

Proposed Digital Sign
47 The Esplanade, Petone
**Urban Design
Assessment**

(**UPDATED** 31 March 2022)

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1. Introduction

MediaWorks Outdoor Limited are seeking consent to erect a 3.5m(w) x 7.0m(h) double sided portrait digital sign on the forecourt of the site at 47 The Esplanade, Petone. The site is located at the west end of The Esplanade, approximately 350m from the intersection with Hutt Road.

This report considers the proposal from an urban design and urban character perspective. It has been based on an understanding of the urban character effects and visual amenity effects of the proposal from public and private locations.

Preparation of this Report

This report has been prepared by Richard Knott. Richard has worked in the areas of urban design, planning, heritage and special character for over 30 years.

Richard has provided advice on over 50 digital signs and billboards on sites across New Zealand. He is very familiar with the issues associated with digital signs.

Whilst this report is not a visual impact analysis, Richard is familiar with the NZILA¹ and Landscape Institute² guidance on landscape and visual analysis and has undertaken training in landscape and visual analysis.

Due to Covid19 travel restrictions Richard has not made a specific site visit to the area for the purpose of this application but has previously visited the site and is familiar with it and its surroundings.

Richard Knott Qualifications

- MA Urban Design, 1995
- PG. Diploma Building Conservation, 2002
- Bachelor of Planning, 1989
- BA(Hons) Town and Country Planning, 1988

Richard Knott Affiliations

- Member New Zealand Planning Institute
- Chartered Town Planner (Member of Royal Town Planning Institute, UK) (full member)
- Member Institute of Historic Building Conservation, UK (full member)
- Member Institute of Highway Engineers, UK (full member)

Richard Knott Accreditations

- Ministry for the Environment Making Good Decisions Accredited, with Chairs Endorsement

Richard Knott Recent Training/Conferences

- NZPI Ethics for Planners (September 2019)
- NZPI Planning for Maori Values (Advanced) (October 2019)
- Planning Institute of Australia, Landscape and Visual Assessment (October 2019)
- NZPI Conference (March 2018)
- University of Southern California; Fundamentals of Heritage Conservation (July/August 2016)

¹Best Practice Note Landscape Assessment And Sustainable Management 10.1, NZILA, November 2010

² Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute (UK), April 2013.

2. The Site and Surrounding Environment



Figure 1: The Esplanade frontage of the site (Photo RKL 22-10-2021)

The site, 47 The Esplanade, is located at the western end of The Esplanade. It contains Bunnings Warehouse and a series of smaller tenancies on the south frontage of the site, fronting the Esplanade. The building presents a two storey frontage towards the street.

There is a vehicular access at either end of the street frontage and two rows of car parking with an access lane between them between the building and the street.

The landscaped area within/along the front boundary of the site, contains low planting and taller cabbage trees, with a retaining wall at the back of this. Close to the entrance at the west end is a Bunnings pylon sign with a smaller sign for a coffee shop below this to one side of the access and a lower directional Bunnings sign on the other side of the access. At the eastern end there are two small directional signs. There is no other signage direct on the site frontage, apart from a flag pole with New Zealand flag.

Relative to the length and height of the building frontage facing The Esplanade, there is limited signage on the building, with one sign at each end of the frontage above first floor level, and signage at ground floor level for three ground floor tenants (albeit that there is a greater area of signage for the Wet & Forget tenant at the west end than is seen for other frontage tenants). There is a large '47' above the central entrance which provides access to the first floor of the building.

The sites immediately to the east (beyond Nevis Street) have buildings built direct to the site frontage, whereas buildings to the west are set back from the street frontage in a similar pattern to the application site.

The street in front of the site comprises a pedestrian footpath along the site frontage (with no berm), a lane of parking, a single east bound traffic lane, a raised grass median (with a single street tree) and two west bound traffic lanes. Beyond this is a wide grass area, trees, meandering pedestrian/cycleway and the beach. At the time of my previous visit to the area, The Esplanade was busy with cars and other vehicles, recognising its role as a key linkage to SH2 from southern parts of Petone and areas east of Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River.

