

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 ("RMA" or "the Act")

AND

IN THE MATTER of an application to **TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCIL** by **BEKON MEDIA LIMITED** under section 88 of the Act for resource consent to authorise the establishment and display of a digital billboard at 332 Queen Street, Richmond

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF IAN MUNRO

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My full name is Ian Colin Munro. I am an urban designer and urban planner.

Qualifications and experience

1.2 I hold the following academic qualifications:

(a) Bachelor of Planning and Master of Planning;

(b) Master of Architecture [Urban Design];

(c) Master of Environmental Legal Studies; and a

(d) Master of Engineering Studies [Transportation].

1.3 I am a Full Member of the NZPI and in the provision of professional services am committed to its Code of Ethics. I am a founding member of the recently incorporated Urban Designers' Institute of Aotearoa but as that is still in its final stages of 'going live' with complete systems including in-place CPD requirements and registered trade mark, I do not propose to make any further mention of that or rely on it in any way.

1.4 I have over 25 years' experience in the New Zealand development industry and 20 years as an urban designer. My experience includes:

- (a) Dozens of digital billboard-type signs in urban settings including their integration with existing buildings; and
- (b) Growth and development projects across over twenty provincial towns, including Richmond; and
- (c) Tasman District and Richmond-specific projects including in terms of growth and change pressures over time. I am currently providing advice to the Council on how it manages medium density housing including around the Richmond centre, but that project has no bearing or consequence on the current proposal.

Involvement in the Bekon Media project

- 1.5 I was not involved in the development of the application that was lodged with the Council.
- 1.6 Subsequent to the release of the s.42A report, I was engaged to peer review and add a second-opinion on urban design and visual impact matters to the Commissioner. I contributed to the discussions that led to the amended proposal now before the Commissioner.
- 1.7 I visited the application site at 332 Queen Street, Richmond (the Site) on 16 October 2024, including the surrounding area.

Purpose and scope of evidence

- 1.8 The purpose of my evidence is to address the urban design / urban amenity effects of the proposed single-sided billboard.
- 1.9 Specifically, my evidence:
 - (a) Identifies the relevant issues and matters;
 - (b) Reviews the relevant submissions;
 - (c) Reviews the Applicant's (evidence) assessment prepared by Mr. Compton-Moen;
 - (d) Reviews the Council's (s.42A) commentary prepared by Mr. Milne;
 - (e) Offers my own additional comments; and
 - (f) Sets out my conclusions
- 1.10 A summary of my evidence is contained in Section 2.

Expert Witness Code of Conduct

- 1.11 I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court of New Zealand Practice Note 2023 and that I have complied with it when preparing my evidence. Other than when I state I am relying on the advice of another person, this evidence is within my area of expertise and that in preparing my evidence I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

2. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 2.1 The proposal before the Commissioner, amended post-s.42A report, is for the installation of a single-sided digital billboard measuring 7m wide and 3.5m high in landscape format, to be located adjacent to the road boundary on a new full-height (and permitted) parapet, atop an existing single-storey commercial building at 332 Queen Street, Richmond. The proposed billboard will be approximately 180m away from the nearest residential properties at 334 and 337 Lower Queen Street, to the northwest of the site.
- 2.2 It was originally proposed that the billboard would not sit in front of a parapet (i.e., it was free-standing above the parapet), and face the intersection of Queen Street, Richmond Deviation (SH6), and Lower Queen Street. That is controlled by traffic lights and has pedestrian crossings and is utilised by vehicle traffic, cyclists and pedestrians.
- 2.3 As a result of Council officer (and NZTA) concerns related to the left-turn slip lane on Lower Queen Street and the integration of the sign with the existing building (amenity effects), the proposal has been amended by re-orienting the billboard so it will not be visible from the slip-lane and most of Lower Queen Street. A full-height parapet is now also proposed, with the sign sitting lower than the top of that. It is the amended 'full parapet' proposal that my evidence focuses on.
- 2.4 The proposal includes a number of (orthodox) limitations relating to its operation; these are unremarkable in urban design terms.
- 2.5 The existing context of the sign is of a busy, vehicle-orientated state highway and this will not change as far as I can foresee. The existing environment exhibits few preferred urban design outcomes, but is fairly typical of busy commercial arterial road corridors. Its amenity, which includes a visual prevalence of commercial signage mounted above the street level on parapets, is much less sensitive to the effects of a sign such as is proposed

than would be the case if the Site's setting was a residential zone or a premium pedestrian-oriented shopping area (like the Richmond main street further south-east along Queen Street). The size of the sign is also appropriate in terms of the scale of the immediate intersection in front of it (SH6 is five-travel lanes wide at the Queen St intersection, making it very large by any measure).

