vista of buildings and shop windows) and cross shopping (there is passing trade). Breaks in the continuous frontage can adversely affect trade so it is important that all sites participate.

It is elements such as these, which affect the bulk of buildings and the way they interact with public space that are important in the assessment of design. These elements are what affects the way the building and the surrounding space function.

This new building in Ashburton has many of the attributes of good design described above.

By contrast, architectural style and materials, which do not affect the function of the building, are a lesser consideration.

It is important to emphasis that good design is not restricted to buildings. Thoughtful design of site layout (for instance to provide good pedestrian routes and a sequence of public space) is also part of the design process.

2.3.2 Fronts and Backs of Shops

Shop units generally have to accommodate a front and a back. The front contains the entrance to the shop and will usually provide large display windows. The back is for servicing and will not provide active frontage. Side elevations may provide some windows but the amount is often limited.

These design limitations are derived from the needs of shops for internal display space.

This means that there is limit to the amount of active frontage that can be provided. In simple terms, shops have attractive fronts and ugly backs.

The traditional solution is to disguise the back, for instance with houses. Poor outcomes will result if shops back onto roads as they cannot provide an attractive frontage.

This issue is limiting for what design can achieve and must be borne in mind whenever we consider how to deal with retail, at any scale. There will almost always be an ugly elevation and the question in each case is “how do we hide it this time?”. The answer will depend on the site and its surroundings.

2.3.3 Colour and Signage

Some retail chains use strong corporate colours to identify their buildings. Examples of these are the bright orange of Mitre 10 Mega and the red of The Warehouse. Such colours are instantly recognizable and can identify the buildings to people over a considerable distance. They have a high degree of colour saturation and for this reason they stand out from the usual building materials (such as brick or concrete) or more usual recessive colours. In effect, the strong colour turns the building into a sign.

Whilst this may be beneficial to the shop, it can become an overwhelming feature in the townscape. It is worsened by the design of “big box” stores which are large, with few features and therefore a larger expanse of unrelieved bright colour. The colour is visually dominant and can also draw attention to a poor quality building.

This issue is particularly important when the building forms a “gateway”, for instance it is on the edge of a centre or town, where it will be visible from rural or residential areas and it will inappropriately dominate those environments. But the pleasantness of the business zone can also be undermined by excessive use of aggressive colours.

2.3.4 Prominence of Car Parking

There is a trend in modern development to site-layouts which place the car park prominently in front of shops. The types of development are derscribed in 2.4, below.

This has visual effects, social effects (it can deter people from walking) and economic effects (it reduces the cross-shopping opportunities that can result when people walk around a town centre).

The visual effects are not limited to the adverse effects of the car park itself. The decision to arrange buildings around car parking in the first place can mean the opportunity to create a main street environment or other people orientated space, is not taken advantage of.

A car dominated development with poor pedestrian amenity

The importance attributed to car parking in site planning is the most significant barrier to improving the quality of development. There appears to be an assumption that trade is predominantly car born and that people are not deterred by having to move a vehicle between adjoining developments. However, studies (described in Appendix 3) would suggest that retailers typically under-estimate the amount of trade that is from non-vehicular sources.

Car parking is not the most important determinant of whether a centre is successful. People also value the amenity a centre offers and are mostly attracted by the mix of shops.

In any case, this model of development has side effects which undermine the coherence of a centre. There is a need to balance the desire to provide convenience for single stop car users with the need to provide a town centre which is attractive to walkers and car-borne shoppers alike.

Whilst it is inevitable that some car-parking may be visible from the street, it should not be the predominant character of a town centre.

2.3.5 Health Issues

There is a widespread acceptance of the role of urban form in promoting health. In particular, there is an appreciation of the damaging side effects of car dependent development which makes walking and cycling more difficult, either through the location of facilities in remote locations (out of reach of walking) or through the lack of provision for active modes of transport.

In New Zealand, this is recognised by the Ministry of Health. A report has recently been prepared for the ministry by the Pubklic Health Advisory Committee (*Healthy Places, Healthy Lives: Urban Environments and Wellbeing)*

It states that:

> *"Cities and towns influence health in a way that goes far beyond the presence of health services in these areas. The way that urban areas are planned and laid out – known as urban form – shapes people's life choices and has a strong bearing on health outcomes. Urban form affects where we live, how we travel to work or school, how clean our air and water is, whether we are active, and what shops or facilities we use."(p. vii)*

This is a strong statement of the importance of urban form in promoting health outcomes. The report is clear on the need to make provision for active transport:

> *"Opportunities for good health are reduced when urban areas are not conducive to physical activity for either recreation or 'active transport'" (p. vii)*

The report noted that appropriate planning has the potential to help New Zealanders live healthier lives, for instance by providing opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. This is consistant with reports in other countries such as Australia and the UK.

2.4 Design Trends

This section is concerned with more recent developments and the impact of development trends on the quality of centres. Bulk and location type rules have been the principle means of development control for at least 40 years and in that time the type of development that is built has changed quite considerably.

2.4.1 Large Format

Large Format Retail (LFR or "Big Box" or "Retail Warehouses") consists of a warehouse with a footprint which is typically between 2,000 and 8,000m^2. The warehouse will typically have a height of around 10m. LFR is often inwardly focused, with goods displayed around the interior perimeter and little opportunity for windows. It requires a large car park and is usually set behind it, rather than fronting the street. It is inherently vehicle oriented, due to the size and/or quantity of goods purchased and the large catchment it serves (though this does not mean all its customers arrive by car). It usually requires a service area which can handle large trucks.

Due to its nature, LFR can be hard to accommodate in a town centre. The car parks and service areas it requires are unsightly and there is often a desire to place car parks in prominent locations so they are visible to passing traffic. The buildings have large, featureless elevations which are difficult to design attractively and which can make them highly visible and dominant.

There is a variety of types of LFR and some is accommodated in a town centre more easily than others. A supermarket, for instance, can have strong links with surrounding shops. This means it can be possible to hide some of the blank elevations behind small shops which will benefit from the trade that the supermarket attracts. It can also provide at least one active frontage. By contrast, bulk goods shops (such as builders merchants) typically have few windows and are harder to accommodate.

Large Format Retail can be unattractive to pedestrians. It is not just visually unattractive; moving around on foot can involve long journeys either through or around the edge of car parks, with little in the way of interest. It often does not provide much vitality.

LFR has become progressively larger and may continue to increase in size. Bulk and location requirements date from an era before LFR and could not have anticipated this type of retail.

2.4.2 Shops Arranged around Car-Parking

A recent trend in the development of smaller shops has been to arrange them around the edge of a car park, typically in an L shape or a U shape. This is convenient for car users and is a way to accommodate the parking requirement without placing it at the rear.

The effect of this type of development though is to separate the active frontage of the shop from the street, replacing it with parking. This greatly affects the quality of the street scene and it deprives the street of vitality.

Sometimes the developments have good quality buildings which provide active frontage within the development. They may have wide footpaths which provide some space for people. To an extent this may replace the quality public space which has not been provided at the road, but it does not create the same quality environment. The interaction of the site as a whole with its surroundings can be poor, and the public spaces created remain dominated by car parking, because the space is not enclosed by buildings on both sides. Space can be one dimensional as the only reason to visit is to use the shops; People may skirt around the outside of the site if they have no reason to visit. A lower concentration of people means a reduction in vitality and activity.

Bulk and location requirements do not take account of this type of development. It creates de-facto public space on the site, where people move between tenancies. This public space is where people will experience the centre, but it is unregulated and in practice is of variable quality.

2.5 Components of Development

The *Commercial Design Guide* uses the concept of 5 components of development (p.2) as a way to think about site layout. These components may be moved around a plan of the site to demonstrate how it will function. All must be considered at the same time to make sure that the development provides for everyone's needs. They are:

- Commercial buildings
- Civic Space
- Active building frontage
- Walking routes
- Car parking

Between them, these components should define the form of development (how the site should be laid out). Changing one of them (for instance moving a building) may mean that the position of others (such as walking routes and active frontage) will need to be changed.

This is a useful framework for considering how the issues can be resolved; and for showing the knock-on effects of changes in design form.

3.0 THE OPTIONS

The previous section defines what is expected from a town centre and why. This section looks at what the Council might do to bring these outcomes about.

Some of the actions will be things that only Council can do such as the provision of larger areas of public space. Others are things that only private developers can do. A combination of both is required to get the best results for the townships.

3.1 Council investment

3.1.1 Community Facilities

The Council has a role to provide facilities such as libraries. In doing so it can consider their role in supporting townships.

An example of where it has done this is in Lincoln, where a new library is to be built at the western end of the B1 area, fronting Gerald Street. The library site will be developed with a garden area, visible from Gerald Street which is designed to be the location of a market. Car parking is provided at the rear of the site.

In this development, the Council is illustrating many of the principles of good, integrated design. The building will provide good frontage to Gerald Street and a mix of uses. The development as a whole, with its public greenspace, will provide a community space for the town.

The Council's LTCCP also includes funding for a new library at Rolleston, whilst those at Darfield and Leeston have recently been refurbished.

3.1.2 Street Works and Works on Other Public Spaces

Council may initiate street works for example to make sure that the street environment is of good quality and street design is appropriate to its use. The decisions that Council makes, for instance in the design of traffic measures, can affect the quality of the pedestrian environment and an integrated approach is needed.

In their study of Christchurch, Gehl Architects noted that the design of streets is dominated by vehicle traffic and that there is "a lack of an attractive, safe and close knit pedestrian and cycling network".

The decisions that Council makes in relation to the design of its streets as spaces of people will be very significant in defining the quality of its townships.

3.1.3 Masterplanning and Structure Planning

The Council has instigated a masterplan for Rolleston, with the aim of ensuring that development takes place in an integrated manner. The masterplan may identify the use of Council reserve land for B1 development, in order to achieve the quality of

open spaces and linkages that the Structure Plan has identified are important in the town.

The Council also owns other land in the District, notably in Rolleston (around the Council offices) and Lincoln (the library site). Whether it develops this land itself, or sells the land to a developer, it is in a position to insist on high standards of design on these sites.

3.2 Regulation

As well as ensuring that its own investments provide for a high standard of urban design, the Council regulates development through the District Plan.

Council can require that development is done in a certain manner. Examples of this from other plans are the provision of a verandah along the footpath, a certain amount of glazing on the ground floor, or rules which require that buildings are built continuously to the back of the footpath. These rules would all serve to re-inforce a traditional high street.

There are a wide variety of provisions that the plan may adopt. Appendix 1 summarises the town centre urban design related provisions from a number of District Plans to illustrate the kinds of things that have been implemented elsewhere in the country.

3.2.1 Preferred Development Types

The Council's *Commercial Design Guide* includes some examples of the types of development that would meet its aspirations for vibrant and well connected town centres.

It identifies that there are different solutions for small and large scale development and that a different approach to these development types may be appropriate.

It also considers how smaller neighbourhood centres may function.

3.2.2 District Plan Options

This section considers how the Council may amend the District Plan to ensure that developments contribute to a high quality centre. Potential amendments are considered in general terms in this section, so specific rules are not prescribed. Rather, this is a discussion of the appropriate general approach to development.

3.2.3 Activity Status

In this report, the general approach is that small developments (under 450m^2) should be permitted subject to compliance with more comprehensive standards than under the current plan. For larger developments, it is suggested that restricted discretionary status is more appropriate.

The reason for this is that the bottom-line standard approach does not allow for flexibility in design. Whilst it is useful to allow small developments a design to comply option, this is not appropriate for larger developments where the development as a whole will affect the dynamics of the centre (for instance its pedestrian circulation). Trying to comply with standards can lead to bizarre outcomes or developers maximizing the amount of development within the baseline, when it would be better to do something different which would mean breaking standards.

This approach ensures that development responds to its individual circumstances and allows the balancing of a number of competing requirements. An example is the need to provide active frontage on the front façade, and servicing at the back.

The approach gives developers more flexibility than a rule based system, which can constrain design, but it gives the community (through the Council) the ability to ensure that development is integrated with its surroundings and will contribute to a vibrant town.

The best development is driven by a need to respond to its surroundings. As noted in the Urban Design Compendium, "development which is driven by blanket standards can stultify design and tends to produce lowest common denominator blandness" (p46). We can see this type of development throughout New Zealand, driven in part by the desire to comply with rules in district plans. This is discussed in section 2 but applies particularly to car parking standards. A more holistic approach is needed.

3.2.4 Other Activity Statuses

The following alternative approaches to the management of large development are available:

<u>Permitted</u>

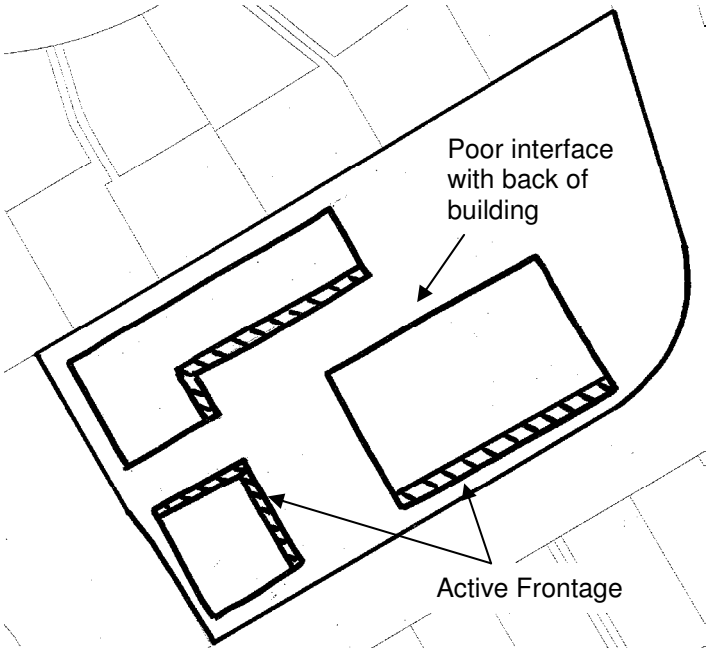
This the current approach. The Council could introduce stricter standards without changing the activity status.

