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Whanganui District Council District Plan Review Phase Seven

Section 32AA Report –

Proposed Plan Change 49 (Town Centre & Outer Commercial Design Guidelines)

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Dated:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

Section 79 of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act) requires Council to commence a review of its plans at least every 10 years. Recent amendments to the Act clarify that whole plans need not be reviewed. The Council has chosen to undertake its review in parts (a 'rolling' review).

The Council is at the stage of updating its Commercial chapter of the District Plan, and as a first step the current Central City Building Design Guidelines (Appendix G) are being reviewed.

Section 32 of the Act requires Council to carry out an evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of existing provisions and consideration of options before notifying a proposed plan change. These matters are discussed throughout this report.

1.2 STATUTORY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE REVIEW

1.2.1 Resource Management Act 1991

Section 74 of the Act requires the Council to change the District Plan in accordance with its functions under Section 31, the purpose of the Act in section 5 and the other matters under sections 6, 7 and 8.

Territorial authorities have the following relevant functions under the Act:

31 Functions of territorial authorities under this Act

1. *Every territorial authority shall have the following functions for the purpose of giving effect to this Act in its district:*
 - (a) *The establishment, implementation, and review of objectives, policies and methods to achieve integrated management of the effects of the use, development or protection of land and associated natural and physical resources.*
 - (b) *The control of any actual or potential effects of the use, development, or protection of land...*

The Council is given these functions for the purpose of promoting the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, which is defined:

5(2) *In this Act, "sustainable management" means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety while:*

- (a) *Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and*

- (b) *Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems; and*
- (c) *Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.*

In exercising its functions and powers under the Act, territorial authorities shall also recognise and provide for the following relevant **Section 6 ‘Matters of national importance’**:

- (d) *the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes, and rivers:*
- (e) *the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga:*
- (f) *the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development.*

In achieving the purpose of this Act, territorial authorities shall have particular regard to the following **Section 7** matters relating to these plan changes —

- (c) *the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values:*
- (f) *maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:*

Further guidance and direction on the way in which resources are to be managed is provided in section 8 of the Act.

1.2.2 Regional Policy Statement

The Act requires District Plan provisions to give effect to the Regional Policy Statement (section 75(3)). The Regional Policy Statement (RPS) is the main vehicle for interpreting and applying the sustainable management requirements of the Act in a local context, and in this regard, guides the development of lower tier plans, including the District Plan.

The Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council (Horizons) combined the Regional Policy Statement and six regional plans into one document called the One Plan. The One Plan became operative on 19 December 2014.

An assessment of whether the provisions of Plan Change 49 (PC49) are consistent with the One Plan is provided in the table below.

Regional One Plan (Operative 19 December 2014)		Proposed Plan Change
Objective	Policy	Evaluation
Objective 6-3: Historic heritage	Policy 6-11: Historic heritage	The Heritage chapter of the District Plan currently provides