- 2.6 The proposal will comply with Central Business Zone built form standards and this has been a very important factor in my assessment of the potential adverse amenity effects of the billboard and parapet. I understand that the parapet now proposed is itself fully permitted under the TRMP. It has the effect of also removing any need for consent for a sign sitting higher than a parapet, leaving only the need for consent for a sign displaying off-site advertising. This has also been factored into my assessment.
- 2.7 The proposal will be visible south-west along SH6 and in the immediate vicinity of the Queen Street / SH6 intersection, but have no practical (i.e., measurable) urban design effects further north, west or east of the Site or in terms of the wider environment. My assessment is that beyond a distance of approximately 75m from the sign, it will not form a materially relevant or dominant part of the view looking north-eastwards along SH6 (i.e., would have very low adverse effects).
- 2.8 The key issues raised by submissions that are relevant from an urban design perspective are visual amenity / clutter; loss of hill views (east); and the height and scale of the sign relative to the existing building and its parapet.
- 2.9 The key issues raised by the Council's expert Mr. Milne are visual dominance, and loss of pedestrian amenity. Mr. Milne is not supportive of the lodged proposal and he disagreed with Mr. Compton-Moen's assessment of those effects.
- 2.10 The (amended) proposal has been assessed on behalf of the Applicant by Mr. Compton-Moen and I refer to his evidence, which I record I agree with. In my opinion, his evidence is sound. I consider his conclusions have been reasonably and justifiably arrived at, and I agree with him that the amended 'full parapet' proposal is acceptable.
- 2.11 In reaching my own conclusion on the amended proposal, I note that I agree with Mr. Milne that the proposal as lodged was not acceptable in terms of its poor visual integration with the existing building. But the amended proposal, with its parapet (designed to integrate into the form and shape of the existing lower parapet and provide visual interest of its own by way of a

pattern of vertical openings), will in my opinion acceptably integrate the sign into the existing building and mitigate adverse amenity effects. I consider consent could be granted to that.

- 2.12 I have reviewed the Applicant's proposed conditions of consent and have nothing further to add to those.

3. **RELEVANT ISSUES AND MATTERS**

LED signage

- 3.1 LED billboard-type signs have become very well-established across New Zealand's urban areas (centre zones and employment zones) since the first digital sign was established in Auckland around 2012. My observation is that New Zealand communities still take a very conservative approach to these.
- 3.2 Overseas, it is now common to see LED lighting including advertising signage and billboards used liberally across buildings. Large-scale, pedestrian-interactive 3D-signage and automated drones are now also becoming 'live' or 'floating' sources of advertising in skies and spaces adjacent to buildings. Sydney's annual and immensely popular Vivid festival is a good example of this – which includes literal animations projected across whole building facades, widely visible for several kilometres not to commercially advertise a specific service or product, but to commercially advertise the city of Sydney as an existing and vibrant place to visit. This is not to conflate an LED billboard with a major tourism event using whole buildings, but to make the point that worldwide as LED lighting becomes cheaper and easier to install, communities' relationships with advertising, lighting and signage on buildings and in urban centres is changing markedly.
- 3.3 From an urban design perspective, LED billboard signage can result in numerous adverse effects, although in most cases these are focused more on operational parameters (glare, 'flashing', etc.). They can visually dominate and adversely detract from the visual qualities of buildings or the character of some urban places; they can impede views; and are on occasion opposed on moralistic grounds of commercial signage just being inherently 'bad'.
- 3.4 LED billboard signage can result in numerous beneficial effects, although in urban design terms this is usually when an existing environment exhibits poor or low visual qualities to begin with (i.e., placing a sign on a large blank concrete wall can result in a visual enhancement). The principal urban design benefits can be a contribution that signage can make to the vibrancy and

sense of 'activity' or 'destination' occurring in urban centres, and the ability for LED billboards to be used in live-circumstances such as to provide TV-screen like content for major events or in association with emergencies.

- 3.5 To urban designers, signs are in the first instance buildings, with dimensions, shape, height, shadows, and so on all in need of assessment. A secondary issue is the content of the signs in terms of operational characteristics but also in terms of proximity to sensitive receivers (i.e., nearby residents in particular); and impacts on views. There is then a cumulative consideration of the physical and visual qualities proposed which will consider impacts on the underlying building and adjacent buildings, character and visual impacts, and so on.

Urban design approach to LED billboard signage

- 3.6 Urban design training emphasises the benefits that specific spatial configurations in the built environment can provide to communities. By way of a very simplified summary:

- (a) In urban design literature, high-density, mixed-use, walkable outcomes are strongly preferred (the Commissioner will be well-aware of this as it is highly-overlapped with urban planning theory.) This becomes intertwined with various conceptions of a "human scale", but that can in turn be understood as a consideration of rational design responses when pedestrians are the principal viewing audience interacting with buildings.
- (b) Slow-moving pedestrians at ground level can appreciate visually rich and intricate built form responses including qualities of two-way intervisibility into windows, appreciation of façade depth and materiality, and the false-perspective benefits that a vertical expression in building facades can provide. (It can make a destination along a street appear closer to the viewer.) Pedestrians can stop and start along a footpath, and usually move at 1.5 metres / second or less.
- (c) This can be contrasted with vehicle-centric built form responses where the viewer is moving rapidly (up to 50km/h or more) and is often separated from the built form edge. The rational built form response becomes simpler, lumpier buildings; use of large sections of blank wall and block colour; and larger-scale signage including billboards. Vehicle occupants cannot readily stop and start where drivers wish along a road, and typically move at 30km/h or more (8

metres / second, or between 5-8 times faster than a pedestrian). For reference, at 50km/h the viewer is passing a building at almost 14 metres / second – and if this is representative of a building's typical viewers, then money spent on rich visual detailing, intricate detail, and very small signage content is frankly wasted.