It is suggested that this is appropriate for smaller developments. But for large sites, which have a greater scale of effect on their surroundings, the approach is not sophisticated enough to be successful.

This is exemplified by considering the recent construction of a Warehouse store in Rolleston. This shop has proved difficult to integrate into the Rolleston centre. It is visually obtrusive, with large blank elevations. It is sited behind a large carpark and its position elongates pedestrian routes from the north (the building is an obstruction to pedestrians).

A shop like this requires 70 parking spaces (Selwyn District Plan Proposed Plan Change 12) which, as discussed below, should not be placed at the front. Due to its internal requirements, it will only be able to provide a single active frontage (which might wrap around a corner).

A permitted activity standards approach might have required that it be built to the road frontage with car parking behind and to the side. This would have some benefits as it would help to activate the street scene on Rolleston Drive. But the building may have a poor relationship with the existing development behind and areas where the public would be present, because of the need for it to have a "back".



A permitted activity standards approach to large commercial development can create problems as well as solve them

Additional requirements could be put in place to require that buildings fronting internal public areas should also have active frontage, and that the public areas should have specific treatments such as those outlined in section 4.3 of the *Commercial Design Guide*. This would help to deal with the issues in the example above, but the rules would become very complicated. They would be hard to understand and administer.

The best way to deal with a development like this is to consider the benefits it may bring (such as increased trade in the centre as a whole) along with the costs (a limited amount of poor frontage - which may be mitigated by landscaping).

Controlled

It is not the intention of this project to make it difficult to develop in the Business 1 zone. Rather, development must be of a suitable quality. There is still a presumption in favour of development.

Council staff do not consider that controlled status would be appropriate. In theory this would allow Council to require amendments to designs. In practice controlled activity status for applications leads to situations where Council cannot decline consent for development that is clearly inappropriate and either has to grant consent for the development or impose conditions that in effect mean that the consent is for a different development to that applied for.

In particular, where changes may be made to site layout, it is not appropriate for this to be done via condition of consent. A new layout will be required, designed from the start around the constraints. A resource consent hearing where Council, which has limited knowledge of development, redesigns an applicants proposal in a limited timeframe is not a good process for this.

Discretionary

The Council could make the establishment of larger development fully discretionary so that it could consider any matter. The disadvantage with this is that it reduces the certainty for applicants and may make the plan less clear, because there are no assessment matters.

If the assessment matters, which are to be backed up by a design guide, are clear then there is no need to move to a fully discretionary status. The Council wishes to encourage development and to be up-front with developers about what is required. Restricted discretionary activity achieves these aims.

3.2.5 Size Threshold

Large buildings will usually involve the creation of significant public space on site, if only for car parking. A 450m^2 building will require 20 car parks (which equates to a further 500m^2). This is a significant amount of asphalt to accommodate successfully (and this is discussed below).

Many of the small sites in Selwyn are 1000m^2 and using this size threshold would allow these small single site developments to go ahead without the need for a discretionary consent. These small developments can use simple solutions for site layout (such as parking behind the buildings) and enough work has been done in the design guide to ensure that acceptable solutions are available which fit a simple rules package. For larger developments this may not be possible (for instance blank walls may have to face a street) and a holistic assessment will ensure that the development as a whole is of good quality.

There is a risk with threshold tests that a developer may use “salami tactics”, developing a site one “slice” at a time. An example of this is New World at Lincoln, where a small 1,700m^2 supermarket was granted consent (on the basis of effects being minor) before an application was made for an extension to 3,000m^2 soon after the granting of the first consent. The threshold therefore needs to be small enough that it prevents a large developments being “sneaked through” in this way.

To an extent, any threshold has an element of arbitrary-ness. It is likely that a small development of 100m^2 would have little effect on the form and function of a centre, but that a large development of 4000m^2 would have quite a dramatic effect (for instance on pedestrian circulation and visual integrity).

A 2000m^2 building will accommodate a substantial retail warehouse such as a supermarket, which will greatly affect pedestrian flow. Even a 1000m^2 development (which is the equivalent of 10 shops or a smaller supermarket) may generate substantial pedestrian flows. It is for this reason that the threshold is set at a level of 450m^2 where the Council can be confident that the effects on pedestrian flow will be

minor. Tim Heath provides comments on the appropriateness of 450m^2 as a threshold in Appendix 4.

Recommendation

That buildings below 450m^2 GFA have permitted status, whilst larger buildings have restricted discretionary status.

3.2.6 Building Design

This section considers designs of buildings but is less concerned with their location within the site, which is discussed later in the document.

Design and Materials

Design is sometimes regulated in plans, and indeed is regulated in the Castle Hill chapter of the Selwyn District Plan. However, it is usually only regulated in areas where there is coherent existing character which would be eroded by unsympathetic modern design or materials. This situation does not exist in the district where townships are often characterized by an eclectic mix of buildings.

The design guide offers some advice on how buildings can be integrated into a street scene, for instance the transition between large and small buildings and how to deal with large bulky buildings such as retail warehouses.

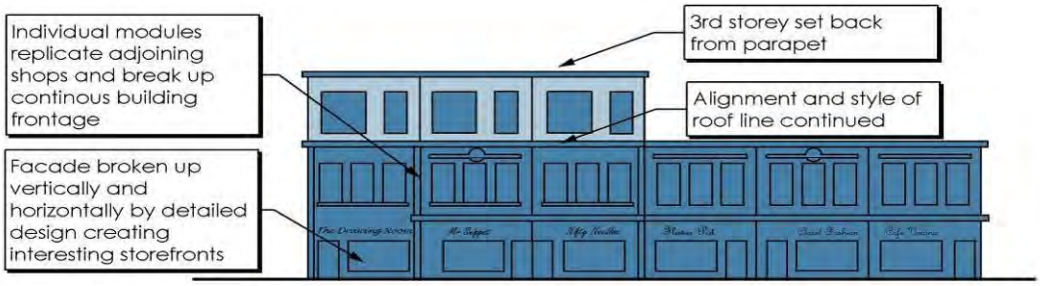
Retail warehouses do present particular challenges, because the buildings are hard to integrate into a regular street scene: they are naturally bulky and featureless. However, the alternative, of setting them back to reduce bulk, invites the provision of a swathe of car parking at the front, which is less attractive and which does not provide activity on the street.

There are now many examples of retail warehouses being integrated into town centre. Methods include integrating them into larger centres (such as the Warehouse and Fresh Choice in Barrington Mall); Sleaving them with smaller shops (for instance the Warehouse in New Plymouth or New World in Rolleston); or integrating the frontage into a street scene (New World in Ohakune).

Left: The Warehouse in New Plymouth is sleaved with small shops
Right: New World in Ohakune is integrated into a traditional street scene

Building Rhythm and Modulation

Traditional high activity streets are comprised of small shops which often have a regular "rhythm". That is, that doors are evenly spaced and the proportion of modules and detailing is similar. Shops are generally between 5 and 10 metres wide and there are regular entrances. This approach breaks large buildings down into a human scale. It creates an intimate street scene with a balance of variety (in the detailing) and regularity (in the scale of the modules).



One option worth exploring is the possibility of regulating the way building facades are broken down into modules. It would be possible to specify a maximum width of a module. This provides developers with flexibility because two or more modules can be merged into a single tenancy. However, this would be quite a prescriptive approach, especially to use as a general rule for all types of development. It might be worth investigating in future, for example for high pedestrian traffic areas.

A better approach would be to make larger developments discretionary activities to make sure the development responds to its circumstances as discussed above.

This requirement allows for the balancing of fronts and backs of buildings. As long as buildings provided active frontage where it is needed, they would be able to have non-active frontage in less important areas, for instance facing car parks or service lanes (subject to landscaping requirements).

3.2.7 Active Frontage

The discussion in section 2 above described the benefits of active frontage in places where pedestrians are present. It is not unusual for plans to require an element of active frontage.

Gehl et al (2005) identify that 63% glazed frontage (by length of façade) is appropriate as a benchmark and it is suggested that 60% is a reasonable minimum standard.

This allows for some flexibility, for instance for corner shops within a larger development which may need to back onto a public space, or for offices which require a lower degree of active frontage. Compared to other district plans (such as the Kapiti Coast or Ashburton which both require 75%), it is not onerous.

It is suggested that active frontage be defined as the area between 1m and 2m in height as a minimum. The rule would be complied with once 60% of the length of the building (facing public areas) was faced with glazing. This then allows for large

display windows (for shops) or for smaller office windows. Public areas would be defined as public space (such as streets or reserves) or on-site public areas (such as pedestrian squares).

The recommended approach would be to use a rule based requirement for small developments, and an assessment matter for large developments.

Recommendation

That a minimum requirement for 60% active frontage is introduced.

3.2.8 Entrances

Urban designers sometimes refer to a desirable minimum frequency of building entrances as well as the amount of glazing. Entrances activate the edge because of the possibility of people coming and going and because they are destinations in themselves. For instance, there is no reason to walk past the south frontage of New World in Rolleston, even though it is well glazed.

It would be possible to require a mimimum number of entrances, for instance per 100m of frontage. This is an approach which has recently been confirmed in the Kapiti Coast District Plan.

However, as for the possible requirement for modulation above, this is quite a prescriptive approach. For the same reasons as outlined in section 3.2.4, a discretionary approach is preferred.

3.2.9 Colour

Appendix 5 discusses the adverse effects of bright colour, the most important of which is that it can visually dominate the environment and be detrimental to the overall appearance of the town centre, especially if it draws attention to a poorly designed building.

The British Standard BS5252 provides a way to categorise colour. It divides colours into five groups according to their greyness content.

Groups D and E, which are vivid colours with low grey content. It is these colours that will dominate their surroundings and be strongly visible from distances.

Groups A and B have a high grey content and so will blend into the background.

Also important is the reflectance value, which can accentuate the strong appearance of the colours.

This system has been used to control the colours of buildings in other district plans, usually for the sake of making them blend into rural surroundings.

It is suggested that the amount of bright colour on a façade be restricted to a minority of that façade.

Because buildings can be repainted at any time and the classification of colour is quite simple, this matter would be appropriately addressed with a distinct rule, rather than being part of a discretionary consent.

Recommendations

That large developments be restricted discretionary activities subject to assessment of:

- the amount and location of active frontage
- the extent to which they are visually integrated with the surrounding buildings and that they contribute to an attractive streetscene

That a requirement for 60% active frontage be put in place for smaller developments, for elevations which are adjacent to roads or other pubic space (on-site or publicly owned).

That the amount of intense colour (groups A and B of BS5252) be limited to 25% of a frontage.

That no general provisions are introduced with regard to modulation or frequency of entrances

3.2.10 People Oriented Space

People Oriented space is space where public life can happen. For the most part, this space will be streets and reserves or other Council owned land. But for large developments, it will not be possible for Council to provide this where activity is taking place. It will be necessary for landowners to contribute some space.

The need for open spaces to "eat and meet" in Rolleston was identified in the research undertaken by Tracy Allatt. This is the type of space envisaged.

The Commercial Design Guide makes some suggestions for what might constitute this space. It may be a "private street" faced on both sides by shops (such as outside Rendezvous Café in Rolleston Square). It may be a pedestrianised precinct within a shopping centre (a common form of development). It may be a plaza, for instance a widened footpath with amenity space, or a leftover corner of a car park (which is also commonly used for amenity).

People Oriented Space: Left - Within a private development (Hazeldean Business Park, Christchurch); Right – on a public street (Timaru)

None of these spaces requires large amounts of land; it is principally about designing development in such a way that it appeals to pedestrians, rather than purely for efficient vehicle access. This means that the interaction between public and private space can be provided for.

Alternatives

Alternative approaches would include the provision of Council reserves outside the site, funded through reserves contributions, or the vesting of land within the development for roads or reserves, as is common for residential development.

The provision of reserves outside the site is unlilkely to be effective. The reserves would not be in the places where people are present, which would not achieve the aim of providing people oriented space in commercial zones.

Another approach could be the requirement for the payment of reserve contributions by business activities. These could be taken in the form of land for the formation of public space, or cash to buy land. Where necessary, land (or connections) could be designated and purchased using the Public Works Act, but this is expensive.

This is also an imposition on developers who may be constrained in the future use of their site. For instance, it may be fragmented by pocket reserves owned by Council.

Alternatively, Council may consider the imposition of a grid standard into the district plan. This would require that developers build roads through their site, to create blocks with a defined maximum perimeter. This would ensure the creation of a traditional style town centre with lots of road frontage and public space. A similar approach is included for greenfield residential areas in Plan Change 7, which uses an 800m walkable perimeter over public land (not necessarily roads).

For commercial areas, a smaller, finer grain is appropriate due to the number of people present and the need to easily access as many sites as possible.

This policy would also be quite onerous as it would require that developers vest a large amount of land in Council. But it would be effective as a way to ensure that adequate public space was provided. However, the general approach has merit as an assessment matter for measuring conectivity over private land; only the “grid” may be formed by pedestrian connections on private or public land.

The intention of the suggested policy is to change the form of development to one which is more “people-friendly”, rather than to aquire land for roads or reserves. With this in mind, the best outcome will be achieved by measures to change the shape of developments rather than the acquisition of land.

It will not be necessary for a development to be comprised entirely of people-oriented space. The intention is that a reasonable amount should be provided so that public life can take place in areas where people are.

Recommendations

That large developments be restricted discretionary activities subject to assessment of the provision of people oriented space in places where people will be present

3.2.11 Pedestrian Routes

Layout

Councillors have made it clear that the poor level of integration in the town centre in Rolleston is of concern to them. Developments have been carried out with limited regard to the ability to walk between them. The quality of connections from one side (the New World site) to the other (Rolleston Square) is poor. Pedestrians must walk much of the way through a car park with no footpath provided. This is one of the drivers of the Rolleston Town Centre masterplan project.

These problems are caused in part because developers have not considered the needs of pedestrians in site layout. For instance, the layout of the Warehouse in Rolleston Square projects forward of its neighbour, meaning that pedestrians have to divert around its (very bland) exterior. The non-provision of a footpath between New World and Hammer Hardware is another example.

As discussed earlier, it is the quality as well as the directness of pedestrian routes that it important. It is not sufficient to provide routes; they must be fronted with activity, preferably on both sides, to create an engaging experience.