Overall, the site is set at a transition point where it and buildings to the west are set back from the street frontage and buildings to the east are developed direct on the street frontage. The retaining wall and planting on the site frontage assist with providing some presence to the site frontage and assist with mediating this change of site layout. The Esplanade is a reasonably busy street, although the grassed central median to the front of the site assist with reducing the overall dominance of the street and the potential dominance of the built development on the north side of the street relative to the informal open space and beach to the south.



Figure 2: View east of the car parking area at the front of the site (photo RKL 22-10-2021)



Figure 3: View along the site frontage from the west (photo RKL 22-10-2021)

3. The Proposed Digital Sign



Figure 4: View of proposed sign, from the southeast across The Esplanade (image provided by client).

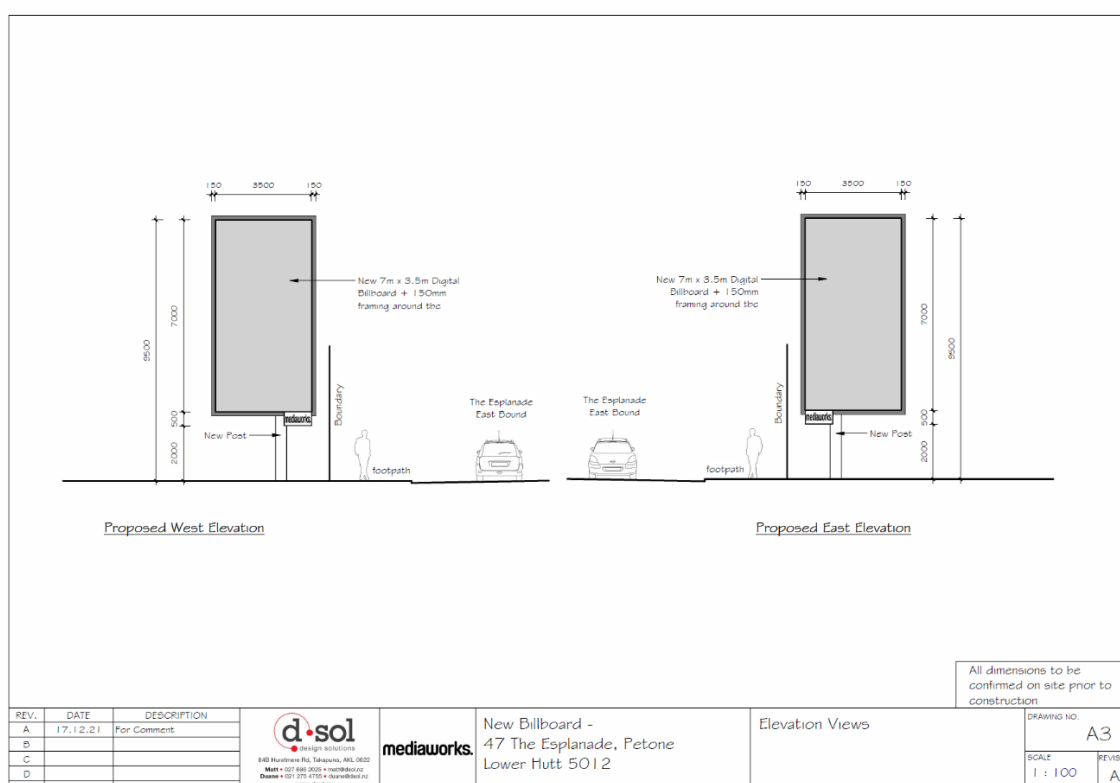


Figure 5: Extract from proposed plans

It is intended to install '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 sign will extend from the pole into the site, over an existing car parking bay.

The sign will have an overall height of 9.5m. Each face of the sign is similar, with a 3.5m(w) x 7.0m(h) display face with 150mm border. There will be a 0.5m deep operators name panel below the sign face.