- (d) In vehicle-centric corridors, larger-scale signage, including LED billboards, are so normative and functionally associated with what built form outcomes emerge and why, that they should be seen as forming part of the specific amenity values and character of those corridors – in the same way that visually blander, larger-scaled buildings, a general lack of landscape amenity, and larger car parking areas often in front of buildings also are. This should not be seen as an attempt to apologise for large-scaled LED signage or make the case that they are aesthetically pleasing or desirable based on any particular evaluative scale – it is simply a factual statement of the characteristics that vehicle-centric commercial corridors typically exhibit.

3.7 The upshot is that there is always a risk that urban designers suffer a bias against LED and other billboard-scaled signage not because of (what can be unfairly identified as) a personal aesthetic preference, but because their training so systematically drills into them that the built form settings that generally give rise to billboards are undesirable and not to be preferred. This can result in urban designers making assessments on the mistaken premise that vehicle-centric commercial corridors can or should be reasonably expected to behave like pedestrian-centric business main streets or residential streets – or that LED billboards are inherently adverse.

3.8 For completeness, the only known spatial typology that can combine functional high-volume through traffic movement with very high amenity and pedestrian-focussed land use edges, is the 'boulevard' (where a through-movement prioritised central road area has low speed high amenity slip-roads positioned either side). These typically require 40-50m or more width, and some in European cities are almost 100m wide in places. This typology is just not an option in New Zealand.

3.9 In plan change processes and in clearly identified pedestrian-emphasis areas, urban designers get more opportunity to draw on their technical ideals. But in resource consent processes, the requirements of the RMA; that built environments are often in 'less than perfect' existing conditions; and practical expectations that a real-world approach be taken do often mean

urban designers have little justifiable basis to promote the preferred outcomes from their toolbox.

3.10 In any event, and in a general sense, urban design preferences for large billboard-type signage can be summarised as:

- (a) Signage that integrates with the form and architectural proportions of the underlying building are preferred (easier when the building is large to start with);
- (b) Signage that complements architectural features and, for example, does not obscure windows or design elements are preferred (easier when buildings already contain large blank sections);
- (c) Signage that sits within the silhouette of an existing building rather than projecting above or beyond it are preferred (easier when the existing building is taller and at least 2-storeys tall to begin with);
- (d) Signage that is orientated to face road users and not immediate neighbours or residential activities are preferred; and
- (e) Signage that is recessed back or screened from the immediate footpath beneath it so as to mitigate adverse visual dominance effects in its immediate foreground are preferred (easier when the building is already recessed back from a street frontage, or where a pedestrian verandah above a footpath can screen a sign).

3.11 Following on from this, it is essential to understand the real-world context of a proposed LED sign and to understand (across both existing and reasonably foreseeable future contexts) the correct built form starting point. In other words, an LED billboard in a setting that the community has determined should be prioritised for high-volume vehicle-based movements should be approached very differently to one in a setting the community has determined should be prioritised for very slow-speed, pedestrian-based movements (in terms of how a majority of people will engage with the built form). I will address this next.

Site and context

3.12 The site and its context have been thoroughly explained in the application material and s.42A report. I also refer specifically to Mr. Compton-Moen's evidence. I am generally in agreement with the site descriptions that have been provided.

3.13 The following are particularly relevant characteristics that are worth highlighting:

- (a) State Highway 6 runs north-east to south-west. It is a major vehicular corridor and is 5-vehicle lanes wide at the Queen Street intersection (a diagonal of approximately 31.2m). There is no parking along the road boundaries. Unsurprisingly, the land use mix along this is vehicle-centric, lower-value (mostly one-storey shed-type) commercial activities. This is fairly typical of similar settings across the country. Commercial signage is generally larger-scale and elevated above the ground level on parapets so as to maximise visual exposure to rapidly-moving passersby (and giving buildings a more 'squared-off- appearance from streets by screening pitched roofs of large barn-type buildings).
- (b) SH6 has no street trees or cycle facilities, but does have footpaths on each side (but, on the south-eastern side, only from McGlashen Avenue to approximately 25 Main Road, Hope), often directly adjoining the kerbline. The road corridor is effectively fully paved. It does cater to pedestrian movement but by far the majority of users are in vehicles and the road is clearly managed to maintain that function.
- (c) SH6 has historically been the urban edge of Richmond; almost all of the settlement is to the south-east. Again, the use of state highway bypasses as an urban edge is commonplace, as is the inevitable 'jumping of the fence' that has happened as urban expansion in Richmond's north-west has occurred.
- (d) For pedestrians and cyclists, the most important movement is laterally across SH6 between 'old' and 'new' Richmond. Walking or cycling along SH6 is not a positive experience. It is not a space that I would imagine any normal pedestrian or cyclist would linger in or think of as a pleasant space to spend time in other than for the function of moving (as quickly as possible) between destinations.
- (e) Richmond's most important pedestrian amenity commercial street is Queen Street. As the traveller moves along Queen Street, away from SH6 (particularly beyond the intersection of Queen Street and McIndoe Place), a steady transition occurs including:
 - (i) More building height and continuity;