The solutions to this are to ensure that development takes account of the existing and future pedestrian desire lines. These can be anticipated because they are the routes between the site entrances and attractions (such as the entrances to buildings). The site should be designed to facilitate these pedestrian routes, not around the car park and vehicle access, as is the case at present.

This will mean that developers may have to move buildings around within their site until a suitable layout is found. This is the intention of the policy. It is aimed at preventing the type of development which has resulted in the problems outlined in section 2 (with specific reference to Rolleston).

The costs associated with this policy (for private developers) may not be particularly high. Developers have a preferred form of development that often involves parking at the front of the site. However, as Appendices 3 and 4 demonstrate, the key driver of the success of a centre is the retail offer, not the position of car parking.

We must balance the rights of landowners to carry out their preferred development with the needs of the community at large; in essence this is the purpose of planning.

The effects of poorly designed development, as is permitted by the current rules, are significant and have resulted in the construction of development which does not meet the needs of the community or the aims of the District Plan as expressed in Policy 3.4.4.

Minimum Width

The NZTA recommends that a minimum unobstructed width of 1.8m is appropriate in town centres (NZTA, 2009). This is wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass each other.

This is the minimum width for walking. Shops will also usually require space for advertising (such as sandwich boards), pillars, bins, postboxes and other

paraphernalia found in town centres. Space may also be needed to allow the fronts of cars to overhang the footpath and circulation space for people entering and leaving shops.

From this, a minimum width of 3m is appropriate for footpaths. This is a width which is commonly provided by developers (for instance in both Rolleston Square and the New World development). It is considerably less than the minimum width recommended by the NZTA for town centre footpaths on public land of 4.5m (NZTA, 2009, p14-3).

Recommendations

That large developments be restricted discretionary activities subject to assessment of:

- The provision of direct, high quality pedestrian routes
- The provision of active frontage alongside pedestrian routes

That there is a minimum standard width of footpaths of 3m.

3.2.12 Parking Options

There is an expectation that parking will be provided in a convenient location to commercial activities. The District is made up of rural and suburban scale townships with low population densities and limited access to public transport. The location and density of population means that a degree of car dependency is inevitable.

For these reasons, this paper does not challenge the prevailing assumptions about the level of parking required.

The options for reducing the dominance of parking are:

- To manage its location.
- To require landscaping to mitigate it effects.
- For Council to provide a shared facility so that no on-site parking is required.

These options are discussed below.

1 Managing the Location of Car Parking

Managing the location of car parking would involve Council restricting where parking could be positioned, for instance that it should not be placed at the front of shops, or between commercial buildings and the road. This could be supplemented by a rule that requires that buildings are built to the footpath.

This would solve the problem of streets which are severed from buildings by asphalt, but we must consider whether there are practical site layouts available which will allow parking to be accommodated on site in an attractive and functional manner; will developments still function if the location of parking is restricted?

The *Commercial Design Guide* provides examples of how development can be designed without parking becoming dominant. For smaller development these place the parking at the rear of the development, with active frontage at the front. Ideally,

the parking should be accessed from behind the shops, for example via a side entrance at the end of the block, with walking access through mid block.

This concentrates the pedestrian activity at the front of the site where it will be re-inforced by neighbours. In a practical sense, sites designed in this way provide for increased activity.

The need to walk from the car park to shops is in many ways an advantage. People will spend more time in the town which will increase the amount of activity. They are also likely to make more stops in shops that they are passing.

Small scale development with parking at rear

The disadvantage with this form of development is that it may be less convenient for people who arrive by car and are only visiting one shop. This loss of convenience must be considered in the context of the functioning of the centre. In terms of pedestrian movement, this form of development is similar to a mall, where car-parking is placed around the outside of an internally focused "street". The precedent for it to work in a functional sense is clear.

There is more flexibility with larger developments but the principle that parking should be "hidden away" still holds.

The evidence in appendix 3 shows the importance that people place on a high quality environment and that this is true in Rolleston as well as nationally and internationally. Comments from a focus group in Rolleston indicated that people question the current layout and would prefer to have improved pedestrian areas as opposed to accessible parking.

2 Requiring Landscaping to Mitigate Effects

One way to improve the appearance of car parking is to require landscaping to mitigate its effects. This requirement may be in addition to any other district plan rules, for instance those that pertain to layout.

This is not a radical proposition and there are many examples of retail development in Christchurch which are landscaped to a very high standard, such that the car park is barely visible from the street.

The degree of landscaping required as a minimum is likely to be the point of contention in a provision such as this. The District Plan at present does not specify a minimum amount of landscaping and does not require landscaping schemes to be submitted.

Landscaping has the following functions: To disguise the presence of cars and asphalt when seen from the outside (perimeter landscaping); To break up the expanse of asphalt when seen from inside and outside the development (landscaping within the car park); To frame the street scene in the absence of buildings.

Perimeter Landscaping

The degree of landscaping on the perimeter of car parks of commercial development is often quite minimal. Many developments provide a grass strip which helps to demarcate the boundary but which does not disguise the car park.

Others provide more but do not conceal the majority of an average car. In many cases, landscaping is barely above wheel height and the presence of cars (or the sweeping expanse of asphalt) is clear for pedestrians to see.

It is sometimes seen as an advantage to retailers that landscaping is minimized so that passing motorists can see the car park. This is an example of where the needs of different users of the street clash. The advertising of car parking spaces in this way is not compatible with an attractive and human-scale street.

There are many examples of where car-parking is effectively disguised by landscaping. In Christchurch these include (amongst others) Tower Junction, Barrington Mall, Riccarton Mall and the Countdown supermarket on Colombo Street. This demonstrates that whilst there may be a preference for car-parking that is clearly displayed, development can still occur if it is well landscaped.

Perimeter landscaping at Countdown on Columbo Street (left) and Riccarton Mall (right)

Landscaping in these instances consists of a continuous hedge of a metre or more in height, which substantially hides the cars behind; and trees planted at regular intervals of around 10m which provide an attractive feature in the streetscape, in the absence of building frontage.

A "window" through the landscaping is often provided by maintaining the hedge at a height of around 1m, and ensuring tree branches do not grow below 2m. This is in line with CPTED principles which ensure that the car park is still visible to passers-by. It also allows views into the site.

An alternative to the use of relatively high hedges is the use of a broader (deeper) landscaping strip which will provide physical separation, combined with plating to a

height of around 60cm. This would allow car parking which is visible to car users on the road, but would still give some separation to passers by. This approach is less effective than a higher hedge because it would be less effective at actually "hiding" the car park.

Landscaping within Car Parks

Landscaping within car parks can help to break up the large expanses of hardsurface. As for perimeter landscaping, it should consist of a combination of low-level landscaping and high level.

For high level landscaping, a good ratio is a tree for every ten spaces , excluding those next to perimeter landscaping. This will equate to a tree every 12.5m between rows of parking.

Trees grow better when they have a larger planting bed and may not thrive if they are squeezed in between spaces. A better approach can be to provide larger "feature" displays, for instance at the edge of aisles, which are more likely to grow successfully.

Low level landscaping will help to demarcate aisles. As for trees, larger beds are more likely to thrive and will have more visual impact. The provision of very narrow (less than 1m) wide beds is often not successful in providing enough plant material to effective break up the mass of the car park.

Landscaping pedestrian spaces

Pedestrian space on the site will also benefit from landscaping. Where larger spaces are proposed then it can provide separation. It will have a visual benefit in de-emphasising the expanse of asphalt. It will also provide a greater feeling of safety as it acts as a visual barrier. It marks the space out as a pedestrian place.

3 Council Parking Provision

It would not be impossible for Council to provide a car park and this approach has been taken elsewhere (for instance in Levin and Ashburton) but it is expensive and Council would need to recover its costs. In established towns like Lincoln, where it could only be build by demolishing houses, the costs are likely to be prohibitive (over $10,000 per space).

In practice, developers are likely to be resistant to paying such a large price to develop (especially if they have to borrow money to do so). The costs of the current requirements have already been priced into the land they have bought, and the removal of the need to provide car parking may not mean that they are able to realize an equivalent increase in development value. Towns where this approach has been adopted have often used land which is has been available historically. Purchasing land which is already developed (or business zoned) is an expensive way to provide car parking.

However, ignoring the costs and practical difficulties, this would be the best solution as it would remove the need to design around a car park.

Recommended Approach

The recommended approach is that larger developments should be a discretionary activity to allow for the assessment of site layout, to include the location of parking.

The discussion above recognizes the role that landscaping can play in mitigating less attractive forms of development. This form of development should be minimized but it is unrealistic to expect that they will be eliminated. Quality development is the sum of its parts rather than something that can be approached with rigid standards.

It is recommended that relatively strict landscaping standards be put in place as discussed above.

Recommendations

That larger development is a discretionary activity, with one of the matters for discretion being the position of parking on site and its effect on the quality of pedestrian space.

For perimeter landscaping, these would aim to disguise car parking from the street through a minimum "hedge" height of 1m, combined with taller trees every 10m.

For landscaping within the car park, a tree would be required for every 10 spaces, within a minimum planting bed.

Landscaping may be a "controlled" activity in the district plan to make sure that it was positioned effectively.

For people oriented space, it is recommended that any such on-site space should be separated from car-parking by landscaping.

3.2.13 Landscaping of Buildings

Note that landscaping of parking areas is discussed seperately, above.

In general, buildings are expected to provide attractive frontage to pedestrian spaces. However, it is recognized that this will not always be possible, for example where the back of a retail warehouse will be visible from public space. In these instances, landscaping can be employed to hide the blank wall.

The Warehouse on Blenheim Road uses landscaping to disguise blank walls

This is a cost-effective way to improve the visual appearance of development without entirely preventing forms of building which are hard to integrate into the

streetscape. Examples of where this has been done in Christchurch are The Warehouse in Blenheim Road and the Bivouac Outdoor Centre next to Tower Junction.

Landscaping would be required for large blank elevations of buildings. It is recommended elsewhere that these buildings should be discretionary activities and landscaping may be one of the assessment matters.

The same treatment should apply to any exposed fencing (which has similar effects from blank frontages).

Recommendations

That landscaping of blank walls is a matter for discretion in larger applications

3.2.14 Fencing

Fencing next to streets creates unattractive blank frontage which is bland and discourages pedestrian activity.

In Living Z areas, proposed plan change 7 makes fencing in front of houses a non-complying activity, unless the fence is less than 1m high. Tall fencing is permitted only behind the front building line. The rule applies to boundaries which adjoin streets and rights of way.

This approach would be suitable in the Business 1 zones to preserve the open-ness of the street scene and other public areas. Fencing in front of commercial buildings is not common but does occur, for instance to screen poorly located storage areas.

Where fencing is essential, if it is not extensive then it can usually be mitigated by conditions of consent, for instance with landscaping or the use of transparent panels. A consent process is appropriate for this.

If it is not controlled by the District Plan, then areas of unrelieved blank fencing can be established in key areas of the town which can undermine its attractiveness to pedestrians.

Recommendations

That fencing is restricted to 1m high except with resource consent

3.2.15 Signage

1 <u>Signs attached to (flush) with building elevations</u>

Signs can affect the visual appeal of buildings, for instance overwhelming the architectural detailing. Signs aimed at car drivers are often large and aggressive, to catch the attention of drivers travelling at 50kph, and do not contribute to a functioning pedestrian street where people are travelling at a tenth of that speed.

The present district plan signage rules do not restrict the size of signs if they are attached to the side of a building, although they limit free-standing signs to $3m^2$.

Allowing signs to occupy the entire frontage of a building can turn those buildings into signs (in visual terms) and overwhelm the buildings proportions and detailing.

It is recommended that signs should be limited to a minority of a building frontage. This can be accomplished whilst still allowing for large signs. For instance, a 10m wide single storey shop will have a frontage of around $30m^2$. If a sign is allowed to occupy 25% of the frontage then it may be $7.5m^2$, or 75cm high across the whole width of the shop. This is more than enough to advertise the identity of the shop, including to passing cars.

In practice it is unusual for signage to occupy larger areas than this, so this is not an onerous proposal.

2 Projecting Signs

A sign may occupy the entire elevation of a building, but may not project beyond the edge of that building in any way. This means that it may be painted onto the wall, or fixed flush to it, but not project at 90 degrees.

The absence of an allowance for a projecting sign means that these are discretionary activities.

An additional allowance of $1m^2$ for such signs clarifies their status without allowing them to be of a size which would overwhelm the street.

3 Freestanding Signs

A single $3m^2$ per site is appropriate but allowing multiple signs may lead to clutter. $3m^2$ is quite large.

A parade of shops may be built on a single site but require more than one sign (as it would contain multiple tenancies). This can be considered via a consent process. To allow more than one sign per site (as the plan currently does) may lead to clutter. It is suggested that the plan is amended to restrict signs to a single freestanding sign per site.

It may be better (tidier) to allow a single large sign for a parade than multiple small signs. Again this is appropriate for a consent process.

There is also a risk that larger buildings would wish to provide multiple freestanding signs. This is not consitant with the policies which are aimed at providing for high amenity.

Recommendations

That signs are limited to 25% of the surface area of a frontage

That an allowance is included for projecting signs

That freestanding signs are restricted to one per site

3.3 Costs of Design

It is by no means clear that high quality design will add to the costs of development. Indeed, CABE/DETR (2001) found that there is no link between good design and increased costs.

CABE (2002) makes the point that over a 25 year period, the cost of the physical envelope of a building is around 5.5% of the total cost wheras the cost of occupying that building is 86% of costs. Another study by Evans et al quoted in CABE (2006 p55) noted that construction costs are less than a fifth of the costs of operating and maintaining a building.

These figures are from the UK but they do demonstrate that the cost of design needs to be set in the context of ther lifetime running costs of a building, of which the actual cost of construction is a relatively minor component. In this context, the cost of design is insignificant. If good design results in a flexible and re-usable building that lasts longer then it will represent a substantial cost saving.

Research indicates that the benefits of good design, which include higher capital and income return, may not fall to the original developer unless they retain a stake in the development. They may be longer term, in increased occupancy and rents, often as the area becomes established. This is another reason why the market often fails to provide for good design. CABE (2006) makes the point that this is why planning needs to inject a requirement for good design into the system (rather than relying on methods such as pursuasion).

