

Rosemary McQueen

I'd like to start by pointing out some problems with the public shopping area facing Moray Place and Filleul St.

Mr Lister pointed out that the drawings indicate the shops intrude into floor area of levels 1 and 2. Mr Craig tells me that this is not so because the ground level 1 is 4.8m while 2 & 3 are 3m. This means that the shops' ceilings disappear below ground level at the south-west edge of the pharmacy and its floor, and its neighbour's, even given a 2.4m stud, are inaccessible from the street. It also means that the stone facade of the 2 carparking levels extends to the ground level at that point rather than well beyond the bike-racks as drawn. So rather than addressing the street with a lively suite of shops behind a permeable barrier built to the street-edge, the facade under the podium is largely a barrier wall through which can be seen a stone facade and which is penetrated only to give access to the steps up to the podium. (NB Street-corner)

The reason that these problems matter is that these shops have been included (albeit tardily) to carry the weight of mitigating the adverse effects of the hotel/apartment proposal. The tower above the podium's adverse effects come about because it fails to address the values that the town plan identifies as those to be preserved and enhanced. This is because of a variety of things:

Monolithic design

The style of this building has been described as "contemporary". There isn't a style "contemporary". "Contemporary" can only refer to whatever styles are in current use. Just as contemporary as the glass and steel modernism exemplified here are traditional mud-brick dwellings if someone is building such a building at present.

This building is an example of international modernism, of a particular sort first advanced by Corbusier - his "Radiant Cities" dating from the 1920s - nearly 100 years ago - comprised monolithic tower blocks set in parks. It was fortunately not adopted in Paris, where Haussmann's boulevards lined with buildings of consistent materials, height, bulk, and location defining the street edge have survived. Corbusier's scheme began to be tried in the 1950s in a variety of cities but soon fell out of favour. This blog: <http://theinnercity.blogspot.co.nz/2006/01/le-corbusiers-radiant-cities-or-super.html> has a short summary of why.

In Dunedin the University Campus has developed along monolithic modernist lines in its post world war 2 development. Bursts of it erupted in Dunedin's CBD but for the most part monolithic structures of eccentric form set

within their own landscape have been confined to places of worship. And having largely confined them in this way, Dunedin has sought in its town plan to avoid having monolithic eccentric developments recur within the CBD for ordinary commercial development. By restricting that sort of development to monuments and icons we say something about ourselves - perhaps that we reserve that sort of special treatment to activities that command our respect and awe.

Dunedin's plan calls for consistency in materials, height, bulk, and location; for building to and thus defining the street edge; for defining the corner and facing the intersection; for occupying the full site; and for entrances to buildings to be from the street creating a porous edge, engaging with passers-by and contributing to the street's vibrancy; these values tend to an architectural treatment that excludes developments of a monolithic and eccentric form. Where these values are followed and inasmuch as they describe our streetscapes, they are what has brought about a particular aesthetic character to the inner city that is particularly harmonious with the built heritage of much of the Octagon and Lower Stuart St. Monolithic modernism with an eccentric floor plan doesn't maintain or preserve these values. It destroys them.

Disassociation from the life of the street

The eccentric pentagonal floor plan of the podium and the clover leaf floor plan of the towers dictate that no face or flank of the tower faces or engages with the street in any way. This building could be in China for all the attention it pays to its neighbours. The entrance to the active purposeful part of this building takes place well away and entirely hidden from the street. Entrance to the hotel or apartments, or engagement with them has become a private matter well hidden behind several anonymous flanks from the citizens of Dunedin. This means that it is entirely possible - and you've been presented with no quantitative evidence to the contrary - that visitors to the hotel could be bussed in and out without ever stepping foot on a Dunedin street. If so, then so much for vibrancy.

On this front I offer you some quantitative evidence:

Southern Cross (including all of its cafés and its casino)

Wednesday 2 July 10.29 - 10.34am: Passers-by 14; Hotel users: 1 well-dressed man in and out before driving away in a car parked directly in front and 1 person coming out of the casino entrance.

Wayne's Hotel and Nectar café

Wednesday 2 July 10.35-10.40am: Passers-by 15; Hotel users: 0

Distinction Hotel (on Bond St where a sign indicates that the street is for the use of hotel patrons only)

Wednesday 2 July 10.41 - 10.46am: Passers-by 2; Hotel users: 2 individuals exited

building and 2 more exited and entered again carrying paper-bags appearing to contain take-away counter food. All appeared by demeanour to be staff members

Squatness

I hadn't realised until I saw this model that the proposal is nearly as broad as it's high. It's proportions can only be described as squat. Given that it is by far the tallest building in Dunedin it must be extraordinarily out of scale with everything else in the CBD. And its intrusion into the residential area where few are more than two storeys high is Brobdinagian, is like putting a dwelling from the land of the Brobdinags into Lilliput. From no point of view it seems to me, can it appear to be anything but dominating and no amount of modulation of the facade could mitigate the adverse effects of its size.

The shops that we must suppose largely disappear under the street level on Moray Place were a tardy attempt at mitigating these injuries to the townscape values. They are sadly inadequate to the task.

This site calls for a 3 to 4 storey hotel, built to the site boundaries, that fronts the street and engages with it, from which views of the inner-city streetscape might please its occupants; it calls for a design with detailing and of materials that enhances the values identified in the zone. The place for this modernist design of monolithic and eccentric form is not in Dunedin's built up CBD which is generally characterised by consistency of materials, bulk, form, and location on site, but in a park or on top of a hill and somewhere far far away.

ELEVATION OF BOUNDARY STRUCTURE / ACTIVITIES /
CONTAINING SEATING/ RETAIL / PUBLIC ACCESS

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