- (ii) More consistent pedestrian canopies;
 - (iii) Street trees and landscaping;
 - (iv) Wider footpaths and pedestrian priority measures such as zebra-crossings; and
 - (v) On-street car parking.
- (f) It is not the case that the very different built form responses on these very different roads reflects some fluke, solar orientation, or a historic planning requirement; the built form responses on SH6 and Queen Street are each entirely consistent with what I would expect based on the management preferences and operational priorities that each road has been purposely designed to cater to.
- (g) The north-west to south-east orientated roads such as Queen Street (and Oxford Street, Waverly Street, Talbot Street, etc.) are directed towards and provide frequent meaningful framed views to the hills east of the town. Views of the hills are also possible along SH6 above the many existing buildings along its eastern side, but my assessment is that this is solely because the buildings are either one-storey or set back from the street. As such, the views are likely to be lost progressively over time as and when development enabled (and often permitted) by the zone occurs.
- (h) The immediate intersection of SH6 with Queen Street and Lower Queen Street is typical of vehicle-centric corridors. On three sides, car parking areas in front of buildings, simple shed-type buildings, and parapet-based commercial signage predominates. Site contains a simple one-storey building encouragingly built to the street edge, but which on closer inspection backs onto the street, including signed-over windows. Doors (on each road frontage) are permanently closed, with signage directing customers to the car parking area at the rear (along the SH6 elevation). This reflects that this activity, like other activities along SH6, relies on vehicle-based customers to such a high extent that a door to a footpath on Queen Street that could cater to pedestrians is permanently out of use.
- (i) More broadly this reflects that SH6, as well as the north-western end of Queen Street, is just not an area where pedestrians frequent or linger. An existing solid verandah above the Queen Street footpath projects approximately 1.2m from the building face, and on the SH6

side in particular a parapet gives shape to the building (and screens the pitched roof of a barn-building behind it from view along SH6).

3.14 Based on my training in urban morphology, everything I have observed is 'normal'. I have the following expectations of future development in this context over the next few decades:

- (a) SH6 will continue to attract vehicle-based, lower-amenity activities until such time as (if) the road management priority substantially changes, not only in terms of (much) better pedestrian facilities but fundamentally a change in road functionality, including a maximum vehicle speed of 30km/h or less - seen in other major arterial corridors where meaningful pedestrian-priority is planned (Ponsonby Road, Auckland, is an excellent example of this approach). I do not expect this to ever occur given the role of the State Highway.
- (b) Higher amenity and mixed-use activities based on smaller catchments and walk-up patronage will occur where there is high amenity including a 'place' or destination to associate with centred on the lots along and adjacent to (perhaps one block either side of) Queen Street, and back from SH6.
- (c) Although it is a non-statutory document, the Nelson-Tasman Future Development Strategy 2022 – 2052 (FDS) (adopted 2022) presents a vision entirely in keeping with my expectations although its vision for 4-to-6-storey buildings including at SH6 and including the Site seems optimistic when considered here and now in 2024 (see **Attachment 1**).
- (d) In this context, the Site (and its immediate neighbours) can be seen as a 'transition point' between the low-amenity movement corridor of SH6 and the higher amenity 'living corridor' of Queen Street. It would be unrealistic and inappropriate to expect a typical 'main street' type of development on the Site, but at the same time it should be expected to exhibit more urban design quality than is the norm along the SH6 transport corridor.
- (e) Importantly, the north-western end of Queen Street exhibits qualities and a character much closer to that of SH6 than what can be experienced further south-east along Queen Street in Richmond's commercial core. Again, this is 'normal', as the businesses here focus on SH6, and the end of Queen Street is associated with those corner sites.