Protect historic heritage from activities that would significantly reduce heritage qualities.	The Regional Coastal Plan and district plans must, without limiting the responsibilities of local authorities to address historic heritage under the RMA, include provisions to protect from inappropriate subdivision, use and development historic heritage of national significance, which may include places of special or outstanding heritage value registered as Category 1 historic places, wāhi tapu, and wāhi tapu areas under the Historic Places Act 1993 and give due consideration to the implementation of a management framework for other places of historic heritage.	protection for listed heritage items. PC49 requires new building development to consider the wider context, including how any new buildings will respond to and respect existing listed heritage buildings.
Chapter 6.4.2: Landscapes and natural character	Policy 6-10: Public access to and along rivers^ and lakes^ and their margins Activities within or near rivers^ and lakes^ must be established and operated in a manner which readily provides for public access.	Policy 5.3.7 and Policy 5.3.18 of the Commercial Zone currently give effect to this policy as they encourage access to and along the Whanganui River and the central river margin area. Proposed policy 5.3.10 also links to the policy as it deals with protecting existing and establishing new visual linkages from the town centre to the river.
Objective 9-1: Effects of natural hazard events The adverse effects of natural hazard events on people, property, infrastructure and the wellbeing of communities are avoided or mitigated.	Policy 9-2: Development in areas prone to flooding (b) ...Territorial Authorities must not allow the establishment of any new structure or activity, or an increase in the scale of any existing structure or activity, within an area which would be inundated in a 0.5% AEP (1 in 200 year) flood event unless: (i) flood hazard avoidance* is achieved or the 0.5% AEP (1 in 200 year) flood hazard is mitigated... (d) When making decisions under Policies 9-2(a) and b(i) regarding the appropriateness of proposed flood hazard mitigation measures, the...Territorial Authorities must: (i) ensure that occupied structures have a finished floor or ground level, which includes reasonable freeboard, above the 0.5% AEP (1 in 200 year) flood level. (f) Despite Policy 9-2(d)(i) and (ii), within that part of the Wanganui central city bounded by Bates Street,	Policy 11.3.7 of the Natural Hazards chapter of the District Plan refers to utilisation of alternative flood hazard mitigation techniques within the Arts and Commerce and Riverfront zones and Rule 11.7.1 requires new buildings and additions in both zones to be designed to be 'protected from inundation or be able to recover from inundation.' A section on Flood Hazard Mitigation has been added to the Town Centre Design Guide encouraging people to consult with Horizons for advice on flood depths, velocities and flood levels. This section also refers to 'resilient building design' as an option to be considered in flood hazard areas.

	Ridgway Street and Victoria Avenue, flood hazard mitigation measures will not be limited to considering flood height and flow but will include such methods as resilient construction and emergency management systems.	
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2. PART 1 – PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE

2.1 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The existing Central City Building Design Guidelines (Appendix G of the District Plan) have been in place since 2005. The review of this document has been informed by a number of documents and Council initiatives.

10 Year Plan 2015-2025

The Council has developed the following vision statement and purpose statement to drive Council's strategic direction for the 10-Year-Plan 2015-2025:

<p>WHANGANUI LEADING EDGE</p>  <i>Deeply united</i>  <i>Globally connected</i>  <i>Powered by creative smarts</i>  <i>Flowing with richness</i>  <i>Works for everyone</i>	<p>PURPOSE STATEMENT</p> <p>SUSTAINING the safety and welfare of our community SUPPORTING richness and opportunity through education, lifestyle and commerce PRESERVING our exceptional heritage and infrastructure PROTECTING our environment and awa.</p>
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The statements "flowing with richness" and "preserving our exceptional heritage" are statements relevant to this plan change. Whanganui's town centre has a unique character due to the fact that a very strong collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings remain. Wanganui's concentration of significant heritage buildings is rare in New Zealand and represents an important part of the historic heritage resource of the District.

The Christchurch earthquakes of September 2010 and February 2011 revealed how valuable historic heritage is and how vulnerable many of Wanganui's historic

buildings are.

The importance of Wanganui's built heritage is recognised in the District Plan through the listing and protection of over 100 buildings in the town centre. In addition to the direct value and contribution individual heritage buildings provide, the spaces and places around buildings, including associated buildings have an important part to play. Changes to buildings near to a heritage building, such as the loss of a building(s), replacement or changes to an existing building(s) (including earthquake strengthening), need to be carefully managed.

The existing Central City Building Design Guidelines aim to reinforce key elements of the heritage buildings in the central city. They are currently used by the Council as a way of having an influence over the design of new buildings and alterations to buildings within a defined area of the town centre.

In 2009 the Council updated the Heritage Inventory part of the District Plan to incorporate 48 more heritage items. Given that this inventory has been updated, and further heritage buildings listed, it is important that the Central City Building Design Guidelines are reviewed to ensure that the guidelines take into account any additional listed buildings in the central city.

Recent revitalisation of parts of the Old Town and riverfront and greater pedestrian linkages with the town centre also suggest the guidelines should be expanded to include this area of town.

National Direction

New Zealand Urban Design Protocol

The Whanganui District Council became a signatory to this protocol in 2007. By becoming a signatory the Council agreed to work to raise the standard and quality of the urban design of developments built in the town. An action from the Council's Leading Edge Strategy also says the Council will "commit to the creation of quality urban design by formalising guidelines as a signatory to the Urban Design Protocol." This Plan change seeks to implement the urban design principles contained in the Urban Design Protocol.