4.0 EVIDENCE

The evidence for why a revised approach is needed is detailed in the appendices to this report. Some of that evidence is summarised here.

4.1 The Relative Importance of walking and Car-parking

The main reason that people visit a shopping centre is the mix of shops that it contains (refer to Appendices 3 and 4). Other considerations, such as parking and pedestrian facilities are a secondary consideration. This means that improved urban design will not in itself make a shopping centre successful. Equally, it means that convenient and visible car parking is not the key to attracting customers.

Evidence shows that retailers over-estimate the importance of car-borne custom. European studies showed that retailers greatly overestimated the number of trips: in Graz retailers estimated that 58% of customers travelled by car but the reality was that it was 32%; in Bristol the results were 41% and 22%). The studies also showed that the car borne customers did not spend more than those who used other means of transport (refer to appendix 3).

These studies have been repeated in New Zealand by Beca Infrastructure (refer to appendix 3). Preliminary results have shown that in the areas studies customers who walked and that spent a similar amount to those who travelled by car. In Rolleston, the number of people walking is 20%, despite the poor facilities identified in appendix 3 and earlier (2008) research.

For this reason, in work done by Beca Infrastructure in relation to re-allocation of road space to bus lanes, the retention of on street parking was a priority for retailers although parking is a relatively low priority for shoppers (composition of shops is the priority).

Rolleston does not attract people to stay in the centre with the majority of visitors spending less than 30 minutes in the centre. Most people made only one stop, with relatively few travelling between the two halves of the centre. Based on the above, this is likely to reflect the retail offer.

4.2 What Makes People Walk

The NZTA (2009) Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide (p4-5) notes the importance of the quality of the street scene to pedestrians and that high quality streets are associated with higher walking levels.

There is a wealth of evidence to support this and this section is not a comprehensive review of it. More detail can be found in Appendix 2.

Studies have shown a number of reasons where people are deterred from walking. These include:

- Lack of continuous pedestrian routes
- Lack of rest areas and seating

- Lack of interesting features on the route
- Poor maintenance
- Barriers such as car parks and wide roads

Research indicates that it is not sufficient to tackle these factors in isolation. Walking and cycling can be encouraged by providing direct routes which invite people to walk. But the routes provided must also be interesting and safe or they will not be used. What this shows is that a comprehensive approach is needed.

In particular, routes need to continue through private land past the fronts of commercial premises. It is the interface between shops and "public" space that forms the most visual interest and will most encourage people to visit and stay in the centre. This is a point which is made repeatedly (for instance by Gehl, 2004 and MfE, 2005).

The evidence in Appendix 3 confirms the importance of the physical environment to pedestrians, including the Rolleston residents in the focus group. A good environment, including landscaping and wide footpaths is greatly valued by pedestrians.

Furthermore, it is important that high quality public space, for instance places where people can sit, eat, talk or watch the world go by should be within the places where people are present going about their business, because otherwise they will not be used (see for instance CABE, 2001).

4.3 Commercial Considerations

There is strong evidence on the value that good urban design adds. This includes:

- Higher returns on investment (higher rents, increased occupancy, increased capital values)
- More activity leading to greater economic performance (more sales)
- Greater diversity of activities (such as cafes and specialioty retail) which is beneficial in its own right and also helps to attract other tenants
- Increased ability to attract "top-end" tenants

Good design adds value for any development type, although the greatest gains are at the top of the market.

This value feeds through into rents and was demonstrated in a CABE (2007) study which found that good street design added up to 15% to rents in different main streets in London. The study also found that people are prepared to pay more local tax to get well designed public space.

The case of Melbourne, with its impressive economic performance following the revitalisation of its dead urban core in the last 20 years, shows what can be achieved through creating a place which people want to visit. These include a 275% increase in cafes and a doubling of visitors in the evenings.

There is very strong and consistant evidence of the value added by good design.

As is noted by the MfE (2005) "*because some of the benefits of good urban design accrue beyond the site, the market by itself will tend to under-provide it".* The solution, as is also recognised by CABE (2001) is that regulation is necessary to manage the externalities of the development.

The reasons that poor design is built were found to be that developers often have a short term interest in the site. Whilst there is real value to landlords in good design, it tends to accrue in the longer term. Because developers interests end once the project is on-sold, they often have little interest in these longer-term commercial outcomes.

Further discussion of the evidence is provided in Appendix 2.

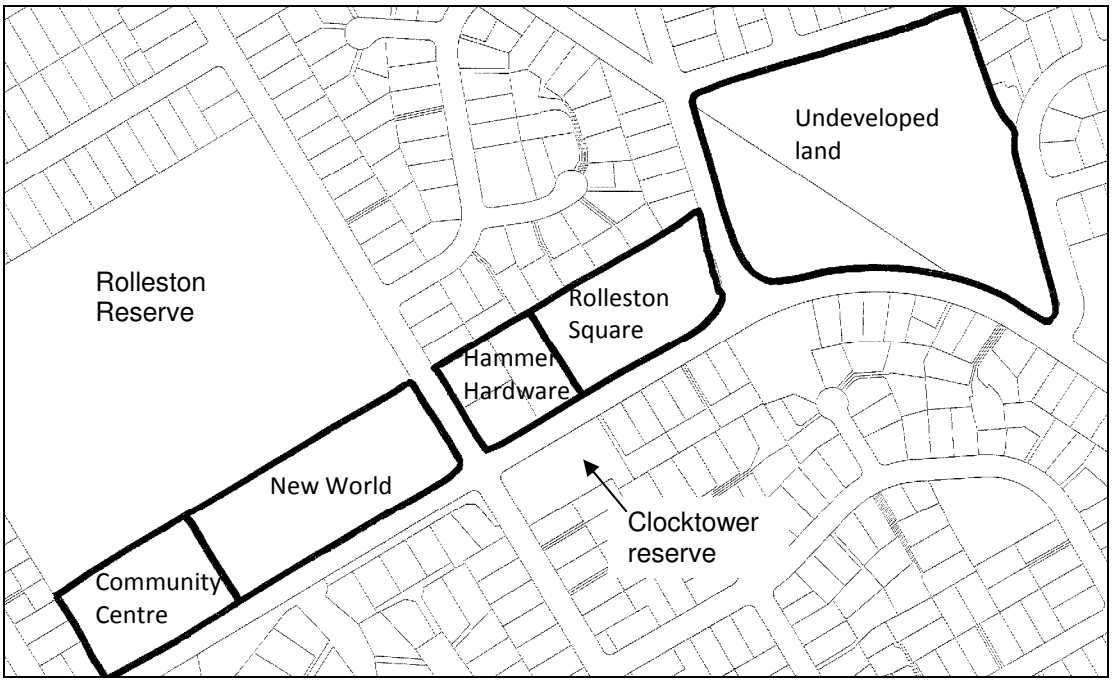
4.4 District Centres and commercial development

The district has nine business 1 zones with differing characteristics. The main centres are described briefly below, along with a discussion on the appropriateness of the proposed measures in relation to each.

4.4.1 Rolleston

Rolleston is the largest of the District's centres and may in the future perform a districtwide retail function.

At present it is characterised by a number of poorly integrated developments, each of which is dominated by car parking.



Rolleston Business 1 Zones

These are the (from west to east): the community centre; the New World development; the Hammer hardware / The Rock commercial area; and Rolleston Square. Beyond Rolleston Square is a large (4.5ha) vacant area of land. A resource

consent has been granted for a Countdown supermarket on the part of this site next to Rolleston Drive, which would occupy around 1ha of the site.

Rolleston has few places to carry out activities other than retail within the business zone. Some seating areas are provided in the left over areas at the corner of car parks. Other public space (such as the clock tower reserve on the south side of Rolleston Drive) is poorly connected with the town centre and appears to be little used.

Left: Wide footpaths and active frontage in Rolleston Square.
Right: Lack of pedestrian provision next to the Rock.

Most of the developments do provide wide pedestrian footpaths and have large amounts of active frontage facing those paths. The exception is the area in front of Hammer Hardware and The Rock, where footpaths are narrower or non-existent. Pedestrians must walk along the traffic lanes to move between New World and the main part of Rolleston Square.

Buildings within these developments are poorly integrated with public (council-owned) space. For example, the New World development is seperated from the street by a large car park and turns its back on the Rolleston reserve, seperating the reserve from the rest of the public realm. Rolleston Square and Hammer Hardware are also set back behind car parking. Where buildings in Rolleston Square do adjoin Rolleston Drive, they turn their backs on it and there is relatively poor (and inactive) frontage. None of the buildings bring activity to the street edge.

Left: Buildings set behind car parking.
Right: Buildings turn their backs on the street.

Footpaths are not direct, because they skirt round the edges of carparks. This adds around 120m to the 350m journey from Rolleston Drive to New World. They also lack amenity and vitality because they border a car park, despite the generally good width and frontage.

Developments in Rolleston have tended to be larger scale developments that would fall within the restricted discretionary category, with a consideration being layout. It is expected that this would continue with the development of the land to the east.

The focus group study conducted by Tracy Allatt (refer to section 6 in Appendix 3) indicated that residents place some importance on elements such as wide footpaths, pedestrians crossings, the presence of trees and planting and also the use of coloured surfacing. The group identified a need to improve and prioritise pedestrian space above that of parking. The group was keen to see that provision for disabled users, pedestrians and cyclists be included in new developments.

The group specifically identified the need to create spaces to eat and meet. These would be covered by the proposal to introduce pedestrian orientated space in new developments.

The group also saw the need to create an identity for a centre was seen as vitally important. This fits in with the benefit of good design identified by MfE (2005), of a good centre creating civic pride.

The recommendations in this report are aimed at improving the layout of developments such as these to reduce the prominance of cars and provide direct and high amentiy pedestrian routes. Whilst this will not solve the problems discussed above (because they are from existing development), it will ensure that the large areas of undeveloped land are developed to a higher standard.

4.4.2 Lincoln

Lincoln has a traditional character with a main street (Gerald Street) which is fronted directly by shops. There is angle parking available in the road corridor in the central area, but the footpath runs directly outside the shops (shop fronts are not usually seperated from the road by car-parking).

The exception to this is at the west end where a small L-shaped mall has been constructed which places car parking at the front.

At the east side, on Robert Street, a new parade of shops has been built that faces the road directly, with extra parking provided in the road corridor.

There is B1 zoned land which is expected to be redeveloped on both the north and south side of Gerald Street, next to the existing shops.

Further development in the style of the L-shaped mall would undermine the traditional character of the main street.

Sites in Lincoln are likely to be variously developed under both the small lot provisions and the restricted discretionary larger development provisions (for instance the land to the south of Gerald Street is in single ownership).

Left: The new L-Shaped mall at the west end of Gerald Street
Right: Shops fronting onto Gerald Street

Section 5.1 of the *Commercial Design Guide* suggests how both these types of site may be developed with parking at the rear. This would compliment the traditional (and pedestrian frienedly) appearance and function of the centre.

4.4.3 Leeston

Like Lincoln, Leeston has a traditional mainstreet character with a strong frontage. This is almost continuous on the south side of High Street, except for the supermarket site which includes a car park. On the north side it is interupted by the church, which is set back within its site but makes a positive contribution to the street scene due to its landscaping and because it is an attractive and interesting building.

High Street, Leeston

Leeston has less development pressure than Lincoln, because it is not growing at the same rate. However, its strong sense of place will be preserved by the recommended changes to the plan, which will preserve its main street character.

4.4.4 Darfield

The commercial centre of Darfield is concentrated towards the west end of the B1 zone. There is a continuous shop frontage on the north side of the state highway on either side of McMillan Street, although there is a limited amount of off-street parking in front of most of the shops.

To the east, the commercial area has a more informal identity with the use of separate buildings rather than a continuous frontage. Many of these do provide a strong interface with the street.

On the south side of the road, shops to the west of Bray Street face the street directly. To the east, there is again a more informal character with gaps between buildings and a small shopping centre which has a small car park in front next to a large landscaped area.

Whilst the Darfield centre does contain parking at the front of shops, it is relatively low-key because it is mostly comprised of single rows of parallel parking. Large, dominant car-parks have not been established in front of shops.

It may be appropriate for this development pattern to continue, with modest car parking at the front and side of buildings, but the establishment of large Mall style developments like Rolleston Square would not be in keeping with the informal style of development which has occurred over time in the township.

The use of discretionary consents is a good mechanism to ensure that the character of Darfield is preserved and that new development relates to its neighbours. Where it has car parking at the front, it should not be overwhelmed by it and the effects may be mitigated by landscaping.

4.4.5 Prebbleton

The main parade of shops in Prebbleton fronts the footpath directly with parking taking place in the road corridor. Whilst the centre has an informal character, it is an attractive traditional pedestrian environment.

There is a large area of deferred B1 zoning to the rear of the shops and there is a risk that the existing high street may be redeveloped as a U-shaped block of shops arranged around a car park. This would bring with it many of the issues discussed in section 2.4.2. The plan change would allow the Council to have some control over the layout of this development ensuring that Prebbleton retains an attractive village atmosphere.

4.4.6 New Commercial Areas

A number of new commercial areas are anticipated in the district and a high standard of deisgn will be expected for these. They include a second commercial area in Lincoln, around the New World supermarket (anticipated after 2020) and neighbourhood and local centres in Rolleston. Additionally, a plan change has been lodged to establish a substantial centre in West Melton and there is vacant B1 land in Castle Hill. Other proposals may be brought forward by landowners.

The recommendations and associated guidance works on a variety of scales to provide flexibility for all the above centres to be achieved, subject to good design.

5.0 EXISTING POLICY

5.1 District Plan Policy

Town centres and commercial areas are zoned as "Business 1" in the District Plan (also known as B1). Within this zone, shops and offices are permitted activities, subject to conditions.

Other commercial activity may establish in the Living zone as a discretionary activity if it complements the character and amenity of that zone. In reality, it is likely that only a limited amount of small scale commercial activity would be permitted without a change in zone.