The (amended) proposal

- 3.15 The (amended) proposal has been described succinctly in Mr. Compton-Moen's evidence.
- 3.16 The amended proposal was developed to address traffic safety and visual amenity concerns; in urban design terms, the reorientation of the Sign is not itself a 'game changer'. What is much more relevant is the addition of a parapet integrated into the form and shape of the existing building and which will wrap the corner higher than the proposed sign (9.3m maximum height). This is intended to better integrate the sign into the silhouette and form of the building it sits on and is in my opinion a very important amendment in terms of overall urban design merit.
- 3.17 The amended proposal was arrived at after consideration of the submissions and s.42A report. An initial 'half parapet' option was considered and circulated to the Council. This proposed a lower parapet to approximately half the height of the sign, intended to give the building a sense of 'stepping up' to the corner and sign. This is a fairly common design approach for buildings on corners. Informal discussion with Mr. Compton-Moen, Mr. Milne and I identified that Mr. Milne remained concerned with this option (I was comfortable with it). But further consideration led to the full-parapet now before the Commissioner.
- 3.18 The sign occupies approximately 18% of the now-proposed parapet, and the parapet itself has been designed to incorporate a pattern of vertical openings to give it visual interest rather than remain as a blank wall surface.
- 3.19 I am advised that the parapet itself is fully permitted on the Site and has the effect of removing any need for consent for a sign sitting higher than a parapet. This leaves only the matter of signs displaying off-site advertising to be considered.

Tasman Resource Management Plan

- 3.20 I am advised that the (amended) proposal falls to be considered as a restricted discretionary activity with discretions at 16.1.4.2. In urban design terms, Chapters 16, and 6 & 17 (Central Business zone) are relevant.
- 3.21 It is not the business of urban designers to try to undertake complex planning evaluations and weightings but it is essential that the spatial built form outcomes and related qualities sought by Plans are understood as a key part of the context of any assessment of environmental effects.

3.22 For completeness what follows should be understood as me making assumptions as to what the Plan seeks, not an attempt to offer-up planning interpretations or judgements.

- (a) The relevant restriction of discretion at 16.1.4.2 states: “*any amenity effect on the surrounding area, including size and duration*”. The word “amenity” is not necessarily shorthand for “amenity values” as defined in the RMA, and at face value is very broad. But I would observe that the principle of visual change, even substantial change, on an urban-zoned site should not of itself be regarded as inherently adverse or an inherent amenity effect - within commercial land use zones that enable substantial permitted activity change on sites (including changes in building tenants and associated signage or colouration), that there is near-constant change occurring is itself part of the amenity of those zones – contributing to a character of vibrancy, activity, and ‘energy’.
- (b) In Chapter 6, Central Business Zone objectives and policies emphasise (in no implied hierarchy):
 - (i) Minimising adverse effects on zone neighbours (e.g., objective 6.6.2.2, and policy 6.8.1.3);
 - (ii) Improving the quality and amenity of the zone (to “high amenity”) as change occurs over time (e.g., objective 6.6.2.2; and policies 6.6.3.2 and 6.8.1.4);
 - (iii) Enabling a wide range of business activities that reinforce and support the concentration of activity within the Central Business zone, and support its “core pedestrian-oriented area” (e.g., objective 6.6.2.1; and policies 6.6.3.1, 6.6.3.2, and 6.8.1.5); and
 - (iv) Minimising disruption to continuous frontages of commercial activities at street level in central business and commercial locations (which I interpret as including the Site) (e.g., policy 6.6.3.8);
- (c) In Chapter 17, Central Business Zone rules implement the above by enabling permitted activity buildings subject to compliance with key building bulk and amenity standards. As per 17.2.4.1, these include 100% building coverage; 10m building height; and no boundary setback requirements. The standards include numerous

requirements applying to sites with a specific “shopping frontage” notation (which I interpret as being those CBZ streets intended to have a particular pedestrian-emphasis and amenity function) – but which does not apply to the Site.

- (d) Notwithstanding the above, Chapter 16 requires that signs such as has been proposed to be a restricted discretionary activity for reasons of signage relating to off-site advertising (16.1.4.1(b) and (e)). I note the lodged proposal also needed consent for extending above the existing building parapet (16.1.4.1(a), (c) and (e)). I record some unease at the practicality of Figure 16.1B as it relates to signage projecting higher than a building parapet. Subject to compliance with building bulk and location standards, it would appear that as long as an applicant included a new parapet (as a permitted activity) accompanying a sign application and on which to affix a sign that was the same height or higher than the proposed sign, these specific reasons for consent would cease to apply. On this basis, I see Figure 16.1B working as a de-facto rule requiring signs to be accompanied by a parapet to the same or additional height.

4. **ISSUES RAISED IN SUBMISSIONS**

- 4.1 The submissions were summarised and considered in Ms. Woodbridge’s s.42A report, and also by Mr. Milne, as well as in the evidence of Mr. Compton-Moen.
- 4.2 I agree with the way the submissions have been characterised and have nothing more to add to that. The key issues raised are amenity related in terms of:
 - (a) Obstruction of views to hills.
 - (b) Visual clutter.
 - (c) Luminance levels.
 - (d) Adverse effects on visual amenity which are already low.
 - (e) Height of sign above the building parapet.
 - (f) Off-site advertising.
- 4.3 I will provide my own comments on these topics later in this evidence, but I note that item (e) is no longer relevant.