2.2 DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS

Discussion with planning staff and a workshop with councillors identified a number of issues currently impacting on the quality of the town centre and outer commercial area. The issues raised formed the bones of a discussion document for each area.

Town Centre Design Guidelines – Discussion Document

The following issues are covered in this document:

- Character and Amenity – *Potential loss of the special character and amenity of the town centre, particularly of the Old Town Area, if new buildings or structures are not designed to be compatible with the quality of the existing built form.*
- Relationship to Context – *New development can be out of context with what exists beyond the site.*
- Active Frontage – *Buildings can lack connection with the street due to a lack of windows and pedestrian entrances to the street.*
- Corner Buildings – *The visual significance of corner buildings on main junctions could be impacted by the lack of protection and guidance for new buildings and structures on street corners.*
- Built Edge – *Opportunities for pedestrian spaces, pocket parks, and linkages may be lost due to the continuous built edge requirement.*
- Cultural Expression – *A lack of Maori influence in the design of Whanganui buildings fails to show the importance of Maori people/culture to Whanganui's identity.*
- Colour and Advertising – *Loss of streetscape amenity and character from inappropriate colour schemes and whole building branding.*
- Lighting – *Pedestrians' feelings of safety may be compromised and opportunities for the design elements of a building to be enhanced may be lost due to a lack of guidance on lighting.*
- Green Building Design – *Opportunities to create buildings in our town centre which incorporate green building design (including being healthier, more energy efficient and more sustainable) could be lost if guidance on green building design is not provided and promoted.*

Outer Commercial Design Guidelines – Discussion Document

The following issues are covered in this document:

- Active Frontage – *Buildings lack connection with the street due to a lack of windows and pedestrian entrances to the street.*
- Materials, Scale and Detail – *The bulk of some buildings, the type of materials, and their lack of building detail can have a negative impact on human scale, character of the area and visual amenity.*
- Car parks – *New buildings which are set back a long way from the footpath by a large car park can reduce streetscape amenity and pedestrian linkages.*

- Relationship to Context – *Lack of consideration for neighbouring buildings and the wider context of the area can result in disharmony in streetscapes.*
- Corner Buildings – *A lack of guidance on corner buildings could mean new buildings and structures on street corner or prominent sites could be lacking design elements which could enhance their position.*
- Green Building Design – *Opportunities to create buildings which incorporate green building design (including being healthier, more energy efficient and more sustainable) could be lost if guidance on green building design is not provided or promoted.*

2.3 CONSULTATION

The following table outlines consultation undertaken in the development of the proposed Plan change.

Date	Who	Comments
5/11/2015	Council staff & Urbanism Plus staff (Inquiry by Design workshop)	Presentation on key elements of draft guidelines to feed into Town Centre Regeneration Project for Whanganui.
2/12/2015	Tupoho Committee members	Presentation to discuss key elements of draft guidelines, acknowledging current building design reflects Whanganui's colonial past. Opportunities exist for designs which reflect Maori culture. Copies of Discussion Document and Draft Guidelines provided.
10/12/2015	Design & Heritage Committee	A presentation to people with design and heritage interests in Whanganui to discuss current issues and key parts of draft guidelines. Supplied copies of Discussion Document and Draft Guidelines prior to meeting.
4/2/2016	Letters to landowners (identified within proposed boundaries of town centre & outer commercial guidelines)	Advising of review of current design guidelines, providing link to Council website for discussion document and draft guidelines. Inviting to attend Open Forum event to answer any questions and provide feedback. Asked for feedback by 25/3/16. Written feedback from Horizons Regional Council and KiwiRail.
4/2/2016	Have your say page & Phase 7 – Shaping	Discussion document and Draft Guidelines posted online.