5.1.1 Policies

The policies that would influence business development are contained in two sections. *Peoples Health, Safety and Values* (Part B3) sets out the anticipated form of development (the qualities expected for the zone). Part B2 *Transport Networks* is also relevant as transport (and parking) standards have a very significant impact on the quality of development.

Transport policy is being reviewed separately by Plan Change 12. This review will make significant changes including an increase in the amount of parking required by some development. But it will also include increased recognition of the negative consequences of roading requirements.

Part B3 Peoples Health, Safety and Values

The District Plan contains a policy (B3.4.3) which aims to maintain and provide high quality town centres:

> *To provide Business 1 zones which enable a range of business activities to operate while maintaining environmental quality and aesthetic and amenity values which make the zone(s) attractive to people*

It also contains, under the heading of "strategy" the following description of the business 1 zone:

> *"Business 1 zones are noisier and busier than Living zones. They are still pleasant areas for people to gather, live or work in, with good aesthetic values and few nuisance effects"*

This high level policy is clear that a certain level of amenity is expected for business areas and it is specific that the zones should be pleasant for people. As the policy is set out, there is an expectation that people will enjoy the atmosphere of the business zone.

The plan also contains more specific policies about how development will be managed.

This expectation is confirmed by the Anticipated Environmental Results for the section:

> *Business 1 zones are attractive places for people to visit, work or reside in.*

Other relevant policy in the section is as follows. Policy B3.4.22 concerns the design of buildings in the Business and Living zones:

> *Allow people freedom in their choice of the design of buildings or structures except where building design needs to be managed to:*
>
> – *Avoid adverse effects on adjoining sites; or*
>
> – *Maintain the character of areas with outstanding natural features or landscapes values or special heritage or amenity values.*

This is a strong statement of a Laissez-faire planning ethos, indicating that management of buildings will be minimal.

Policy B3.4.23 concerns the issue of concept plans that existed at the time of the notification of the District Plan:

> *Support the use of building or landscaping concept plans or ideas developed for townships in Selwyn District where such plans or ideas:*
>
> – *Are appropriate to the proposed activity;*
>
> – *Do not contravene any District Plan policies or rules; and*
>
> – *The builder/developer is interested in using them.*

It is not clear what this policy seeks to achieve as it makes it clear that such plans can be ignored, which would be the case if the policy did not exist.

The question that this report seeks to confront is whether the laissez fair approach set out in policy 3.4.22 has delivered the results anticipated by the strategy and by policy 3.4.4.

5.1.2 Rules

The principle implementation method for the policy is the rules which are set out in sections 16 (Business Zone Rules - Buildings) and 17 (Business Zone Rules – Roading). These rules are a traditional bulk and location approach to development, common throughout New Zealand.

The rules include:

Landscaping	The area between the road and a principle building shall be paved or sealed, or planted in lawn or landscaped with shrubs
Site Coverage	Generally unlimited, but with exceptions for particular areas
Height	Generally 10m, with 25m for structures.
Recession Planes	Variable (30-55 degrees depending on orientation) from 2.5m when facing residential boundaries or 6m when facing other internal boundaries.
Setbacks	Not generally applicable.

These rules generally reflect the laissez faire approach described by policy 3.4.22.

Traffic and Parking Rules

The traffic rules are also being revised by Proposed Plan Change 12 and we must consider the effects that these rules (both the present and new rules) have on the business zone form.

The key matters are described below:

On-Site Parking	Activities are generally expected to provide on-site parking for the general demand associated with the activity. Parking rates are lower in town centres under PC12 because use of on-street parking is anticipated in business zones. Under PC12 the (town centre) parking rates are:	
	Retail Area	3.5 spaces per 100m^2 Gross Floor
	Food and Beverage:	3.5/100m2 for the first 150m2 of public floor area, then 19/100m2.
	Offices	2.5/100m2 GFA
	The present District plan requires 2/100m^2 GFA for shops and 10/100m^2 for restaurants.	
Accessway	The District Plan does not control accessway location, although DP12 will include this as a matter for discretion for high traffic generators, subject to traffic related rules. Generally one access per site is permitted.	
Design of Parking	PC 12 will include assessment matters for larger car parks to ensure that they provide safe crossing routes and landscaping.	

5.1.3 Effects of District Plan Policy

This section considers the actual effect of the District Plan rules and the extent to which they deliver the intentions of policy 3.4.4, and also the extent to which they obstruct that policy aim.

The bulk and location rules are aimed at provided some basic protection of amenity, for instance from shading or overbearing buildings (for instance ones which are overly high).

They do not ensure good design or a relationship between buildings and public space. They do not ensure that development is laid out to be convenient and accessible for pedestrians. They do not ensure that development works within the context of surrounding sites. In short they are deficient in ensuring that development is attractive and convenient.

Of equal or greater significance, however, are the requirements for car parking.

Parking requires a very significant land take. A parking requirement of 4/100m^2 of GFA will result in a site which is around 50% car parking. The existing Plan requirement of 2/100m^2 means that 25% of a site needs to be car parking (unless it is to be used for restaurants).

Just as important is the location of car parking. Shops generally prefer to have it located at the front of the site where it is visible to passing traffic, feels safer (for instance less chance of vandalism) and is more efficient in terms of land take. However, this has serious negative consequences as described elsewhere in this report.

It is not unreasonable to conclude that the District Plan rules make it very hard to build good quality development, because the parking requirements invite designers to position the car park prominently. The building rules do not compensate for this. The rules in the current district plan therefore serve to undermine policy 3.4.4 rather than give effect to it.

Case Study: 5 Robert Street, Lincoln

This is a recent commercial development where the Council facilitated an alternative solution to that prescribed by the District Plan in order to obtain an improved built environment outcome.

The development is for a parade of five shops and required ten parking spaces.

The developer initially proposed a scheme which provided the ten spaces on site in front of the shops. Two would have been accessed by driving over the footpath which meant that the shops would need a discretionary resource consent. But Council staff were of the view that the effects of this would probably be minor and that the development would be approved. However, the developer realized the shortcomings of this design in terms of urban form.

Original Plans for the Robert Street development

As a result of discussions with Council, it was agreed that the developer could form parking in the berm at 90 degrees to the road and divert the footpath onto his site (As shown below). This resulted in a more traditional style shopping parade fronting the footpath with parking in the road corridor.

Breaking the rules: finished Development at 5 Robert Street

A resource consent was required for this because the parking was one space short and because it was not on site. This was granted.

In terms of planning process, the shops as built would be more non-complying than the initial proposal and the application involved a greater degree of uncertainty. It was only by working closely with staff that the developer was able to go through this process. The original design would have been approved more easily yet would have produced a poor quality environment where the frontage of shops was severed from the street by parking.

In this way, the Plan facilitates poor quality development whilst putting up obstacles to better outcomes.

5.2 Other Plans and Strategies

5.2.1 The Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (the UDS)

The UDS has been produced by a partnership of District Councils (Selwyn, Waimakariri and Christchurch City), Environment Canterbury and the New Zealand Transport Agency. Its purpose is to manage future urban development in the Greater Christchurch area until 2041.

The UDS sets the framework for managing urban growth in Greater Christchurch through a combination of staged urban expansion and more intensive use of the existing urban areas.

It aims to achieve compact, sustainable urban form and high quality development. Specific policies in the UDS are:

Urban Design

Key Approaches

- *Urban Design considerations are incorporated into district plan variations and changes to help prevent poor quality developments.*
- *Promote and encourage comprehensive development and redevelopment to achieve good urban design outcomes*

The recommended approach is specifically aimed at preventing poorly designed development. It does not require comprehensive development but it does require the consideration of existing and future development in the design of site layouts.

City and Town Centre Revitalisation

Key Approaches

- *Improve the quality of urban design in town centres, particularly provision of adaptable built form and attractive public spaces and street frontages including space between buildings, footpaths, lanes and alleyways.*
- *New buildings have a good relationship to the street and surrounding neighbourhoods.*

The recommended approach is aimed at improving urban design in town centres and is particularly aimed at the relationship between buildings and public space. The plan change would implement the above policy.

5.2.2 Canterbury Regional Policy Statement Plan Change 1

The UDS is intended to be implemented by a range of measures. The first key regulatory measure is Plan Change 1 to the RPS. The plan change sets out the objective and policy framework for how urban growth is to be accommodated over the next 35 years in the Greater Christchurch area.

Plan Change 1 has been upheld by Commissioners but is currently under appeal to the Environment Court. As such, it is subject to modification and amendment, but it is still relevant for consideration in this plan change. Under the RMA, the District Plan is required to give effect to the RPS.

Relevant Objectives include:

Objective 2: Character and Sustainability
To achieve built environments within Greater Christchurch that:

- *have a sense of character and identity*
- *retain heritage values*

- *protect areas of special amenity*
- *provide a range of densities and uses*
- *are healthy, environmentally sustainable, functionally efficient and economically vibrant*

Objective 7: Integration of Transport Infrastructure and Land Use
Transport infrastructure is integrated with development and settlement patterns to reduce network congestion, reduce dependency on private motor vehicles, reduce emission of contaminants to air and energy use, promote the use of active transport modes and facilitate the movement of goods and provision of services in Greater Christchurch.

Also relevant is Policy 7 (development form and design) which requires that urban development should give effect to the urban design protocol:

Policy 7: Development Form and Design
Development of Activities in Greenfields, Intensification Areas, and key Activity Centres should give effect to urban design best practice. The principles of the Urban Design Protocol (Ministry for the Environment, 2005) shall be observed when preparing or assessing any urban development and the following matters shall be provided for:

- *good safe connectivity within the area, and to surrounding areas, by a variety of transport modes, including motor vehicles, cycling, pedestrian and public transport, and provision for easy and safe transfer between modes of transport*
- *location within walkable distance to, community, social and commercial facilities*
- *provision for effective, efficient and attractive walk and cycleways, preferably integrated with open space and stormwater detention areas, within, across and linking beyond the area*
- *provision for a range of areas of residential densities and lot sizes, with higher residential densities located within walking distance of Key Activity Centres and commercial centres*
- *provision for the protection of surface and groundwater quality, including appropriate stormwater management facilities to avoid down stream flooding and to preserve or enhance water quality*
- *provision for sufficient and integrated open spaces and parks to enable people to meet their recreation needs, with higher levels of public open space for areas of higher residential densities,*
- *protection and enhancement of significant natural, ecological, landscape and historic heritage features,*
- *show how other adverse effects on the environment are to be avoided, remedied or mitigated,*

- *a high standard of visual interest and amenity,*
- *people's health and well-being through good building design, including energy efficiency and the provision of natural light,*
- *effective and efficient use of existing and new infrastructure networks.*

The recommended approach is aimed at implementing the above objectives and much of policy 7. It will ensure quality development that has a sense of identity, and in particular that provides healthy and functionally efficient environments that are easy for people to walk around. This development form, with walkable and attractive town centres, will reduce dependence on private motor vehicles.

5.2.3 Selwyn District Council Walking and Cycling Strategy

The Walking and Cycling Strategy was adopted in December 2008. It aims to enable opportunities for walking and cycling (including the provision of improved facilities and environments). It also aims to reduce the use of cars for short trips.

The strategy identifies that land-use planning tools can implement these goals. It aims to ensure that sustainable transport solutions are supported by the District Plan. The principles it identifies include:

- *Designing for walking and cycling is not to be secondary to designing for motor vehicles. The environment should be designed for all modes of transport.*
- *Land use planning should facilitate ease of travelling by bicycle or on foot.*
- *Appropriate planning for walking and cycling including provision of improved connectivity.*
- *Council provision of safe and efficient road, footpath and cycle networks.*

The recommended approach would ensure that the provision of walking and cycling facilities was prioritised in new development and would promote the above principles. The plan change would be an effective way to implement these parts of the strategy by influencing the built form of development.

5.2.4 Selwyn Community Outcomes

The following community outcomes are relevant to the Plan Change:

- *A living Environment where the rural theme of Selwyn is maintained*
- *A Safe Place in which to Live, Work and Play*

The plan change would support the first of these by limiting the degree to which inappropriately designed commercial development might occur in rural townships.

One of the sub-aims of the second outcome is detailed as: "*Pedestrians, cyclists and motor-vehicle users can safely move around the District".* Safe and attractive pedestrian routes in town centres would be an important component of this.

5.2.5 New Zealand Urban Design Protocol

The Council signed the Urban Design Protocol in September 2008. The Protocol has been produced by the Ministry for the Environment and aims to make New Zealand's towns and cities more successful through quality urban design.

The protocol identifies seven essential design elements for quality urban design (the "7Cs"). These are:

- *Context: seeing buildings, places and spaces as part of whole towns and cities*
- *Character: reflecting and enhancing the distinctive character, heritage and identity of our urban environment*
- *Choice: ensuring diversity and choice for the users of an urban environment, including building types and transport options*
- *Connections: supporting social cohesion, making places lively and safe and facilitating contact among people. Places a high priority on walking, cycling and public transport.*
- *Creativity: encouraging innovative and imaginative solutions*
- *Custodianship: ensuring design is environmentally sustainable, safe and healthy*
- *Collaboration: communicating and sharing knowledge across sectors, professions and with communities.*

These design principles are especially relevant for commercial areas which are used by a large number of people with a variety of needs. The plan change would particularly support the first four of the principles.

APPENDIX 1 COMPARISON WITH OTHER DISTRICT PLANS

A study of other District Plans has been carried out to compare the proposed measures with what has been implemented elsewhere in the country.

This is not a comprehensive study of District Plans. Rather it is a compilation of similar measures from a sample of 8 District plans.

It shows that what is being proposed is not "new" in the sense that it is similar to what has been approved for inclusion in other Plans.

