

This is the submission to hearing of Elizabeth Kerr, resident of Dunedin

I begin with the reminder that Dunedin is a planned city and was set out by Englishman Charles Kettle following his appointment in September 1845 as civil engineer and chief surveyor for the New Zealand Company. Kettle's instructions had been to reproduce for Dunedin, so far as possible, the characteristics of Edinburgh in Scotland. He took as his inspiration Edinburgh's New Town, by that time perhaps the most widely admired urban development in Europe.

The decision to construct a New Town at Edinburgh had been taken by the city fathers, after overcrowding inside the Old Town city walls reached breaking point and to prevent an exodus of wealthy citizens from the city to London. The New Town, a suburb in the central area, was built in stages between 1767 and 1850 and as it developed, the rich moved northwards from cramped tenements in narrow closes into grand Georgian homes on wide roads.

While Edinburgh's New Town is a modern agora on a ridge, Kettle's central city is Romantic, it is (described as) 'a low-lying harbourside parade set among bold hills, enjoying distant views of harbour steeps and bush clad ridges'. His vision is achieved with a central grid oriented roughly north and south beside the harbour with designed-in features, such as The Octagon, circled on the landward side by a reserved Town Belt to separate the city from its suburbs, the waters of the harbour forming its other margin. The discovery of gold in Otago funded the carriageways descending the landward escarpment, such as High Street and Stuart Street, extraordinarily steep for the then horse-drawn age, affording dramatic views of the town in its setting, as its author intended. Kettle's town plan was the only nineteenth century one in New Zealand formed from a specific aesthetic instruction.

Importantly, the Kettle Plan for Dunedin remains largely intact with remarkably few significant changes to the pattern of central city streets apart from the introduction of the SH1 one-way system in 1968. All the same, his plan is still very much legible and retains the street names of Edinburgh's New Town, of which Princes Street is the most famous.

Kettle's papers are held at Hocken Collections, University of Otago.

George Griffiths' book, *Dunedin Street Names* (1999) is held in the Heritage Room, Dunedin City Library.

Dunedin Central City Plan

Enhancing the heart of one of the world's great small cities

The Dunedin City Council has stated that it wants to work with the community to decide what should be done over the next 10-15 years to protect and improve the central city as a place where people work, live, shop and socialise. The council is committed to the idea that

the design and planning of an outstanding city centre relies on everyone working together, including business owners, the public sector and residents, to come up with the best ideas.

The draft Dunedin Central City Plan establishes a vision for the central city area and an integrated series of initiatives and changes designed to work towards this vision. The council sees its own role as providing coordination and infrastructure for a prosperous, vibrant, exciting, and accessible central city. In the Central City Plan, the council places special emphasis on Dunedin's unique and distinctive heritage character.

“The central city's unique character is strongly defined by the large number of heritage and character buildings. In the past there has been a tendency to perceive heritage buildings as part of the problem inhibiting progress and growth. However, redevelopment at the expense of historic buildings in the Exchange has demonstrated that this is not necessarily the case, especially where they have been replaced by open air car parks or poor quality buildings that do not contribute to an attractive streetscape. In contrast areas like George Street show how successful re-use of heritage buildings for a modern purpose results in an attractive streetscape. Growing heritage-led regeneration in the southern part of the central city is further demonstrating the potential for defining a distinctive Dunedin character based on its heritage buildings to attract more visitors to the central city.”

As well as specific place-based projects – for example, the Warehouse Precinct Revitalisation Plan, the Queens Garden Upgrade, the Exchange Square Upgrade, The Octagon Upgrade, the George Street Upgrade and the Princes Street and South Princes Street Upgrade – the Central City Plan outlines other projects and initiatives relevant to the central city area, including improving processes and streamlining procedures to help building owners re-use their buildings; the Central City Heritage Re-use Grants Scheme; a strategy to overcome procedural and financial barriers to revitalisation in various city quarters; and making district plan changes to better reflect built form, help and promote quality development, review activity zones and activities, and protect special character in the central city.

http://www.dunedin.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/544816/Central-City-Plan.pdf

Dunedin City District Plan and the 2GP

Broadly speaking, and as we've heard from expert evidence given this week, the operative Dunedin City District Plan (ODP) and the proposed second generation district plan (2GP) do speak to the character, heritage and 'charm' of the central city as having significant amenity values worth maintaining – through critical recognition, for example, of buildings, sites, archaeology (which includes pre-1900 buildings and structures), streetscape and townscape, precincts, views, skylines, trees, and public reserves including cemeteries. This identification and recognition of special or distinctive character, pattern and appearance is woven into and informs plan objectives and policies, and is backed and supported by rules, guides, schedules and assessment criteria.

As discussed by the experts, particularly those for Millennium and Copthorne Hotels (legal, planning and urban design) and Misbeary Holdings Ltd (legal and urban design), the ODP and the 2GP are not silent on support and enhancement of amenity values – and like the Central City Plan and the Dunedin Spatial Plan before it, the consulted public has strongly voiced, through workshops and submissions, support for the promotion of Dunedin as a ‘heritage city’ (following the Christchurch earthquakes, as ‘the’ heritage city of New Zealand), but one accepting of change and new development – to be effected within what is really a bold, economical, practical framework now of contemporary adaptive reuse, treasuring what survives and is distinctive from the past, for future generations.