The two faces will each be angled to allow a clear view of one face from vehicles and other users travelling east along The Esplanade and the other angled to be visible to users travelling west along The Esplanade.

As illustrated in Figures 4, the portrait format and the height of the sign have been selected to provide appropriate clearance below the sign, to provide space between the sign and the building on the site and to ensure that in the views along The Esplanade the sign reflects the vertical proportion of trees in the local area.

The sign has been designed to have a simple appearance and the sides and rear of the sign will be enclosed to ensure that it has a simple, clean cut appearance.

The new sign will incorporate changeable messages, and will be managed in accordance with the following parameters:

1. Each message will be displayed for a minimum of 8 seconds
2. Each message will transition to the next message by way of a 0.5 second cross-fade (where one image fades out as the next image fades in)
3. Each message will be static, and will not incorporate animation or movement
4. The sign display will be illuminated to a maximum level of 5,000 candelas/m² during daylight hours, and to a maximum level of 250 candelas/m² during hours of darkness
5. The luminance of the sign display will be automatically adjusted at all times to vary according to the ambient light conditions.

4. Assessment of Proposed Sign

The proposed digital sign is a Discretionary Activity.

The relevant policies from 14B 1.1 of the Hutt City District Plan utilised as a means to consider the visual amenity effects of the proposal (see Table 1 below).

Consideration is also given to the Petone Mixed Use Activity Area Design Guide (Chapter 5 – 5B Appendices - Petone Commercial 2) which provides the basis for the design assessment of new development in this area (see Table 2 below).

TABLE 1

14B 1.1 Amenity Values	Response
Objective	
To provide for appropriate signs, while avoiding, remedying or mitigating any significant adverse effects on visual amenity values of the area in which they are located.	
Policies	
a) To allow a wide range of signs within the commercial and business activity areas, while protecting visual amenity values.	<i>There are already a wide range of signs within the local area on the north side of the street, and on the application site in particular. This includes the Bunnings pylon sign, lower freestanding directional signs and signs for tenants on buildings. This is all in keeping with the commercial character of the north side of the street. Whilst some of this signage can be viewed from the open space and beach to the south of the street, the separation provided by the road and raised grass central median ensures that this existing signage does not have a negative impact on the visual amenity values of the reserve and beach.</i> <i>The proposed double sided digital sign will be larger than other signage in the local area. However its vertical proportion will ensure that it sits comfortably within the forecourt area. It will not unduly 'crowd' the building on the site and will reflect the vertical emphasis of the trees in the local area. From the east it will 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</i>

	<i>adjacent sites. This includes large two to four storey commercial buildings.</i> <i>Given the commercial context of the locality and the separation provided by the road and raised planted median, the proposed digital sign will only have minor adverse effects on the amenity values of the local area</i>
b) To restrict the size, location and frequency of signs in activity areas where visual amenity values are sensitive.	<i>As described above, taken with the existing signs in the local area, the proposed digital sign will only have minor adverse effects on the amenity values of the local area.</i>
c) To manage the size, location, frequency and appearance of signs at the interface between commercial/industrial activity areas, and all other activity areas.	<i>As described above, taken with the existing signs in the local area, the proposed digital sign will only have minor adverse effects on the amenity values of the local area.</i>
d) To manage illuminated signs to ensure the containment of light spill and glare within the boundaries of the site concerned.	<i>This matter is addressed by others.</i>
e) To ensure that lettering on signs is neat in appearance, and legible.	<i>The sign will be constructed using high quality LED panels which will be capable of displaying clear, legible images.</i> <i>The size of lettering used on advertisements will be chosen to ensure that it is legible and easily readable.</i>
f) To protect identified Urupa sites from inappropriate signs on neighbouring sites.	<i>There are no Urupa sites within the immediate location, from which the proposed digital sign can be seen.</i>
g) To manage the adverse effects of off site signs in residential areas.	<i>The sign is not within a residential area and cannot be viewed from any residential area.</i>