	Whanganui (District Plan page)	
	Council Website	
18/2/2016	Open Forum (Grand Hotel Whanganui)	Opportunity for landowners to pop-in anytime between 4.30pm and 6.30pm to talk informally about the draft guidelines, discuss the implications for them and ask questions. Provided display boards with key elements of guidelines, photographic examples, and maps of the areas. Eight people attended, largely in support.
25/2/2016	Letter to statutory agencies as required under Clause 3 of RMA (Parliamentary Ministers, neighbouring councils, local iwi groups, Heritage New Zealand)	Advised of review of current design guidelines, provided website links to discussion documents and draft guidelines. Asked for feedback by 25/3/16. No feedback received.
25/2/2016	Letter to architects/draughtsman, building companies	Advised of review of guidelines, provided website links to discussion document and draft guidelines. Asked for feedback by 25/3/16 and offered to arrange a focus group meeting. No feedback received.
2/3/2016	Tamaupoko Link	Presentation to discuss key elements of draft guidelines, acknowledging current building design reflects Whanganui's colonial past. Opportunities exist for designs which reflect Maori culture. Copies of Discussion Document and Draft Guidelines provided.
8/3/2016	Design & Heritage Committee	Attended meeting to hear feedback on draft town centre guidelines. Generally in support, minor changes suggested.
16/3/2016	Local Architects Group	Discussed draft guidelines (focused on town centre) and obtained feedback on specific detail of guidelines.

Feedback from community meetings and affected parties is summarised below:

- More flexibility around provisions.
- Support for Outer Commercial Guidelines only to apply to appearance of new buildings.

- Urban Design Panel – need more than 1 architect on panel for a more balanced view (3 people as minimum). Good to have pool of people to call on. Funding mechanism needed.
- “to support, protect and reinforce key elements of existing built heritage” identified as key to what design guide should be about.
- Dislike copycat of existing heritage buildings – look fake.
- Dislike upper storey windows without anything behind.
- Context seen as very important – building needs to look right in the context that it is in, having respect to the scale and character of their surroundings. Designers should show wider street view in their drawings.
- Balconies – concern may be heavy looking on some buildings, better if extend up to front boundary not over footpath.
- Roofs – don’t think it is necessary to require roofs to be hidden behind parapet.
- Verandah requirement – concern that owners with buildings without verandahs be made to add verandah.
- Articulation – seen as important design element lacking from guidelines.
- Some of the provisions don’t take into account practicalities and functionality of site – Kiwi Rail opposed to new buildings being of similar scale. E.g. new signal building may be significantly smaller than existing buildings, and opposed to the requirement for openings in buildings which are for an industrial purpose where the site doesn’t have public access.
- Clarification around whether car parking is to be altered if a new building is proposed on a site containing existing development.
- Add a new section to the town centre guidelines that is dedicated to ‘resilient building design’.
- Include map of floodable area and advice note encouraging plan users to consult with Horizons with respect to flood depths and velocities, and finished floor level advice.
- Support for planting areas and permeable paving to reduce stormwater run-off from car parking areas.

2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE

- 2.3.1 Proposed Plan Change 49 (Design Guidelines) would remove the existing Central City Building Design Guidelines (Appendix G) and replace them with two new sets of guidelines – Town Centre Design Guidelines and Outer Commercial Design Guidelines.

The area subject to the Town Centre Design Guidelines includes all sites located within the Central Commercial, Riverfront, and Arts and Commerce zones. The Outer Commercial Design Guidelines applies to key streets zoned Outer

Commercial. Refer to Appendix 1 for maps of the two areas.

New objectives and policies are proposed relating specifically to quality building design, establishment and use of an urban Design Panel, verandahs, Maori design and energy efficiency. Amendments are also proposed to existing objectives and policies to strengthen pedestrian linkages and viewshafts in the town centre.

New rules and performance standards for each zone listed above are proposed based on a review of the existing provisions and to give effect to new areas now covered by design guidelines.

- 2.3.2 All existing relevant objectives and policies are included in this report for completeness and are not subject to the Plan change process. The objectives, policies and rules that relate specifically to the design guidelines are open to submission as part of proposed Plan Change.

3. PART 2 – SECTION 32 EVALUATION

3.1 REQUIREMENT TO MAKE AN EVALUATION

The Act requires that when a Council undertakes a plan change it must produce a report evaluating the proposed provisions. This is known as a Section 32 Report. This report contains an evaluation of the proposed Plan change, prepared in accordance with section 32 of the Act (as amended 2013).