To that extent, we have ‘beneath’ and including the Town Belt, what passes virtually unmentioned in the ODP and 2GP, a swathe of cultural heritage landscape forged by Charles Kettle and traced over by layers of construction and increasingly fastidious and proud blended efforts at conservation, restoration and redevelopment to maintain the urban and suburban places we love and set great store by – so that we can say our commercial and residential city heart, although crashed here and there, does come with some insights and active learning about what maintenance, improvement and replacement can entail, with good stewardship. As Mr Simpson “from the flat”, the lone submitter on Tuesday, said, we now “prize our heritage”.

The proposed apartment and hotel building for 143-193 Moray Place, a fairly ‘wide’ and beefy construction of excessive height and material contrast compared to its neighbours, is never likely to be a sympathetic or complementary part of our ‘prize’ surroundings.

The building’s juxtaposition is not, excuse me, the phallic daring (something about curves) of the Gherkin of London – now seen as ‘the cityscape’ in British drama and film. Further, the Gherkin does not stand alone, it neighbours and clusters with other tall buildings as the sign of architectural competition and monetary might in one of the world’s leading financial centres. The Gherkin was commissioned by Swiss Re, a reinsurance company. The 41-storey tower, at 140 metres, was built in 2004. It is the sixth tallest building in London and was designed by Norman Foster, Ken Shuttleworth, and engineers from Arup. Its design lineage goes back to ideas developed for the Climatroffice design by Buckminster Fuller in the 1970s. Never constructed, it was supposed to be a free-form glass skin which allowed the building to have its own microclimate. A too complex build for the 1970s, thirty years later Foster was able to use advanced parametric modelling to achieve the form.

I say this as someone who enjoys structurally engineered verticality in the form of towers, spires, and tower buildings in the form of skyscrapers....

If deemed a “stand alone”, yet not of exceptional form, and certainly not an exemplar, then the proposed apartment and hotel building for Moray Place remains inadequately explained to substantiate its ‘point of difference’ as meritorious. The lack of explicit, clearly seen, architectural communication renderings and three-dimensional modelling is not bolstered by the applicant’s notional use of ‘late’ references to pinwheel, thistle or tartan—such that

there is a mind's eye warming to its difference as, we could suppose, the Chase-style Auckland office block typology (yes, there in the 1980s, amongst Chase, Mainzeal and Fletcher building cranes and the soon to be leaky, unsecured curtain walls of central Auckland); or its cookie-cutter likeness to a fidget spinner (in plan) or short accommodation towers elsewhere done on formula about a vertical core for a certain level of spend, and not dissimilar to the formula seen for 41 Wharf St, the 'old \$100m slab' trick. The proposed building is an unkind and abrupt neighbour—a pressure point, a dangerous precedent to set for the central city if consent is granted.

Designing boutique five star visitor accommodation for the attractively contoured subject site (say, minus the need for diesel belching coaches, trucks and other service vehicles which is not the way of the future—go electric), you might quickly come to thinkings about how many new 5 star rooms Dunedin truly needs, following the 4.5 star Distinction Dunedin Hotel developed by Geoff Thomson in the former 1937 Chief Post Office on Princes Street (hotel address: 6 Liverpool Street), hosting 121 suites and studio rooms (\$197 – \$433 based on average rates for a standard room).

Is slightly 'exploitive tourism' by the coachload what we want – or should Dunedin offer exclusive boutique destination hotel experiences more fitting to the existing urban fabric through subtle, deft transformation of a walkable web of older buildings: commercial, industrial, residential – interspersed with new build that brings new architectural design to town in 'fitting ways', intensifying the inner city that the 2GP encourages across the Central Business District and the Inner City Residential Zone (medium density, 12m max. height) by going up and working hard for sun penetration and with perhaps elevated or rooftop green space in contemporary detail.... Dunedin has historical precedents for terrace housing, and wouldn't that idea applied to 143-193 Moray Place to make the edge 'firm' and active, stacking and following the gradient, offer the more interesting well-scaled replacement for open parking – boutique gold service, private spas and electric car garaging and charging – no disappointing 'out by 10' rules. No awkward retail space that isn't really 'public'. Elegant contemporary "Dunedin" heart of city accommodation at a high price through.... good design.

Shove the taller hotels closer to the stadium where they belong, or park a shallow draft (Victoria Channel issues) cruise ship at the wharves permanently – a better option to liven and connect the Steamer Basin area to the central city via Queens Gardens, and to the stadium for the (ratepayer-subsidised) loss-making events.