Recommendations for Selwyn District Plan

For the sake of comparison, the recommendations for the Selwyn District Plan are listed below:

Rules

New rules for the business 1 zone as follows:

- Fencing is limited in height to 1m.
- Buildings to have 60% of public frontages as active frontage.
- Car parking shall not take place between the frontage of buildings and a road
- Car Park Perimeter Landscaping with a minimum height of 1m or width of 3m, 1 tree every 10m.
- Landscaping within car parks, 1 tree for every 10 spaces.
- Footpaths within developments have a minimum width of 3m
- Signs are limited to 25% of the surface area of a frontage
- Freestanding signs are restricted to one per site
- Bright colours (groups A and B) are restricted to 25% of a building elevation
- External security shutters are not installed

Restricted Discretionary Activities

Retail over 450m^2 has restricted discretionary status. Matters for discretion include:

- The provision of direct, high quality pedestrian routes
- Position of parking
- Provision of pedestrian oriented space
- the amount and location of active frontage
- Buildings to be visually integrated with the surrounding buildings and contribute to an attractive streetscene

Waimakariri District Plan

The Waimakariri District Plan includes controls on buildings fronting Rangiora High Street. These state that buildings shall be:

- Built to the road frontage
- Occupy the full frontage of the site;
- Contain clear glazing for the display of goods and services on the ground floor;
- Not have any individual area of unglazed wall exceed a length of 1.5m; and
- Include a verandah on the road frontage for the full width of the building.

The plan also has a requirement for landscaping within setbacks in all business zones. Landscaping shall have an average depth of 2m along road boundaries, with a tree planted every 10m.

COMMENT

These rules apply to Rangiora High Street which has a traditional character. This is similar to Lincoln and Leeston and is a high quality environment of the kind that is desired for all Selwyn townships.

The provisions aim to shape development on the main shopping area and include requirements for building location and active frontage. They are similar to the recommended " small development" rules.

The landscaping requirements would require a similar amount of landto the recommendations although they do not specify a minimum height for screening.

Christchurch City Plan

The city plan contains a variety of measures for its various business 1 type zones (such as central city or suburban centre). These reflect the different chracter of those areas. The Central City has a greater built density than other areas and some of the standards are reflective of this. The plan also contains site specific rules for a number of areas.

<u>Rules</u>

- Buildings in Sydenham and Central City to be built to the road boundary
- Landscaping standards of 1 tree for every 10m of frontage, plus 1 tree for every 5 car parking spaces, minimum planter diameter 1.5m.
- In the B1 and B2 zones, A 3m setback and landscaping required where display windows are not provided along the full width of a building. A larger setback can be provided if it is not used for car parking.

Business 1 and 2 zones

Controlled activity status for redevelopment above 4,000m^2 with respect to:

- Layout of buildings
- Location of carparking
- Landscaping
- Relationship of the development with neighbours

Where a resource consent is required the following assessment matters are in place in the B1/2 zones:

- The visual appearance and attractiveness of the development, particularly as a pedestrian environment.
- The relationship of the development with any open space areas, within or adjoining the centre, and the accessibility of any public facilities such as crèches, libraries and public conveniences.
- For Ferrymead:
- The extent to which the development facilitates safe and direct pedestrian walkways, cycleways, vehicular access, and pedestrian access to public transport, both within and adjoining the site;
- The extent to which trees or landscaping contributes to the amenity both within the site and surrounding environment;
- The relationship and linkages (both physical and visual) of the development with any open space areas within or adjoining the site;
- The degree to which the development provides for residential, commercial services, community facilities and publicly accessible open space; and
- The extent to which buildings relate to the street, access ways and publicly accessible areas.
- The visual relationship of the building to adjoining buildings, and others in the vicinity.
- In the Sydenham district centre, the use to be made of a non-complying setback; any effect on the visual impression of the streetscape and "sense of enclosure"; and the effect on the traditional "mainstreet" character of the shopping centre.
- The visual impact on the street scene and/or adjacent living zones of any building without display windows.
- For Ferrymead, the extent to which a reduced [less than 10m] setback is comparable with the existing built form in the vicinity.

COMMENT

The matters for control for large developments include control over the layout of buildings and carparking and the relationship with neighbours. Although this is less rigorous than

what is recommended for Selwyn, it is similar in that it does give the council discretion over the layout of sites. The threshold is very large and in practice may be vulnerable to "slice by slice" consent applications to get a larger project through the process without triggering the controlled status.

The individual rules for Sydenham are similar to the requirements for smaller commercial development.

The rules for Ferrymead include consideration of on-site public space, that it should be accessible and that there should be a good relationship between that space and buildings on site. This requirement is similar to the recommendation that people oriented space be provided on site.
The landscaping requirements are in some ways stricter than those recommended (more trees) but in some ways less prescriptive in that they do not specify a minimum height for low level landscaping.

Ashburton District Plan

Business 1 (town centre) zones:

- Buildings to be built to the road frontage
- Verandahs on road frontage
- Windows occupying 50% of the building frontage
- No on-site public car-parking

The plan also contains landscaping requirements as follows: In business 2 zones, planting to a depth of 1.5m. In business 3 zones, planting to a depth of 3m, with a tree for each 10m of site frontage.

COMMENT
The plan standards are similar to the recommended small shop provisions. The restriction on parking is viable in Ashburton because there is plentiful public car parking, but the intent is still to maintain a mainstreet character uninterupted by car parking. The landscaping requirements would require a similar amount of land to those in the recommendations.

Wellington City Plan

The Wellington City Plan includes the following:

- Display windows required along designated frontages, the use of roller-shutter doors is not permitted.
- Signs are restricted to 10m2
- Maximum area of freestanding signs is 8m2 (limit 1).

In certain areas, new buildings are controlled activity subject to design, external appearance and siting. The plan contains a series of design guides for individual areas. These specify matters such as

- Width of shops and frequency of doors (for instance 7m in Thorndon)
- The style of and architectural detailing of shop fronts
- Materials used in joinery, and the finish of walls

COMMENT

As important as any regulatory standards in Wellington is the geography (which contrains the central area, restricts the land supply and makes erecting taller buidings more viable). Also important in the central area is that parking standards do not apply (except for maximum standards) which reduces the problems caused by trying to integrate a car park within the site.

The Wellington Plan does contain some quite prescriptive design restrictions in designated character areas. These would allow the control of building style (including archtectural design) as well as materials and colour. This is more prescriptive than what has been recommended for Selwyn, but is based on a study of individual areas with individual historic character.

Kapiti Coast District Plan

Retail over 500m^2 has controlled activity status. Matters for control include:

- Location of buildings on the site
- Location and design of car parking
- Quality of pedestrian areas
- Use of active frontage to create visual interest
- Maximum setback of 1.8m to legal road
- 75% of frontage as active retail frontage
- A pedestrian entrance every 15m to legal road or main internal routes
- Pedestrian pathways with a width of 2m through car parking areas

The definition of active retail frontage is the area between 1 and 2 metres in height, to allow unobstructed views of the activities in the building.

Freestanding signs are restricted to a single 8m^2 sign. Wall signs are restricted to 20% of wall area.

COMMENT

This is a very similar approach to that proposed in the recommendations in the main report. It differentiates between large and small shops and provides similar discretion on site layout, car parking, active frontage and pedestrian areas. It includes more onerus requirements for pedestrian entrances.

The sign restrictions allow a larger area of freestanding signs, but they also restrict wall signs to 20% of the wall area.

Western Bay of Plenty District Plan

Proposed WBOP Plan

The proposed WBOP plan has been heard and the following provisions are not subject to appeal:

- Development to be to road boundary
- Glass to cover 50% of frontage to main streets and 25% of frontage to other streets or public areas
- No car parking to be located within 10m of a road boundary
- Signs limited to 30% of a building frontage

In the Omokoroa area:

- The provision of a 200m2 public space (plaza) to act as a focal point.
- Screen planting
- The use of natural and recessive colours

COMMENT

The rules are generally similar to the approach recommended for small shops. The proposed plan was the only plan to limit signage on building facades. Omokoroa is a new development area and the Council has taken the approach that it should provide a set area as a public square, a similar approach to that recommended for all larger developments in Selwyn. The plan also contains some control on colours.

North Shore City Plan

<u>High traffic generators</u>

Comprehensive development plans are required for sites over 2,000m^2 in certain business zones, where these would meet criteria for being high traffic generators (such as supermarkets). Plans are to include the following:

- Integration with pedestrian patterns.
- The safety and convenience of pedestrian and vehicle access, including service vehicles.
- Any public amenity areas located in or adjoining the site.
- The provision for shelter from the weather, i.e. shelter from the sun and shelter from the wind and rain.
- The location and extent of areas to be landscaped:

- Whether existing trees and vegetation have been incorporated into the landscape plan.
- How the landscape programme mitigates the development's effects, e.g. by using screens and buffers.
- Whether the landscape plan has been designed to create visual interest and contribute to the amenity of the area.
- The visual impact of the development and the location of buildings.
- The location and arrangement of land use activities including the location of all significant buildings.
- The location and design of car parking, its visual screening and the use of planting to break up large parking areas.
- The type of design, height, materials and finish of all proposed buildings.
- The relationship of the development and its effects on the adjoining land and the wider community.
- The location and design of signs associated with the proposed development.
- The provision of stormwater quality control and wastewater treatment and disposal.

These rules principally apply in mixed use zones and the sub-regional centre. The Council's ambitions for the creation of a high amenity mixed use sub-regional centre in Albany (the business 11 zone) are provided in policy 15.4.8 of the North Shore City Plan. These incude:

- Active uses on ground floor street frontages
- Breaking down building forms into horizontal distances that create a human scale
- Absence of large areas of on-street car parking between buildings and streets
- Absence of blank walls along street frontages

The plan also contains rules that restrict fencing above 400mm from being placed within landscaping setbacks (ie it must be placed on the inner edge).

<u>Signs</u>
The total area of signage is controlled by a relatively complex points system, which allocated points based on the road frontage at the rate of 1 point per 1m of frontage. These can then be translated into signage which uses up the points according to its area. A sign painted on or flush to a wall would be allowed at the size of $1m^2$ per 1m of road frontage up to a maximum of $30m^2$. But other types of signage use up the points, so if there are multiple signs (eg if there is also a projecting sign) then the size of sign is further restricted.

COMMENT
The assessment matters are very comprehensive and are aimed at controlling similar effects to those of the recommendations, notably the layout of development with regard to pedestrian amenity. The degree of control on car-parking is also similar to the

recommendations. The plan also controls the finish of proposed buildings which would give the council the ability to control colour. The plan also include scope for the consideration of people oriented space located on the site.

Whilst the North Shore controls are more specific than the recommendations (the list is very long) they are likely to amount to a similar level of control.

The thresholdfor controlled status is set at a 2,000m^2 site. In practice, this is likely to equate to around 800m^2 of single storey development, once car parking requirements are considered.

The North Shore signage rules appear to be very fair at alowing a maximum total of signage and giving occupiers the flexibility about how to use their allowance, but they are complicated.

By contrast, a control at the rate of 25% of building frontage is easy to understand. A 10m frontage might translate into a building frontage of around 40m^2. To allow 25% signage would be 10m^2, the same as the North Shore plan. However, there would then be additional capacity for other types of signage up to the plan restrictions. The recommended approach is less restrictive than that from the North Shore, but simpler.

Rodney District Plan

The partially operative Rodney District plan contains the following rules. Whilst the business chapter is not yet operative, these rules are not subject to appeal:

- the building façade shall occupy at least 70% of the street frontage at ground level;
- A maximum front setback of 5m
- Any setback to be used for outdoor dining, display, planting or pedestrian amenities [not car parking].
- building facades shall include façade modulation, articulation or architectural relief at intervals no greater than 10 metres along the street frontage. Examples of this include a change in building mass, features such as pilasters, entrances, windows, shutters, balconies, changes in surface texture or detail;
- Minimum height for building façades of 6 metres;
- Windows with clear glazing and pedestrian entrances shall comprise no less than 40% of the surface area of the building façade at ground level;
- the ground level floor of buildings at the street frontage to be no higher or lower than 1 metre from the average ground level along the street frontage;
- Any carparking at ground level shall be located behind or within the building and in any case no closer than 6 metres to the street frontage;
- parking and service access shall be provided from the rear of the building or a service lane.

- verandahs or other cover along the full extent of its frontage shall be provided.
- Trees – 1 per site plus an additional tree for every 10m of road frontage.
- Car parks to be screened by walls and hedges at least 1.5m high (wall not to be located within a landscape setback).
- Drive-through facilities such as restaurants are discretionary, subject to traffic and amenity (notably the effects of a break in retail frontage).
- Signs may be $7m^2$, one per site.

The plan also provides the following assessment matters which apply if the rules are broken:

- Amenity values and visual character: Whether, where the proposal is to deviate from the Rules relating to the building façade, the building will adversely affect the pedestrian amenity values or visual character of the streetscape.
- Street frontage: Whether, where the proposal is to deviate from the Rules relating to the building façade, the building will adversely affect the continuity of the built street frontage or result in large areas of blank wall.
- Location of carparking: Whether, where the proposal is to vary the location of the carparking, it will adversely affect the visual character or pedestrian amenity values of the streetscape.
- Safety: Whether, where the proposal is to provide parking or service access along the frontage, it will adversely affect the continuity or visual effect of the frontage or pedestrian or traffic safety.
- Verandah cover: Whether, where the proposal is to vary the verandah cover, it will adversely reduce the protection to pedestrians.

COMMENT

In its general approach,the Rodney District Plan differs from the recommendations in that it does not differentiate between large and small activities; instead it applies a comprehensive set of rules to all development. However, it does include further assessment matters for development which does not comply with the rules. These allow the assessment of pedestrian routes and amenity as well as the effects of the loss of continuous street frontage. The plan also contains policy which notes the importance of pedestrian amenity to the vitality of the centre. In reality, it provides a means for the assessment of all types of development.

This plan is more prescriptive than the recommended approach, probably because it does not differentiate between the different scales of effects of small and large development. Some provisions are stricter than those recommended such as the requirement for building modulation and a minimum height.

The Plan does not require pedestrian oriented space or an equivalent and it does not restrict colours or security shutters.

Conclusions

The recommended rules and assessment matters are broadly similar to measures which have been implemented elsewhere. The measures have been annotated below to show where similar provisions have been put in place.