The evaluation examines:

- *the extent to which the objectives of the proposal are the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose of the Act (to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources), and*
- *whether, the provisions are the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives by*
 - *identifying other reasonably practicable options for achieving the objectives; and*
 - *assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the provisions in achieving the objectives; and*
 - *summarising the reasons for deciding on the provisions; and*
- *contain a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the environmental, economic, social and cultural effects anticipated from the implementation of the proposal.*

For the purposes of this examination, the evaluation must:

- *Identify and assess the benefits and costs of the environmental, economic, social and cultural effects that are anticipated from the implementation of the provisions including the opportunities for –*

- *economic growth that are anticipated to be provided or reduced; and*
- *employment that are anticipated to be provided or reduced; and*
- *if practicable, quantify the benefits and costs referred to above; and*
- *assess the risk of acting or not acting if there is uncertain or insufficient information about the subject matter of the provisions.*

3.2 CONSIDERATION OF METHODS

3.2.1 While the use of non-regulatory methods such as non-statutory design guidelines, education and information provisions have been taken into account, as a primary option these were not considered to be an appropriate stand-alone option for achieving the objectives of the Plan or the Act. These methods would require strong voluntary buy-in from the development community/building owners and architects. The risk of these methods is that although some quality development will occur, there will be nothing stopping poor quality development.

It is therefore deemed most appropriate to maintain non-regulatory methods as supplementary to regulatory approaches. In investigating the best regulatory method of achieving the objectives of the proposed Plan change, five options were identified and considered.

3.2.2 The options considered are as follows:

Options		Explanation
Option 1	Maintain the status quo – do nothing.	Leave Plan as it is – retain existing Central City Building Design Guidelines.
Option 2	Don't provide any regulation for the design of buildings.	Remove the existing guidelines and enable property owners/developers greater flexibility in the design of new buildings and structures.
Option 3	Develop a set of voluntary guidelines.	Provide guidelines for property owners/developers which offer suggestions for building design but are not enforceable.
Option 3	Develop new design guidelines for town centre only.	Develop a new set of design guidelines for the town centre and address issues identified. Continue to provide no design controls for development in the Outer Commercial zone.
Option 5	Develop two sets of design guidelines – one for town centre and one for outer commercial area.	Develop a new set of design guidelines for the town centre to cover a wider area of town and address issues identified, and also develop a new set of design guidelines for key streets in the Outer Commercial zone.

Each of these identified options is discussed in detail below.

One of the aims of a Section 32 analysis is to identify a preferred approach as being more efficient and effective than other options in achieving the objectives of the Whanganui District Plan and the Act. The benefits and costs of each option are illustrated below.

	Benefits	Costs
Option 1 – Status Quo/ Do Nothing	<p>Least financial cost in processing the Plan change due to less research.</p> <p>Retain familiarity with the existing objectives, policies and rules.</p>	<p>Loss of special character and amenity of parts of the town centre (outside current design guide boundary), particularly of Old Town area, if new buildings and structures are not designed to be compatible with the quality of existing built form.</p> <p>Poor quality design of buildings impacting on amenity value of streetscape in Outer Commercial zone.</p>
Option 2 – Don't provide any regulation for the design of buildings.	<p>Lower costs associated with complying with minimum standards.</p> <p>Greater flexibility and certainty for building development.</p>	<p>Loss of special character and amenity of the town centre if new buildings and structures are not designed to be compatible with the quality of existing built form.</p> <p>Poor quality design of buildings impacting on amenity value of streetscape in Outer Commercial zone.</p>
Option 3 – Provide voluntary design guidelines	<p>Can be implemented without the expense and implementation time of a Plan Change.</p> <p>Provides guidance for developers/building owners and architects on design elements that the Council sees as important.</p>	<p>Guidelines would be optional and non-enforceable.</p> <p>Costs associated with the preparation of the design guide and education on the guide.</p> <p>Poor quality development will still occur, and can negatively impact on the value of built heritage or quality development nearby.</p> <p>Those that invest in good quality development may feel aggrieved that others are not following suit.</p>
Option 4 - Develop new design guidelines for town centre only.	<p>More certainty for developers and building owners on the design of buildings and how applications will be assessed.</p> <p>Re-affirms the value of the existing built heritage by requiring quality buildings</p>	<p>Cost of Plan Change process.</p> <p>Costs associated with applying for resource consent.</p> <p>Some developments may be declined due to not achieving the design requirements.</p>