5. **REVIEW OF THE APPLICANT'S EVIDENCE**

5.1 Mr. Compton-Moen has undertaken an assessment of the amended proposal in his evidence. This has included preparing numerous visual representations of the sign in photographs that include the now-proposed parapet. He has also provided a series of visual representations incrementally on the SH6 approach to the sign.

5.2 Mr. Compton-Moen's assessment:

- (a) Summarises the proposal and planning status / issues;
- (b) Summarises the site and receiving environment;
- (c) Provides his professional assessment of the proposal including its visual impacts;
- (d) Responds to the matters raised in public submissions and in Mr. Milne's review; and
- (e) Concludes that the proposal is acceptable in urban design terms.

5.3 It is also important to recognise that the amended proposal itself has arisen as a direct response to the submissions and Council officer opinions.

5.4 It is my opinion that Mr. Compton-Moen's assessment is sufficiently comprehensive relative to the scale and magnitude of effects raised by the proposal. His assessment has not omitted any relevant facts or matters that I can ascertain and the conclusions he has arrived at are in my opinion reasonable.

6. **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S EVIDENCE**

6.1 Mr. Milne has undertaken an assessment of the proposal as lodged, including commenting on Mr. Compton-Moen's initial assessment. Mr. Milne's assessment is in the form of a peer-review and I agree this is typical of a s.42A assessment on behalf of a Council. I have no concerns with the extent of analysis Mr. Milne has undertaken. Notably, Mr. Milne considers Mr. Compton-Moen's analysis is insufficient in its consideration of night time visibility and pedestrian amenity effects. Mr. Milne considers that the sign is not well integrated with the existing building, and will have visual dominance effects of concern.

6.2 I do not agree with Mr. Milne that Mr. Compton-Moen's assessment is lacking or that there are effects or aspects under-assessed or where additional

assessment is necessary. I consider that Mr. Compton-Moen and Mr. Milne have simply arrived at different opinions. In terms of night-time lighting, I consider that this is a matter of operational control subject to advice from lighting experts such as Mr. Kern. I do not see any relevant urban design or amenity-related basis to refuse consent to the sign rather than impose operational conditions, which at the extreme could include a review condition or limited hours of operation if necessary. In any event, I would disagree with the assumption that seeing a sign at night along SH6 would be inherently adverse; it would add a moment of interest or interaction along an urban section of state highway in the same way lighting on the walls of a building or monument might.

- 6.3 I do agree with Mr. Milne's comments to the extent that the lodged proposal did not exhibit several ideal or preferred urban design outcomes, and that it was not acceptably integrated with the existing building to appropriately manage amenity effects related to the visual quality of the existing building and intersection. I did not support the granting of consent to the proposal as lodged.
- 6.4 The amended design will not result in problematic adverse pedestrian amenity effects. First, SH6 and the north-western end of Queen Street is not a high-pedestrian traffic area nor does it contain any pedestrian attractors such a playground or bus stops close to the Site. Secondly and with the addition of the full parapet, the sign will not seem to singularly loom or overbear the building or pedestrians, nor will it unreasonably diminish sun or daylight or any other quality that pedestrians might currently enjoy.
- 6.5 In my opinion the concerns raised by Mr. Milne have been addressed in the amended design, or (in terms of night-time lighting) could be managed by way of the operational conditions proposed by the Applicant.

7. **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

- 7.1 It is not realistically possible for a billboard-type sign to be accommodated within the scale, form, and silhouette or a one-storey building, with something above the existing building impossible to reasonably avoid. It is relevant that most existing commercial signage in the vicinity of the Site is:
- (a) Above the pedestrian ground level attached to a parapet;
 - (b) Sized to be viewed primarily by vehicle occupants including at the intersection; or

(c) A free-standing pylon-type sign.

7.2 To that end, the amended proposal does present a supportable outcome, with the parapet providing a 'base' for the sign and an overall form of building silhouette that can be seen stepping-up to the corner a technique that is widely seen on corner buildings in commercial zones. It avoids any of the sign rising higher than the new parapet, and also provides a parapet that has its own appropriate shape and internal patterning.

7.3 In light of the maximum height of the proposed sign and parapet being well within the zone height limit, I disagree that the amended proposal presents a scale of visual dominance effects that is inappropriate or problematic; in an urban area and, in particular, a commercial corridor where fairly large and elevated signage is common (and as noted earlier in my opinion part of existing amenity values), seeing an eye-catching or large sign should not be categorised as being inherently adverse. For completeness, it is also my opinion that the proposal will be within the scale and form (and appearance) of a building that complied entirely with the zone's permitted activity standards.