Legend

WDC Waimakariri District Council
CCC Christchurch City Council
ADC Ashburton District Council
WCC Wellington City Council
KCDC Kapiti Coast District Council
WBOP Western Bay of Plenty District Council
NSCC North Shore City Council
RDC Rodney District Council

Rules

New rules for the business 1 zone as follows:

- Fencing is limited in height to 1m. NSDC
- Buildings to have 60% of public frontages as active frontage. WDC, ADC, WCC, KCDC, WBOP, NSCC, RDC
- Car parking shall not take place between the frontage of buildings and a road WDC, CCC, ADC, KCDC, WBOP, NSCC, RDC
- Car Park Perimeter Landscaping with a minimum height of 1m or width of 3m, 1 tree every 10m. CCC, WBOP, NSCC, RDC
- Landscaping within car parks, 1 tree for every 10 spaces. CCC, ADC, RDC
- Footpaths within developments have a minimum width of 3m ADC, WDC, KCDC, RDC
- Signs are limited to 25% of the surface area of a frontage KCDC, WBOP, NSCC
- Freestanding signs are restricted to one per site KCDC, WCC, NSCC
- Bright colours (groups A and B) are restricted to 25% of a building elevation WCC, WBOP
- External security shutters are not installed WCC

Restricted Discretionary Activities

Retail over 500m^2 has restricted discretionary status. Matters for discretion include:

- The provision of direct, high quality pedestrian routes CCC, KCDC, NSCC, RDC
- Position of parking CCC, KCDC, NSCC, RDC
- Provision of pedestrian oriented space CCC, WBOP, NSCC
- the amount and location of active frontage KCDC, WCC, RDC, NSCC
- Buildings to be visually integrated with the surrounding buildings and contribute to an attractive streetscene CCC, WCC, NSCC, RDC

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF URBAN DESIGN EVIDENCE

This report is in two parts. The first is a summary of policy guidance from the New Zealand government which supports the aim of improved amenity and connections in town centres. The policy, which comes from four separate ministries, is consistant in seeking outcomes which are in line with the aims of this project.

The second is a summary of some of the evidence from New Zealand and overseas which shows how improved urban design leads to economic and social benefits. This evidence is principally from two reports, both of which have been produced to collate the (plentiful) evidence; one from the Ministry for the Environment and one from the UK, produced by the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions in association with CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, which was then the government's advisor on the built environment). The first of these was a review of existing studies, whilst the second included some primary research which compared similar developments with different design characteristics. Other sources have also been consulted and are referenced where applicable.

The research is unequvocal that there are social and economic benefits from good design and that these accrue both to the developer and to the wider public. Furthermore, it shows that there are costs of bad design which fall disproportiately on the shoulders of the wider community.

1 NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT POLICY

A variety of central government policy supports the aim of improved pedestrian connections and an improved pedestrian environment. This policy is produced by a number of government departments and agencies and is consistant in its recommendations.

1.1 Ministry of Transport: Getting there – On Foot, By Cycle

Getting there – On Foot, By Cycle is the Ministry for Transport's national strategy for walking and cycling. Amongst its ten priorities for action are:

- Encourage land use, planning and design that supports walking and cycling
- Provide supportive environments for walking and cycling in existing communities

It notes that 1 in 5 trips is on foot (for all purposes) and that not all New Zealanders have access to a car. For instance, 10% of households do not have a car and 20% of New Zealanders are under 15.

The strategy places some importance on the physical environment that is provided for walking and cycling. It recognises the importance of the quality of connections as well as their directness:

> "Individuals are more likely to choose to walk or cycle if they perceive the environment as being walk-and-cycle-friendly — that is, convenient, safe, and pleasant, with direct routes that minimise travel time." (p12).

> "For pedestrians and cyclists, travel is not always about getting from A to B. Often, it is about experiencing life along the way — being in rather than just passing through communities. Ensuring that new communities have an active street life, interesting and human-scaled design, and amenities such as shade trees and rest benches will encourage walking and cycling." (p27).

The strategy is quite explicit about the need for integrated planning. It notes that:

> "A New Zealand where people from all sectors of the community walk and cycle for transport and enjoyment requires communities and transport systems that enable and invite walking and cycling. Achieving this requires us to look at how we plan our cities and neighbourhoods." (p26)

To meet this aim, it recommends that "sympathetic urban design creates environments that pedestrians and cyclists enjoy and feel comfortable in." (p27).

This strategy from the Ministry of Transport is quite clear on the importance of creating good pedestrian environments and how this will contribute to providing for transport choice.

1.2 New Zealand Transport Agency: The Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide

The Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide was produced by the New Zealand Transport Authority. It notes that it takes a combination of factors to create a walkable community. It lists 9 characteristics of walkable communities:

Table 4.1 – Primary characteristics of walkable communities

Characteristic	Definition
Connected	Does the network provide direct access for pedestrians to the places they wish to reach? Do paths connect well to public transport and to surrounding networks?
Legible	Are walking networks clearly signposted and are they published in local maps? Can visitors find their way? Do users intuitively sense how to use the facilities?
Comfortable	Are routes unpolluted by excessive noise and fumes? Are paths wide enough with even surfaces and gentle gradients? Is there shelter from the elements and places to rest?
Convenient	Are routes continuous, efficient, unimpeded by obstacles, and undelayed by other path users and road traffic?
Pleasant	Are the pedestrian spaces enjoyable, interesting, quiet and clean with qualities encouraging lingering and social interaction?
Safe	Are road crossing places and driveway crossings safe from traffic danger and do all surfaces provide a good grip when wet and provide even surfaces free from trip hazards?
Secure	Does the walking environment discourage antisocial and criminal behaviour due to the application of the principles of crime prevention through environmental design?
Universal	Are facilities suitable for mobility and vision-impaired pedestrians through gentle gradients, visual contrast, audible and tactile features?
Accessible	Are popular destinations within easy walking distance.

Source: NZTA (2009)

These principles are reflected in the recommendations of this project, with its emphasis on the provision of direct routes with high amenity, directly interacting with buildings.

The NZTA guide notes the importance of urban form and the effect that it has on the attractiveness of walking as a practical means of tranport:

"The quality of the street scene is particularly important for pedestrians and is associated with higher walking levels . Pedestrians prefer both close and distant views of features of interest, and landscaping should be provided and maintained while always ensuring personal security. Pedestrians enjoy lively and animated street scenes, so in many situations a modest flow of vehicles is generally acceptable and provides improved natural surveillance. As traffic engineering devices can be ugly, attention to attractive design is important.

"We need to ensure that our view of a street is more than just functional. Streets and public spaces should be beautiful, engaging and inspiring. Too often they are boring, repetitive and ugly. As a general principle, it is important to promote a quality public environment where impediments to walking are only implemented when they are absolutely essential." (p4-5)

This is a strong statement of the importance of quality of active pedestrian environments (such as streets or similar environments). This (SDC) project is seeking to create public environments which have a similar sense of amenity to streets.

The above statement also indicates the importance of direct routes to pedestrians where diversions (such as around car parks) are avoided.

The NZTA guide also recognises the place of pedestrian routes over private land (such as shopping complexes) in the pedestrian network:

"A fully comprehensive walking network will encompass:

- *the road corridor, enabling pedestrians to travel along and across roads*
- *routes over land available for public use, such as along coast and river margins and through parks, transport interchanges and car parks*
- *private land, such as on immediate approaches to and exits from buildings and carparks.*

Providing for walking should be at the heart of planning for an area, as faster modes can be more flexibly accommodated. In an integrated approach to planning for new roads or changes to existing roads, identifying, understanding and working to incorporate and balance the needs of all road users at the beginning of the process is critical. This requires an understanding of the general needs of pedestrians in the area for access along and across the road or site of interest…

…All land owners should be encouraged to provide a comparable level of service to that on public road corridors. All new and improved developments should be required to have a high-quality pedestrian environment as an integral part of all resource consent applications, unless there is good reason." (p5-2)

1.3 Ministry for the Environment: People+Places+Spaces: A design Guide for Urban New Zealand

People+Places+Spaces was published in 2002 as a guide for interested parties in how to achieve good urban design in New Zealand.

Its principles for design include:

Integration and Connectivity. It notes the elements for this are Movement networks and building interfaces. " The purpose is to promote development that is integrated and connected with its surrounding environment and community. This facilitates ease of access, economy of movement and improved social interaction" (p30).

Legibility and Identity. The elements involved in this are town form and visual character. "To promote environments that are easily understood by their users and that display a strong local identity and appropriate visual character. This facilitates an enhanced usage, enjoyment and pride in local places" (p31).

The guidance it offers for commercial development is conventional in urban design terms. It suggests that it should:

- Keep block sizes as small as possible, especially towards the centre of a node as this increases conectivity for all users (p45).
- Design public spaces and streets that effectively connect new developments into the surrounding area (p48).
- Minimise the impact of parking areas by locating them to the rear of the site where possible, planting large numbers of trees, limiting paved surfaces to the minimum required for parking and manoeuvring and breaking large areas into small seperated parking clusters (p50).
- Narrower lots make for a richer more diverse street edge – concentrate these especially around key public spaces (p51).
- Avoid streets being lined with the blank walls of large buildings. Where possible, locate smaller lots between these sites and the street (p51).
- Have active rooms fronting public areas and avoid blank walls on the street edge (p52 and 54).
- Promote higher degrees of spatial enclosure in more intensive urban conditions.

1.4 Ministry of Justice: National Guidelines for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design in New Zealand

These guidance notes were produced by the Ministry of Justice outline how Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design provides a framework for incorporating crime prevention within urban design by focussing on reducing the opportuinity to commit crime.

The guidelines note four key principle of CPTED:

- Surveillance (people are present and can see what is going on)
- Access management (attracting people to some areas and restricting them from others)

- Territorial reinforcement (clear boundaries encouraging community ownership of public space)
- Quality Environments (good quality environments attract people and support surveillance)

CPTED emphasises the use of natural techniques that involve thinking about peoples natural behaviour in the design of spaces, to reduce the opportunity for crime.

The techniques for implementing CPTED are broadly in line with recommendations for urban design from other government guidance.

The guide notes the importance of connections and a legible pedestrian network to support easy way-finding. It expresses some reservations about pedestrian routes which might provide opportunities for entrapment. Instead it favours routes with multiple exit points and the elimination of concealment spots (such as high fences or doorways).

It supports the need for active frontage at ground level and the elimination of inactrive frontages. It supports the provision of good quality public space that attracts people.

1.5 Ministry of Health, Report from the Public Health Advisory Committee: Healthy Places, Healthy Lives: Urban Environments and Wellbeing.

This recent evidence-based report from the Public Health Advisory Committee notes the importance of the urban environment in shaping health outcomes, and the link between poor health and poorly designed urban environments.

It places a high degree of emphasis on the ability to walk to services and notes the importance of walkability.

It states that:

> *"Cities and towns influence health in a way that goes far beyond the presence of health services in these areas. The way that urban areas are planned and laid out – known as urban form – shapes people's life choices and has a strong bearing on health outcomes. Urban form affects where we live, how we travel to work or school, how clean our air and water is, whether we are active, and what shops or facilities we use."(p. vii)*

This is a strong statement of the importance of urban form in promoting health outcomes. The report is clear on the need to make provision for active transport:

> *"Opportunities for good health are reduced when urban areas are not conducive to physical activity for either recreation or 'active transport'" (p. vii)*

The report noted that appropriate planning has the potential to help New Zealanders live healthier lives, for instance by providing opportunities for physical activity and social interaction.

This guidance is in line with that from other countries, including Australia and the UK (see for instance Planning Institute of Australia, 2009).

One of its recommendations is that urban infrastructure should promote active transport for all populations.

> *"If designed appropriately, urban form and transport can increase physical activity, improve air quality, reduce road traffic injuries, increase social cohesion, and achieve maximum health benefits from services and facilities" (p28)*

It also notes the importance of allowing good access to facilities for different social groups; that this can provide young people with options for independent travel and allow older people and those with disabilities to be physically active and independent. Paying insufficient attention to walkability can make it herder for people to access services, or to walk to them.

The report stresses the importance of integrated planning for land-use and transport; that this is a key requirement for planning for pedestrians. The Council's Proposed Plan Change 12 (notified 14 December 2010) is an attempt to being integrated decision making on land-use and transport matters into the District Plan. This project would build on the groundwork which is laid by Plan Change 12.

> *In addition to increasing physical activity, a 'walkable' urban form reduces the risk*
>
> *of injuries, increases equity in access to services for people who have no car, enhances community cohesion, provides the 'eyes on the street' that help keep neighbourhoods safe, and enables older people to remain socially connected.*

2 EVIDENCE

This report draws primarily on two sources: The Ministry for the Environment's comprehensive literature review *The Value of Urban Design* and the 2001 CABE/DETR study also entitled *The Value of Urban Design.*

Whilst the first of these is a review of the available evidence, the second is a combination of existing research combined with new case studies.

The case studies include urban design analysis, interviews with key stakeholders and a study of costs and returns. The developments were large predominantly office based developments with mixed use.

The case studies scored developments on their success using 7 objectives of urban design as identified in BY DESIGN (DETR and CABE, 2000). These are similar to the 7 C's in the Urban Design Protocol. These results (from professionals) were then compared with the results from interviews with users of the developments.

2.1 Benefits of Design

The Ministry for the Environment's *The Value of Urban Design* (MfE 2005) study reviewed the evidence for the benefits of urban design. It made a conclusion that a number of benefits were strongly supported in evidence. These included the following:

Connectivity

"Well connected cities, towns and neighbourhoods can

- *Enhance local values*
- *Make local shops and facilities more viable*
- *Enhance people's safety and security by encouraging surveillance*
- *Encourage more walking and cycling, leading to health benefits*
- *Reduce vehicle emissions through fewer cars being used for non-work trips"*

(p3)

High Quality Public Realm

An urban design approach that emphasises quality in the public realm can:

- *Lead to enhanced economic performance by attracting people and activities*
- *Encourage greater participation in community and cultural activities and enhance civic pride and commitment to the community*
- *Increase the use of public space and support associated business*
- *Enhance personal safety*

(p4)

The report defined the public realm as *"all parts of the physical environment of towns and cities that the public has access to and that form the setting for community and public life"*(p9). This includes traditional public space as well as de-facto public space (such as car parks or public ares created around shops, such as Rolleston Square).

It found that *"The combined weight of evidence strongly supports the view that good urban design adds spill over social and environmental value… Conversely, the evidence suggests that some poorly designed places and developments limit the spread of social benefits and may even create social and economic costs".* (p18).

