

Richard Knott Limited

Urban Design | Masterplanning | Built Heritage
Town Planning | Landscape and Visual Assessment

To: Daniel Coppell, Mount Hobson Group
Hamish Firth, Mount Hobson Group

From: Richard Knott

Date: 20th June 2023

Re: Amended Plans - Proposed Digital Sign, 47 The Esplanade, Petone

Introduction

1. MediaWorks Outdoor Limited has applied for consent to establish and operate a double-sided digital sign on the forecourt of site at 47 The Esplanade, Petone ("the Site"). The site is located at the western end of The Esplanade, approximately 350m from the intersection with Hutt Road.

My involvement to date

2. I prepared:
 - (a) The urban design assessment (updated 31 March 2022) which accompanied the assessment of environmental effects lodged as part of this application; and
 - (b) A further visual assessment (dated 29 August 2022) prepared in response to a section 92 request for further information by Hutt City Council ("Council") (dated 22 June 2022).
3. This report is intended to supplement, and should be read in conjunction with, the Urban Design Assessment and Visual Assessment dated 29 August 2022.

The proposal

4. As lodged, the application seeks consent for a 'V' shaped double sided portrait digital sign, supported on a single column in the planted area along the site frontage, close to the eastern vehicular access to the site. The digital sign extends from the pole into the site, over an existing car parking bay. It is shown as having an overall height of 9.5m. Each face of the digital sign is the same, with a 3.5m(w) x 7.0m(h) display face (24.5m²) with 150mm border. A 0.5m deep operators name panel is shown below the sign face.
5. The two faces are angled to enable a clear view of one face from vehicles and other users travelling east along The Esplanade and the other face angled to be visible to vehicles and other users travelling west along The Esplanade.

Council Officer concerns and MWO response

6. As part of discussions with Council officers, concerns were raised over potential adverse amenity effects and dominance issues generated by the digital signs. In response, amended plans have been prepared which reflect the following changes to the digital sign:
 - (c) Re-orientation of the digital sign faces from portrait to landscape format with a total height of 8m; and
 - (d) Amended display screen dimensions from 7.5m x 3.5m (24.5m²), to 9m x 3m (27m²).

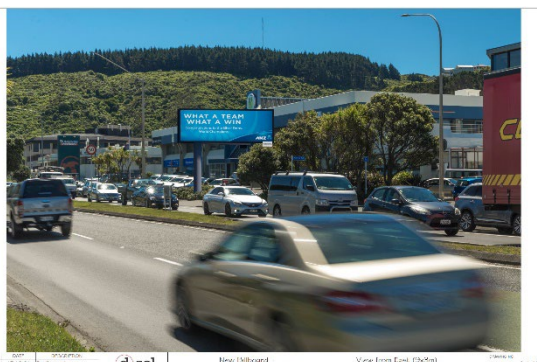


Figure 2: Updated view from east (provided by applicant)



Figure 3: Previously proposed view from east (provided by applicant)

14. The landscape format, and increased distance of the digital sign above ground level, allows greater views of the ground floor commercial frontage of the building than would have previously been available. This includes views of the entrance to the first-floor offices.
15. Overall, I consider that the amended digital sign would still not crowd the existing building. As illustrated in the montage (Figure 2), from the east the digital sign will still be viewed against the rising ground to the west. When viewed from the west and from the south it will be seen within the context of the commercial development on the site and on adjacent sites. This includes large two to four storey commercial buildings.
16. The reduction in the overall height of the amended digital sign also helps to further reduce any dominance effects that may result from the digital sign.
17. Given the commercial context of the locality and the separation provided by the road and raised planted median, my position has not changed. I remain of the view that the alternative digital sign will only have minor adverse effects on the amenity values of the local area and will appear as an integrated element in the environment, being viewed within the context of the existing buildings on the site, and other large commercial buildings on adjacent sites.

Visual Assessment 29th August 2022

18. The Visual Assessment considered the visual effects of the digital sign at night-time from 10 specified viewpoints¹. Having reviewed my Visual Assessment, my conclusion as to the effects of the digital sign on the visual amenity of the surrounding environment has not changed.
19. I consider that both the digital signs as lodged and the alternative digital signs would have, at worst minor adverse effects on the visual amenity of the area; this being at the same three viewpoints found to be subject to 'low' (i.e. minor) effects within my Visual Assessment, with there being less than minor effects at the remaining seven viewpoints.
20. I remain of the view that many of the viewpoints are locations where I would not expect members of the public to visit after dark and note that the Council has not asked their consultant urban designer to consider these viewpoints.

Conclusion

21. Having considered the Urban Design Assessment and the Visual Assessment in light of the amended digital sign, I remain of the opinion that both the digital sign as lodged and the alternative digital sign will appear as an integrated element in the environment, being viewed within the context of the existing buildings on the site, and other large commercial buildings on adjacent sites (and in more distant views, in the context of lighting and buildings along the whole length of The Esplanade).

¹ See Section 2. The Viewpoints, Visual Assessment 29th August 2022

22. Overall, in my view, the alternative digital sign will have minimal effects on the visual amenity and the character and quality of this urban environment and on the amenity of the reserve and beach area to the south, during both daytime and night-time. It will appear as an integrated part of the area as it currently exists, when considered in the context of the presence of the existing signs and advertising signage already located within this environment and given the urban nature of the surrounding commercial area.



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