7.4 In terms of matters raised by submissions:

(a) I consider that the reasonable protection of hill views exists via the many roads running perpendicular to SH6 that offer regular de facto viewshafts of the Hills. My assessment is that it is permitted for 10m tall buildings along SH6 and I see no environmental or physical / spatial reasons to suggest why this could not be regularly achieved on sites. These would remove views that currently exist. I have no urban design reasons to suggest the Plan is defective or that there is a conflict with any identified public viewshaft and the height limit. I also disagree that the Site offers any particularly unique view of the Hills compared to other SH6 sites that allow views behind them. Noting the Council's FDS (Attachment 1), I cannot imagine the Council signalling a change from a 10m height limit to something that could enable 4-6 storey buildings along the south-eastern side of SH6 in the future (i.e., 16m-22m+ heights,) if maintaining hill views was a relevant resource management outcome or important amenity attribute to be safeguarded. In any event, the hill view in question is one enjoyable along a substantial length of SH6. The loss of one transitory moment associated with the proposal / Site would represent a very small impact that most travellers, in my opinion,

would likely find did not detract from their entire journey / experience.

- (b) I agree that the vicinity of the Site exhibits a functional and modest visual amenity. It is different and lower than would be expected in a residential environment or a main-street-type environment. But it is 'normal' for commercial streets focused on moving vehicles, and it is not in my opinion "bad" or "low" for what it is (in the same way that a factory will never look like a dwelling, and should not be expected to). The proposal and additional accompanying parapet will maintain this amenity, but will improve the urban design merit of the existing building by way of better-emphasising and addressing the intersection corner with a parapet that provides its own additional visual interest features. I disagree that the sign will adversely worsen or detract from existing visual amenity, and although some in the community may find it visually offensive, others may find it visually neutral or even interesting to view. I also consider that despite its size, the sign will only have a material visual presence to SH6 users travelling from the south-west, and within approximately 75m of the sign. This represents in my opinion a quite limited field of view or impact.
- (c) I disagree that the sign will contribute to visual clutter; the positioning of the sign visually separates it from other signs or traffic / information signage, and it will not overbear or dominate its surrounds. I would expect to see the sign visually merging or overlapping with several other signs for clutter to become a concern.
- (d) The size of the sign is in my opinion appropriate. It is large, but is also intended to face a large urban intersection of a 5-lane state highway that is fully paved across its width. The sign will not visually dominate the building elevations and in this respect the addition of the parapet has been a very helpful design decision. Placing the sign on the parapet also brings the proposal into direct consistency with the majority of existing on-building signs in the vicinity, being above the street level and attached to (but not sitting above) a parapet.
- (e) Following on from (d), I do not consider any relevant adverse urban design or amenity effect will arise from the display of off-site advertising. In my opinion and in light of the viewership potential presented by SH6, any sign would be logically sized to maximise exposure to that without visually dominating the host building or

intersection / road approach. There will be no difference in amenity or urban design effects between a scenario of the sign displaying general commercial advertising, or the sign displaying each week's specials from the existing pet store (vet services / types of animal food or enclosures / animal treatments, etc). The relevant matter is whether the sign is of an acceptable size and in my opinion it is.

Overall comments on the amended 'full parapet' proposal

7.5 In summary, the amended proposal seeks to provide an extended parapet, is designed to visually integrate with the existing form and shape of the building (and its SH6 parapet), with the sign sitting attached to and subordinate to that. It provides its own visual interest elements by way of a pattern of vertical openings. In my opinion this is the optimum outcome and merits the granting of consent. This option:

- (a) Makes the sign visually subordinate to what will visually look like a two-storey building, rather than 'looming above' a one-storey building, and which in my opinion contributed to Mr. Milne's concerns.
- (b) Allows the sign to sit within the parapet rather than projecting above it, making it more consistent with the pattern and characteristics of commercial signage on local buildings (and simplifying the matters over which consent is required).
- (c) Includes visual interest in the parapet so as to avoid it being a flat / blank wall (although it would be permitted for it to do so).
- (d) In creating a stronger built form response at the street corner (albeit by way of the 'illusion' created by a parapet), the building's overall urban design merits will be increased in terms of typical urban design preferences that buildings:
 - (i) Define the edges of roads and open spaces, including larger-scaled intersections;
 - (ii) Enclose the street and footpath along footpath edges, to help provide weather and wind protection; and
 - (iii) Create a more obvious 'turning point' at the entry to Queen Street from SH6.
- (e) The parapet remains below the zone's height limit and will not present a scale or visual impact of building that would be problematic

either in terms of real-world existing environment and effects on that; and the built form outcomes I read as sought by the Plan.