	<p>which take into account the wider context.</p> <p>Maintaining and enhancing amenity values in the town centre by requiring quality building design.</p>	Poor quality development will still occur in the Outer Commercial zone.
<p>Option 5 - Develop two sets of design guidelines – one for town centre and one for outer commercial area.</p>	<p>More certainty for developers and building owners on the design of buildings and how applications will be assessed.</p> <p>Re-affirms the value of the existing built heritage in the town centre by requiring quality buildings which take into account the wider context.</p> <p>Maintaining and enhancing amenity values in the town centre and Outer Commercial zone by requiring quality building design.</p> <p>Recognition that the outer commercial area is a very different environment from the central city.</p>	<p>Cost of Plan Change process and of drafting two guidelines.</p> <p>Costs associated with applying for resource consent.</p> <p>Some developments may be declined due to not achieving the design requirements.</p>

3.2.3 Analysis of Options

Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo (Do nothing)

Maintaining the status quo would involve the retention of the existing Central City Building Design Guidelines.

The risk of not expanding the area the current guidelines covers to a wider area could result in the loss of the special character and amenity of the town centre, particularly of Old Town, if new buildings and structures are not designed to be compatible with the quality of existing built form.

A lack of design guidance for new buildings in the Outer Commercial zone means there would continue to be no clear direction for developers in terms of what new buildings should look like. The current issue with the characterless form of large format retail buildings would not be addressed.

Given the reasons noted above the status quo is not considered to be the best method available.

Option 2: Don't provide any regulation for the design of buildings.

If Council was to proceed with this option, there would be no control over the design of buildings. This would rely on adhoc consideration and informal negotiation of design quality with developers. Council would have little ability to ensure that the wider community benefits of quality design are achieved. The market would dictate design outcomes. This could result in the loss of the unique character and amenity of the town centre if new buildings and structures are not built to the same quality as the existing built form.

Currently no controls over building design in the Outer Commercial zone are resulting in poor quality design impacting on the amenity value of the area. The current lack of design guidance for developers, building owners and architects means there is no clear direction given on what new buildings should look like.

This option is not considered to be an efficient and effective approach for addressing current and future issues around amenity and would not achieve the statutory purpose of the Act.

Option 3: Provide voluntary design guidelines.

The introduction of voluntary design guidelines means that the guidelines would be unenforceable. They would provide some guidance on the Council's aim in respect to quality design outcomes, however, development could still occur which degrades the quality of the built environment in the town centre and outer commercial area.

Option 3 is therefore not the most efficient or effective approach to follow.

Option 4: Develop new design guidelines for town centre only.

Revising and updating the existing town centre design guidelines and developing performance standards to require adherence to the guidelines would provide certainty to developers on the community's expectations around the quality of new building design and how this will be assessed by Council staff. These guidelines and associated objectives, policies and regulation would effectively address the quality of the built environment in the town centre but fail to give direction to the design of new buildings in the Outer Commercial zone, and poor quality development would likely still occur in this area. For this reason, this option is not considered the best method.

Option 5: Develop distinct design guidelines for the Town Centre and for key streets in the Outer Commercial Zone and associated regulation.

Option 5 strengthens the value of the existing built heritage in the town centre by requiring new buildings to be of high quality. It also provides for a more flexible design approach to the Outer Commercial zone but still aims to maintain or improve amenity values and the quality of the built form in key locations.

This option includes updates to the objectives, policies and rules as well as the introduction of design guidelines and use of a design panel. It ensures that appropriate recognition and consideration of design quality occurs where new buildings, alterations and additions to existing building facades, and major additions visible from Residential zones are proposed in key urban locations.

This option is considered the most effective and efficient approach.