This conclusion is supported by the CABE/DETR report which found that "*Good design adds economic, social and environmental value and does not necessarily cost more or take longer to deliver".* Moreover, that report found that good design *"Benefits all stakeholders – investors, developers, designers, occupiers, public authoritites and everyday users of development."*(p74). This is an unequivical endorsement of the benefits of well designed places. They do not cost significantly more and they deliver significant benefits which are appreciated by a full range of stakeholders.

2.2 Pedestrian Facilities and Pedestrian Activity

There is strong support for the contention that the propensity to walk is affected by the availability and attractiveness of routes.

The MfE report found "strong" evidence that connectivity encourages walking and cycling (p13) and "conclusive" evidence that a high quality public realm attracts people and activity:

> *"The evidence shows that a well-connected network of neighbourhood streets encourages walking and cycling. People are generally willing to walk or cycle a limited distance to reach a destination and a relatively well-connected network of streets allows a greater range of destinations to be within walking distance"* (p27).

> *"Increased cycle use can be fostered by design improvements, sometimes despite an increase in car ownership. These findings are significant because they show a combination of connectivity and sensitive public space design can encourage some people to change their mode of transport"(p27).*
>
> *"A considerable weight of evidence indicates that there must be attention to the quality of connections if they are to attractive use". (p28) "Quality space and routes enhance enjoyment and quality of life".*

The report notes the importance of the need to adopt *"an integrated, all-encompassing approach to the design of the public realm."*(p49). It argues that the use of single measures will not be effective. This point is also made by USEPA (2000). This study noted the importance of the aesthetics of the streetscape in shaping attitudes to travel. Attributes mentioned included the orientation of shops, amount of glazing, pedestrian entrances onto the street and the presence of street trees. It noted that a single attribute (such as attractive buildings or direct connections) would not in itself increase pedestrian travel. This indicates that a bundle of measures will invite people to walk, but that introducing a single measure (for instance increasing pedestrian connectivity in isolation from amenity) would not achieve this result.

This is an important point as the measures proposed in the main body of this report have been designed as a package, to work together. To unbundle them or weaken the measures is likely to make them less effective.

Some of the evidence that an improvement in facilities will lead to an increase in walking and cycling is as follows:

- Investment in cycling infrastructure in Munich has lead to a tripling in cycling (to 15% of journeys) since 1976 (USEPA, p74).
- A Chicago study found that the provision of good facilities was associated with reduced car ownership (USEPA, p74).
- In Oregon, a study showed that upgrading pedestrian environments would lead to a 10% decrease in the use of cars (USEPA, p73).
- The city of Copenhagen has increased commuting by cycle by 65% in the last 30 years despite an increase in car ownership.
- In the case of Melbourne, the number of pedestrians has increased by almost 40% on weekdays following a comprehensive program to improve the quality of the city centre, including significant improvements to facilities and the walking environment. These are detailed later in this appendix.
- An Australian study found that households in automobile dependent communities spend 50% more on transport than more accessable communities (AU$8,500 compared to AU$5,500) (VTPI, 2010).

The position of public open space (such as reserves) is important *"Social value is not delivered by the provision of public open space if that space is poorly integrated with its environment"*(CABE, 2001, p79). The significance of this point is that Council cannot act in isolation to provide reserves to encourage walking and urban vibrancy.

The amenity must be located where people are, which may not be on land which is in public ownership. The only solution is to change the way private development takes place.

The Victoria Transport Policy Institute (2010) makes a strong case for more attention to be paid to walking in policy. It notes that although walking represents a small amount of milege (just 2.8%) it does represent 18% of trips and 25% of travel time. "This tendency to undervalue nonmotorized travel can be particularly harmful because transportation decisions often involve tradeoffs between different travel modes. Wide roads, high traffic speeds and large parking facilities create barriers to walking, so evaluation practices that undervalue walking tend to create automobile dependent communities"

The point made is that poor design creates barriers to walking and does not invite people to walk. This goes beyond the failure to provide vibrant spaces, to the creation of an environment which is making it hard for people to walk even if they would prefer to.

The report also refers to some of the costs of the current development trends, including ther very high level of car dependancy. In particular, poor design can make it necessary for families to own a second car, which is a significant expense to impose on the community (estimated at at least $5,000 per year in the report).

2.3 The Link Between Economic Activity and Good Design

There are two aspects of economic activity. One is the return to investors and developers on the capital used to build a project. This has traditionally dominated development decisions because this is what decides if a project is profitable. The other is the longer term effect on economic activity. Does good design stimulate economic activity?

The CABE/DETR research found that good design delivers high investment returns for developers and investors by meeting a clear occupier demand that also helps to attract investors (p74). It lists a number of benefits (p8):

- Higher returns on investments (capital and rental values)
- By placing development above local competition
- By responding to occupier demand
- By creating a place-making dividend
- By reducing the cost to the public purse of rectifying urban design mistakes
- By boosting civic pride and enhancing civic image

The MfE study is unequivocal that there are economic benefits in good urban design. "A high quality public realm attracts people and activity leading to enhanced economic performance; higher participation in community and cultural activities". It notes that in a poor quality public space, only necessary activites will take place. But a far more diverse range of optional activities will take place where a higher quality environment is provided. "People stop, sit, eat, play and so on."

This is a theme which is picked up by Gehl Architects (eg 2009). They provide evidence that a high quality public environment, with the appropriate combination of conditions for its specific context, leads to a significant increase in occupation and activity. Gehl particularly notes the importance of providing places where people can linger at the interface between buildings and adjacent public space.

The economic value of more people spending longer in the town centre is the payoff for commercial developers and property owners. Gehl's study of Melbourne (discussed below) provides some evidence of the economic impacts of this.

The CABE research found that benefits did accrue to the developers of higher quality developments:

> *"Good design tends to be reflected in higher levels of rent and higher investment returns over the long term"* (p75).

The research draws the link between good design and economic success through a lively urban environment:

> *"Good urban design supports the life giving uses in developments (cafes, shops) which were seen as important in projecting a contemporary image and in attracting occupiers."*

This underlines Gehl's view that "optional" activities are important in attracting people to a development and lead directly to economic benefits.

Another important conclusion from the CABE report is that occupiers who do not show an interest in design quality can regret their decisions:

> *"Occupiers whose primalry concern is cost and location show more discontent with the environment they end up occupying."*

The 2007 CABE research into the quality of streets demonstrates that the quality of a shopping environment is reflected in the rent paid. That study showed a discrepancy of almost 15% between the rent for a higher quality street than a lower quality one, attributable entirely to the physical environment of the street on which it was located. Whilst the study was aimed at showing local authorities the value of street improvements, it could equally apply to the developers of private malls which function as streets. The research also showed that people were prepared to pay for better design, in the form of higher rents or higher local taxation. This indicates the value that people place on a high quality public environment.

The 2007 CABE study (Paved with Gold) is discussed in more detail below.

2.4 Why does poor design get built.

Given the range of benefits outlined above, it is worth asking why poor design gets built. The studies show that investment decisions are based narrowly on the risk and returns falling to the developer. The wider effects on other stakeholders and the future occupiers of the buildings receive relatively little attention.

> *"Developers may have shorter time horizons than the community as a whole. Developers may thus tend to emphasise short run returns and curtail costs,*

> *whereas the community may favour a durable yet flexible outcome that provides lasting utility [this has been described] as commercial pressures militating against long-term investment in design quality*
>
> *There are two consequences. One is that the market will tend to provide poorer urban design than is socially optimal. Second, many of the benefits of good urban design (or costs of poor urban design) are intangible social, environmental or even economic impacts affecting a range of parties."* (MfE, p9).
>
> *"Private sector activity alone has great difficulty providing the full range of positive social impacts that well-designed development can deliver". This underlines the point that because some of the benefits of good urban design accrue beyond the site, the market by itself will tend to under-provide it." (*p18).

These statements illustrate that, whilst the developer may have some interest in good design, because it helps to differentiate their development and may attract more discerning tenants, this runs contrary to their interests in minimising capital costs and financial risk.

The CABE/DETR study reached similar conclusions:

> *"The social benefits of a high quality public realm and the productivity gains arising from well-designed urban spaces and workplaces occur in the form of externalities."*

This report goes on to note that such public goods are often undervalued in investment decisions but that their true value can be much greater than the supply price or the cost incurred in making them available. Investment decisions are made by people remote from their impacts (company head offices, commercial development firms, investment fund managers etc). So, whilst the benefits of good design may be highly valued, the market cannot be relied upon to provide them.

The CABE report also noted that the benefits of good design which accrue to the property owner may accrue in the longer term (for instance through higher rents). If development is carried out by short term interests (for instance if the property is on-sold) then it may not fully value these benefits.

In effect, the developer is priotising the short term gains from poor design and discounting the costs that are then imposed on a range of users in the long term. This again underlines the point that the adverse effects of development are not being adequately managed. As the CABE report states: "*The failure to deliver connected, well-integrated environments imposes costs which later have to be bourne by public and private stakeholders, although original developers have often moved on.*" (p77).

2.5 Costs of Poor Design

Whilst much of the research focusses on the benefits of good design, the other side of the coin is the cost of poor design; the negative externatilies that accrue if buildings and spaces are not well designed.

The CABE/DETR report found that some poor urban design solutions (eg introspective or disconnected urban environments) *"limit the spread of social benefits from developments and may even create social and economic costs."*(p78).

This theme is built on by CABE (2006):

> *"Badly designed places impose costs on their occupiers, their neighbours and on society. Economists describe this kind of cost as a negative externality, when someone does something that doesn't cost them but creates costs for other people.*
>
> *"All developments impose some costs on society, of course. They all consume resources and space that might be used for other things. Generally they compensate for this by generating utility and value that accrue to the community as well as their owners. For example, a beautiful, well-maintained park can be shown to increase the value of neighbouring property and quality of life. However, badly designed buildings and public spaces don't provide enough of a compensating return to the community and, indeed, can impose external costs that are grossly abnormal.*
>
> *"By transferring the costs to others the originators of those costs frequently insulate themselves from the negative consequences, which are instead borne by some or all members of the wider community." (p17-18)*

This is a strong statement about the problems that poor design imposes on us. It is these negative externalities as much as the missed opportunities to create good public space that justify the case for intervention, especially in a RMA framework. Clearly, buildings that impose significant negative externalities are not mitigating the effects of development.

2.6 Detailed Studies

In addition to the more general review above, there are two more detailed studues that have particularly relevant conclusions for the project. These are discussed below.

Paved with Gold (CABE, 2007)

Paved with gold shows how we can calculate the extra financial value that good street design contributes, over average or poor design. Although the report focusses on street design, its conclusions are likely to be transferable to public space in general, in the New Zealand context where private development fulfils many of the purposes of streets.

The analysis used a tool known as PERS (Pedestrian Environment Review System) to rate the quality of streets in different areas of London. This produced a score on a seven point scale, taking into account factors such as envrionmental quality, personal security, permeability, surface quality. These factors were weighted according to their importance. The effects of matters other than street design were controlled in the analysis.

The study concluded that each point in the PERS scale corresponded to a 5% increase in rental value for a shop. That is an increase of nearly 15% between the best and worst streets in the study, attributable entirely to the quality of the street environment.

The study also surveyed people to see whether they would be prepared to pay for higher quality environments. It found that residents were prepared to pay more tax, public transport users would pay higher fares and people in rented accommodation would pay higher rents. This shows the extent to which people value a good quality environment and that they are propared to pay for it.

The Example of Melbourne (Gehl, 2005).

Melbourne is a city which has had notable success in transforming its public realm and the benefits are evident. Over 20 years the central city has been transformed from "an empty, useless city, a doughnut with nothing in the centre" (Gehl, 2005, p96) to a "vibrant, 24 hour place that is livelier, more attractive and safer than most other cities found worldwide; an almost European atmosphere"

Melbourne was the subject of successive studies in 1994 and 2004 by Jan Gehl which looked comprehensively at its public life, including pedestrian counts and users of public space. Over this period, the authors noted a "remarkable increase in public life". This is evidenced by the following:

- An 830% increase in the number of residents in the city centre to 9,721
- 71% more space for people on streets (with widened footpaths) and squares
- A huge 275% increase in outdoor cafes to 356
- An increase of 177% in outdoor café seats (to 5380).
- A 39% increase in pedestrians in the day and 98% in the evening (weekdays).

There are an estimated two to three times more people using the streets, parks, benches and cafes compared to 1993. It is clear from this that people are choosing to spend time in the city of Melbourne. "The nature of public life has quite radically changed, with more people choosing to stay for optional rather than purely necessary activities until late evening. The results clearly illustrate that places designed to be people friendly attract people, and public life will follow." (p1).

This is the result of "a carefully planned and executed process for turning the city into a people oriented city has been orchestrated and gradually implemented since 1985, but particularly during the past decade." (p96).

Key policies in achieving this successful outcome have been:

- Widening footpaths on 30m wide streets to make space for pedestrian activites
- A city wide greening program to protect the character, amenity and enclosure of streets

- Active frontages throughout the city (with the introduction of minimum planning standards)
- Requirements for the rhythm and detailing for architecture to be in keeping with existing street scenes and for all buidling to provide details which are of interest to pedestrians
- Requirements that facades must not be devoid of detail (no large blank walls)
- Roller shutter doors must be removed
- The provision of benches throughout the city where people want to use them

This is a comprehensive program to improve the pedestrian environment and turn Melbourne into a place which people want to visit and stay longer than they need to, to pursue optional activities. It has led to obvious social benefits as the city has thrived and economic benefits due to growth in employment which is higher than that for the city as a whole. Much of the growth in employment has been in restaurants and bars and is directly attributable to the improvement in the city's character.

2.7 Conclusions

The research is unequivocal that there are social and economic benefits to good design. These accrue to both the property owner and the wider community.

Furthermore, it is unequivocal that there are social and economic costs associsted with bad design and that these are imposed on the wider community by the developer. However, in the longer term these costs are also felt by the property owner and tenants.

The benefits to the developer tend to be realised in the longer term and this is the reason that developers may seek to reduce costs by reducing design quality.

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