8. **CONCLUSIONS**

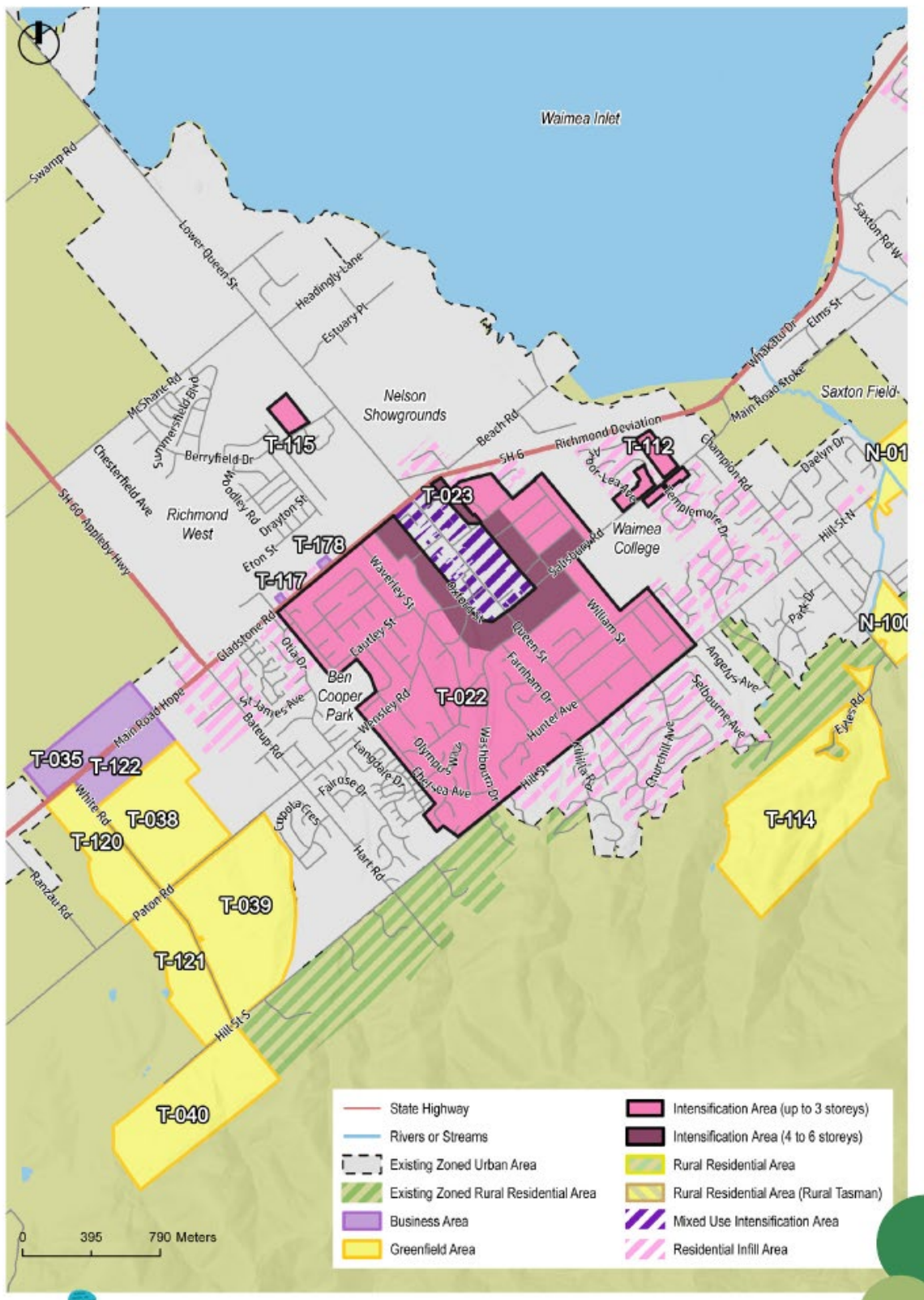
- 8.1 I have been engaged to review the application, and work undertaken by Mr. Compton-Moen; public submissions; and the Council's s.42A reporting.
- 8.2 I agree with Mr. Milne that the lodged proposal was not acceptable in terms of how coarsely the sign would sit above the building and lack of acceptable integration into the building's form and silhouette. I disagree with comments made in relation to screened or lost views of hills currently visible above and behind the Site from SH6, or that the sign would be fundamentally adversely visually dominant based on the characteristics of the existing environment and its amenity values.
- 8.3 The lodged proposal's urban design shortcomings have in my opinion been addressed in the amended design.
- 8.4 I consider Mr. Compton-Moen's evidence assessment has been appropriate and I agree with the conclusions he has arrived at regarding the amended proposal.
- 8.5 I note that I am familiar with other consented LED billboard proposals above existing one-storey buildings where such a 'full parapet' approach has been instrumental in the granting of consent. In addition to the examples shown by Mr. Compton-Moen, the most recent one I worked on was in Wairau Road, Glenfield, Auckland (**Attachment 2**) - although that was a different context than the current proposal (the example is provided only to the extent that it shows precedent for this particular technique to manage LED billboards above an existing 1-storey corner building).

Ian Colin Munro

17 October 2024

ATTACHMENT 1 – FIGURE 7 FROM NELSON TASMAN FDS 2024

Note: Site is in the purple hatched area approximately left of the “T” in the notation “T-023”. Although not stated in the Strategy, in the accompanying FDS Technical Report is it confirmed that the “Mixed Use Intensification Area” is envisaged as 4-6 storeys in height.



ATTACHMENT 2 – EXAMPLE OF RECENT FULL-PARAPET BILLBOARD CONSENT, 135 WAIRAU ROAD NORTH SHORE (REF. LUC60368727)