Architecture integrity and Urban Design

For a time in my misspent youth during four years of postgraduate study (MArch) I ran studio design programmes at the University of Auckland School of Architecture, for vertically integrated professional years 1, 2 and 3 of the then four-year BArch degree. My areas of interest in leading those programmes involved commercial tower design and urban design – aesthetic handling of public space, the transitions between public and private space, and

horizontal and vertical communication systems through the building complexes and or street blocks. Typically, these were 5- and 10-week design exercises in group and individual architectural brief-setting, research and information gathering, client analysis, site analysis, intuitive responses to context, scale and location for envisaged uses, rendering and modelling concepts for interim and final presentations to guest critics and the School's academic jury of which I was a member.

And so I come to the white building model here, and the drawings presented by the applicant. There appears to have been too much time spent on merely diagrammatic 'entreaties' to architectural form and texture without hacking into 3D investigation. There is not one clear drawing of the way the podium can work for the public or the 'retailers' or 'exhibitors' – or indeed the people staying at the hotel, servicing the building functions and or using vehicles on site. We get an idea 'about it', a not convincing one, there is too much guesswork to do. And so the commissioners' questions have been rather intense.

A building at scale must provide clearly legible entry and exit points, clear level changes and pathways, smooth vehicle access..... by now, conceptually, we should know pretty much every inch of the podium against the site gradient and excavations, and the way it must work economically (I do mean in dollar terms as well as spatially for front and back of house), if the active edge is to attract successful small business tenants or concessions of the hotel operator. If you're going to float a space frame, let's see the upscale drawings (3D swivels) of what it's like to come in off the street, walk inside and up to the lobby reception. Where are the interior perspectives.

More simply, build a bigger scale *working* model that allows the apartment levels to be removed, and the hotel levels to be removed; leaving the 'hollowed' indicative podium base that is detailed enough to show the key spaces for entry, lobby reception and circulation, the retail areas, the exhibition area, the spas and hot pools, access to the car parking levels for cars and pedestrians, against the gradients of the site and the weather line – modelling would immediately show what's not working against the tower structure coming down into the ground. Computer modelling by a good technician can do the same but for a public hearing, an 'artefact' model is your best friend.

Amongst other things, Rebecca Skidmore, in her urban design evidence for Misbeary Holdings Ltd called for more cross sections – in my view, both through the building *and* the site would be helpful, given what we now understand is the unworkability of the perimeter road as heard in the evidence of transport engineer Andy Carr for Millennium and Copthorne Hotels.

For a multimillion-dollar apartment and hotel complex I'm disconcerted and concerned that, like we saw for the Betterways proposal, we are here again without rigorous and persuasive evidence to support a tall multistorey construction proposal for one of our best urban sites, as far as design challenges go. How could this happen twice.

We can't take what is offered on trust, because it is incomplete and imprecise; therefore the

assessment of effects is difficult to pin down to anything concrete and remains unhelpfully superficial – this was “the work” the applicant was to table for us, we thought, to generously persuade us that moving beyond the ‘norms’ of height in this Dunedin location has measurable benefits against other sites or, through strong honest examination of design alternatives for this site (the expression of the ‘perimeter block approach’ was leaden, something of a throw-away line in blue).

I am open to being persuaded. It is expensive to do that persuading. However, it has to happen in other city centres in this country. For an expensive building, isn't it worth doing the budgeting for preparation of your case – to get the result you want, which is consent to subdivide and build. These are open questions but they lie at the heart of A for architecture as the practical art and science of building economics and professional practice. Behind and in front of the commercial façades, that must have depth of delivery.

Nearly all of these spatial and material stumblings, should have been exposed to an independent urban design panel of multidisciplinary membership including knowledgeable lay members of the community in the pre-application stage. Even with the best and most genuine of intents, it is not enough to depend on planners, urban designers, architects and landscape architects to guide a potentially non-complying application of this type and scale for this location. The Southern Branch of the NZ Institute of Architects when I was last on the committee was still motivated to ask the city council for a UDP but somehow since then the committee has disappeared except for own CPD events and Awards ceremonies.

Sale of Land and Central City Parking

In brief, although the subject site has been targeted for a hotel opposite the Town Hall for years I do still find it extraordinary that the City Council can simply sell off one of its ratepayer-owned strategic central city sites without public consultation on that sale or the potential change of use from car parking, which is sorely needed for everyday use as well as during special events in the central city – on top of the considerable loss of other central city parking happening through a number of significant site redevelopments pending, the new bus hub at Great King Street, and due to adverse effects of the imposed cycleways on State Highway 1 – ALL without a DCC commissioned economic impact report to determine the effect on businesses, organisations and residents. I hear, though, that the subdivision will escalate the price of the land.

Lastly, I'm heartened that expert Andy Carr doesn't think the Filleul Street roundabout is workable. I often use that 'western' route to taxi to the Town Hall and Municipal Chambers or south Moray Place, to avoid the lights and congestion in George Street. The roundabout is likely to cause congestion, and further, it disrupts Kettle's Plan. The Octagon, and the octagonal Moray Place are together a strong feature of his plan, marking the centre of our city. Why introduce this clot of sorts. This is just another indication perhaps that the site at 143-193 Moray Place is being expected to do Too Much.

Thank-you for hearing my submission.