

Stuart Griffiths - Filluel St Hotel proposal submission
4.30pm, 2.8.17

“Edinburgh of the South”, “ City of Spires and Towers”, Victorian City of New Zealand”, “Athens of the South”.

However you refer to Dunedin, it usually describes our city’s distinctive 19th and early 20th century architecture.

This is a leading paragraph, read from the DCC’s own web site.

Written in response to the direction that this type of vision has promoted in its citizens the DCC say that it is “a sign of the reawakened awareness of our city’s heritage.”

My presentation supports the idea that the status quo remain in this city’s planned development strategy.

That this panel recommend that the DCC adhere to the district plans height restrictions of 10 metres, and if need be, extend this opportunity to the developer to be able to build within the proposed new district plan’s 16 metre height restriction, and not allow this radical deviation from the city’s planned future to occur.

I am a current working member of Transforming Dunedin, a group that succesfully formed the Ara Toi Strategy in partnership with the DCC. A Strategy that has now become a guideline for the City and it’s creative development into the future.

To quote from the covering statement regarding Dunedin’s success with their new Ara Toi Otepoti Strategy at the 2016 Creative NZ Excellence awards for best creative place:

“ Key achievements to date also include strong community input into the Warehouse precinct revitalisation plan to breathe life into an historic area of Dunedin and to protect and enhance the city’s significant built heritage.

It needs to be said that this proposed hotel development contravenes almost all of the aspirational objectives of Ara Toi Otepoti.

Therefore, it is disappointing that the DCC would consider this hotel proposal to be a suitable concept for this site. Bearing in mind the site is owned by the city and that the development that this site’s governance falls within should reflect the aspirations of this new strategy for the city.

Adhering to the current height restrictions for this hotel's site, or as close as to be considered reasonable, is important as it shows the DCC can "walk the walk not just talk the talk !"

The ARA TOI OTPOTI - OUR CREATIVE FUTURE strategy vision for the built city environment is:

It sets the direction for further strengthening of art and culture in Dunedin, positioning the city as, quote : "one of the great small cities for arts and culture, where creativity is fully integrated into the city's identity and is recognised as essential to our future success".

It is a comprehensive forward looking plan that takes into account art and creativity in the public realm, for example, the built environment, architecture, public spaces and urban design.

It aims to, quote:

- .. develop and implement a new approach in response to the vision...
- ..be informed by international thinking and best practices in the field.
- ..to set high standards when it comes to creating great spaces that delight intrigue and challenge those that venture into them...

These aspirations, to be a great small city, do not include allowing buildings such as the one proposed here to obliterate what is probably the iconic vista of the historic Dunedin central city with its prominent facades and background spires.

It is, in fact, the contemporary equivalent of the regrettable demolition of the Dunedin Stock Exchange building on Princes Street. Although, I might say, that the brutalist John Wickliffe House building, that was built on the Stock Exchange site, has more credibility and integrity than this proposal has, as it was built and accepted in it's own time. Whereas this proposal is from a time gone by and is totally unacceptable in this form.

Quality urban planning would place a building such as this in a precinct more accommodating due to the existing buildings surrounding it. Such as close to

the Southern Cross Hotel for instance. It can be noted here that the owners of Scenic Circle were very disturbed by the news that the DCC were financially assisting and collectively supporting this Filluel St proposal when they submitted a new Hotel proposal for a site in this Hotel precinct. They also suggested that the Filluel St proposal hindered the aspirations for their Hotel to be financially successful in the city. You could probably say the same thing for the proposed Hotel site on Anzac Ave.

Many of the nearby modernist two story buildings to the north west of this proposed hotel site, have shown sensitivity to the earlier small 19th century industrial buildings such as the Mason and Wales architectural premises, and the Pool house back packers, or post modernist facades that reflect on the neo classical facades in the precinct. This new hotel proposal is an affront to those commercial neighbours who have built commercial buildings in recent times and shown sensitivity to the scale requirements of this precinct, such as the DCC, Quality Inn, and the Otago Community Trust building. These buildings have been built as classic building designs of their time, ie. the DCC building being a classic modernist building, and the Community Trust building being a classic post modernist building.

This hotel proposal has no generous design qualities that are responding to its architectural environment.

The new proposal is not a contemporary design of its time, but an out dated commercially driven modernist stack with very little architectural merit that could be said to reflect the aspirations of the architecture of its time or responding to the environment that it is being built in.

Words like 'elegant tower' and 'thistle like', used by its promoters to describe its design, do not come into consideration when you examine this grosse glass facade on offer, and are in fact cynical gestures.

I would like to refute the idea that this hotel needs to be this big to be able to operate at a profit on this site. There are new quality hotels being developed in Queenstown, for example, that are smaller and work within similar height restrictions to Dunedin's proposed 2GP height restrictions, and can operate at a profit in this competitive market.

The \$60 million 227 room Holiday Inn Express Hotel on Melbourne St (site 5615 sq m).

The \$45 million 100 -120 room hotel / residential Hotel for Stanley St.

The same developer opened the 59 room Ramada Hotel in Frankton last year.

These new hotels are of a contemporary design and a scale that reflect the type of development that is needed in Dunedin.

I would like to quote here Russell Lund's recent article in the ODT, that described the visitor accommodation situation in Hobart, a similar city to Dunedin in scale and socio economic standing,

"... the hotel industry has acknowledged that the fastest growing and most profitable hotel sector are boutique hotels that offer a unique local and cultural experience". He also quotes from Tripadvisor a description of Hobart's Grand Chancellor, the hotel equivalent to what is proposed for Filluel St, as "a scar on the Hobart City scape", and goes on to further say, which I totally agree with, that the proposed hotel for Filluel St has no discernible architectural merit".

It needs to be said that the proposal's architect would not be able to build this building in Ch'ch where 5 storeys is the limit now due to the nature of earthquakes in this country, and Dunedin is not immune to such a disaster. Those who will work and live in the immediate vicinity of this building, if it is built, will be putting themselves in grave danger if, or when, such an event occurs. Bearing in mind that a shift in the grand divide is overdue!

I have been resident and have raised a family on Cargill Street since 1983. I would like to think that I am also talking for the large transient student and renting demographic, who subliminally enjoy this city outlook from their homes and environment, and are oblivious of the issues at stake, which demand a civic view point.

I live as a neighbour of sorts to the central city. I view this hotel proposal as an aggressive assault on the community of people who live in the nearby urban environment. There are no redeeming features pertaining to this proposed hotel's imposing vast reflective glass facade design that will enhance our every day life in this neighbourhood. It will be clear to see, if this proposal was to be successful, even at a reduced height of a few floors, that blatant commercial gain will be at the expense of the those who have to live with it as a neighbour, both domestically and commercially.

I regularly walk down to Moray Place and experience our celebrated, expansive Town Hall facade and walk through the alley way or Harrop St to the lower Octagon, or cut through the back of the historic Anglican Cathedral grounds to the upper Octagon. This a joy to do for residents in the area and the many visitors who discover our town.

This hotel proposal provides no generous offering to this particular experience of this wonderful Historic Dunedin precinct, and in contrast only takes from this experience, for commercial gain, its wonderful panoramic out look of the inner city hill suburb and green belt, and its superb reciprocal view of it. As made clear in the surveyor's report, this hotel will cast a cold shadow and a chill wind tunnel breeze over this area. The exact same area where concert goers, graduates and their mostly visiting family members can spill out, onto an open and often sunbathed Moray Place.

If built, this proposed hotel will appear like a schism in this part of town, an eye sore for the future inhabitants of this town to wonder "What were they thinking? and Who were they, who allowed this to happen!"