TABLE 2

Petone Mixed Use Activity Area Design Guide	Response
2.4 Street Frontage – Guidelines	<i>The addition of the freestanding billboard between the building frontage and the street will not impact the positive response that the building currently makes to these matters.</i>
1. Buildings containing commercial, business and service activities should be parallel with and consistently aligned relative to the street frontage;	
2. Buildings should have active frontages;	
3. Continuous blank walls, opaque glazing, blanked out windows and doors, security shutters and roller doors on building frontages at street level should be avoided;	
4. Buildings of more than one level should have windows on upper levels that overlook streets, parks, or lanes;	
5. Entrances to buildings should be easily recognised and sheltered such as by the use of doorways within inset setbacks, bays and porches; or by the extension of canopies out to reflect the doorway positioning;	
6. Separate door entrances for commercial and residential uses should be provided where the building has both activity types;	
7. Entry areas should be designed as a transition from the public space of the street to the private or semi-public space of the building inside;	
8. Entrances should be able to accommodate push chairs, mobility scooters and bicycles; and	
9. Consideration should be given to the provision of bicycle parking.	
2.8 Car Parking – Guidelines	<i>The site as existing does not comply with these guidelines.</i>
1. Car parking within buildings should avoid directly fronting onto streets or open spaces. Parking should be set back into a building structure so as to be enveloped by associated active residential, commercial or other uses;	<i>Locating the sign between the building and the street brings development closer to the site frontage, and mitigates some of the effects associated with the non-compliance with these guidelines.</i>
2. Car parking above ground level should also be within a building structure so as to be enveloped by active uses. However, if this is impracticable, the	

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- building should incorporate design features such as green walls and screen devices to minimise the visual *impact of* parking floors on public spaces;
3. Car parking within smaller scale building developments, such as for townhouses or terrace houses, should be located in garaging (or surface parking) at the rear of the building with access via a service lane or access from the street; and
 4. Car parking within smaller scale building developments that incorporate a garage with direct access from the street should have a garage frontage that is less than 50% of, and is set back from, the frontage of the building

2.14 Signage

Signs are encouraged to be:

- a) Consistent with the building design as a whole;
- b) Not obstructive to pedestrian movement;
- c) Of a size, scale and materials that does not dominate the street environment; A good fit with architectural features or ground floor windows;
- d) Located below the parapet or roof line of a building; and
- e) Suitable number and type for the site area, to avoid a proliferation of signage and visual clutter.

- a) *As the sign is freestanding it is not consistent with the design of the building on the site as such. However, as noted above its vertical proportion will ensure that it sits comfortably within the forecourt area. It will not unduly 'crowd' the building on the site and will reflect the vertical emphasis of the trees in the local area.*
 - b) *The sign has been positioned and designed so as not to obstruct pedestrian movement.*
 - c) *As described above, there are already a wide range of signs within the local area on the north side of the street. This is all in keeping with the commercial character of the north side of the street. Whilst some of this signage can be viewed from the open space and beach to the south of the street, the separation provided by the road and raised grass central median ensures that this existing signage does not have a negative impact on the visual amenity values of the reserve and beach.*
 - d) *N/A as the sign is freestanding.*
 - e) *As noted above there is already a wide range of signage in the local area. However, due to the limited signage on the building facade facing The*
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Esplanade, the small size of other signs adjacent to the vehicular accesses to the site, and the height of the base of the sign above ground level, the proposed sign will not create visual clutter with the existing signs.

5. Overall Conclusion and Recommendations

The application proposes the installation of a new freestanding portrait formal digital sign at 47 The Esplanade, Petone.

The proposed 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.

Overall, in my view, the new digital sign and 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. 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.



Richard Knott MNZPI MRTPI IHBC IHE

Director, Richard Knott Limited

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Richard Knott Limited

PO Box 272-1352, Papakura, 2244 09 392 0091

021 242 5865

richard@RichardKnottLtd.co.nz