3.2.4 Appropriateness of the Plan Change

Whether or not the Plan change is necessary or appropriate is directly linked to Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Act. This Plan change is considered necessary to achieve the purpose and principles of the Act because it meets the following:

Section 6 ‘Matters of national importance’:

- (f) the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development.*

Section 7 ‘Other matters’:

- (c) the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values:*
- (f) maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:*

The proposed objectives and policies recognise and provide for commercial development which takes into account existing heritage values in the town centre (section 6(f)), and proposes design guidance which has particular regard to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values (section 7(c)) and the quality of the environment (section 7(f)).

3.2.5 Conclusion and Recommended Option

The Council has not relied on any uncertain or insufficient information, but has undertaken research to ensure the subject is adequately understood and recommendations are well founded.

Option 5 and associated strengthening of objectives, policies and rules is recommended because it is considered to be the most efficient and effective way to preserve and enhance the amenity and the quality of the built environment within Whanganui District.

The proposed Plan change is the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose of the Act.

3.3 PROPOSED OBJECTIVES

The proposed Plan change includes amendments to a couple of existing objectives and the introduction of new objectives relating specifically to building design in the Town Centre and parts of the Outer Commercial zone (shown as shaded text). All relevant objectives are also included for completeness but are beyond the scope of this plan change process.

COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- 5.2.1** To ensure that development and activities in the central city area contribute to the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Whanganui community.
- 5.2.3** To ensure that development and activities in the central city area maintain or enhance the high quality amenity of the area.
- 5.2.4** To ensure that development and activities in the central city area reflect the importance of the Whanganui River to Whanganui.
- 5.2.5** To ensure that development and activities in the central city area contribute to the overall safety of the area.
- 5.2.7** To ensure a well-connected town centre, where new development contributes to establishing and maintaining safe, accessible, pleasant to use pedestrian linkages ~~that the key areas in the central city are well connected.~~

Comment	These objectives recognise how the built environment has an impact on the look and feel of the town. The changes proposed to Objective 5.2.7 acknowledge the importance of pedestrian linkages and the need to maintain existing linkages as well as require new development to establish further linkages.
Summary of benefits	<p>The amended objective will strengthen existing pedestrian pathways and ensure they are retained in future development and provides assurance that the design will be safe, accessible and pleasant to use.</p> <p>The changes to the Plan promoted by PC49 will provide Council and the community with greater clarity about what quality design is for new buildings in Whanganui and greater ability to influence design and achieve quality design outcomes. This is the key benefit of the Plan change.</p> <p>Consent processes would likely be more streamlined and where proposals adhere to the design guidance or design panel recommendations then the consent process should be simplified and more certain.</p>
Summary of costs	<p>Minor costs associated with provision and maintenance of pedestrian pathways.</p> <p>Consent processes will potentially be more onerous and costly for applicants who choose not to adhere to the</p>

	design guidance. Risk of such consents being declined will be greater.
Effectiveness	<p>The modified objective is effective as it provides greater clarity by spelling out that the connections relate to pedestrian pathways.</p> <p>PC49 will provide much greater scope for existing objectives to be fully achieved, where quality design and location of buildings is a factor. It is a highly effective approach.</p>
Efficiency	<p>Modifying objective 5.2.7 is efficient as greater clarity will support more informed decision making.</p> <p>PC49 will provide much greater scope for existing objectives to be fully achieved, where quality design and location of buildings is a factor. It is a highly efficient approach as it will provide real clarity about what the community expectations are about what quality design is for new buildings in Whanganui and greater ability to influence design and achieve quality design outcomes.</p>
Appropriateness	<p>The amended objective is appropriate as it recognises the importance of pedestrian pathways providing linkages in the town centre.</p> <p>PC45 is an appropriate way to achieve the objectives of the Plan in relation to the design quality of new and significantly altered commercial buildings.</p>
Risk of acting or not acting if there is uncertain or insufficient information about the subject matter of the policies, rules, or other methods	<p>The modified objective is considered necessary to demonstrate that the Council is encouraging pedestrian movement and linkages.</p> <p>PC45 is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Plan in relation to the design quality of new and significantly altered commercial buildings. There is no uncertainty or lack of information available that would create risks of acting.</p>

<p>5.2.11 To ensure high quality building design in the town centre, which reflects those physical, cultural and heritage characteristics of the surrounding environment most valued by our community.</p>	
<p>5.2.12 To ensure quality building design outcomes in the Outer Commercial Design Guide Overlay with buildings exhibiting active frontages and visual interest in street facades.</p>	
Comment	These objectives recognise that the quality of buildings and structures can have a positive or negative effect on

	the character, amenity values and quality of the environment.
Summary of benefits	<p>Improved building quality in a wider area of the town centre and the Outer Commercial zone. Provides greater clarity about what the community expectations are around quality design for new buildings in Whanganui and greater ability to influence design and achieve quality design outcomes.</p> <p>Any increased construction or design costs to achieve a higher quality design could potentially be mitigated by developers having clarity about criteria for success from the start of any project. Thus before starting a project these costs will be factored in.</p>
Summary of costs	Costs to developers to provide higher quality buildings, and to apply for resource consent applications. Processing costs to Council for additional resource consent applications. Funding costs for an Urban Design Panel to operate.
Effectiveness and Efficiency	The new objectives are effective and efficient as they allow the Council to prioritise and enforce urban design matters and they provide improved understanding of matters of importance with respect to building design.
Appropriateness	The proposed objectives are responsive to the understanding that building design is an important factor which impacts on the character, amenity values and quality of the environment. Given the quality built environment that exists in the town centre it is appropriate for new development to reflect these characteristics.
Risk of acting or not acting if there is uncertain or insufficient information about the subject matter of the policies, rules, or other methods	It is important for the Council to demonstrate that it is managing the design of new buildings so that they have a positive impact on the character, amenity values and quality of the environment in accordance with the requirements of the Act. There is no uncertainty or lack of information available that would create risks of acting.

3.4

PROPOSED POLICIES

5.3.6	<p>To encourage pedestrian movement in the town centre central city area by retaining and enhancing existing pedestrian access lanes, and promoting new thoroughfares in locations that enhance walkability for pedestrians, and strengthen connections, particularly between:</p> <p>a) <u>Victoria Avenue and:</u></p> <p>i. <u>parallel streets and other off-street parking areas</u></p> <p>ii. <u>Trafalgar Square</u></p>
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iii. Papatuhou / Cooks Gardens

iv. Pukenamu / Queens Park;

b) the Old Town and:

i. Pukenamu / Queens Park

ii. Pakaitore / Moutoa Gardens

iii. the Riverfront and the Whanganui River.

5.3.7 Encourage access to and along the Whanganui River and river banks.

5.3.8 Incorporate urban design principles in all development.

5.3.9 Incorporate crime prevention through environmental design principles in all development.

5.3.10 Protect existing visual linkages (including identified viewshafts) and establish new visual linkages, where practicable, between the town centre and ~~Connect the central commercial area,~~ the riverfront, the Whanganui River, Pukenamu / Queens Park, Papatuhou / Cooks Gardens, Pakaitore / Moutoa Gardens and Trafalgar Square.

5.3.19 To require high quality design outcomes within the town centre which adhere to the Whanganui Town Centre Design Guidelines, in particular, new development and additions or alterations to existing buildings are expected to:

- a) Acknowledge, and respond to, the context of the site and the surrounding environment.
- b) Create visual interest and be in keeping with streetscape values.
- c) Address cultural and built heritage values and design elements.
- d) Create a vibrant, active pedestrian environment of human scale.
- e) Incorporate new and innovative design.
- f) Take into account sustainable building design and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

5.3.20 To promote quality design outcomes in the Outer Commercial Design Guide Overlay by requiring adherence to the Outer Commercial Design Guidelines, in particular, new development is expected to:

- a) Acknowledge, and respond to, the context of the site and the surrounding environment.
- b) Ensure the bulk, form and siting of new buildings maintains and enhances the quality of the environment.
- c) Provide a quality street frontage with visual interest and connection with the street.

	d) Ensure visual effects from car parking areas are avoided or mitigated.
5.3.21	<p>To promote best practice urban design by requiring development proposals to be endorsed by an Urban Design Panel. The Panel will critique design elements and adherence to the Council's design guidelines and make recommendations to Council, if required. Triggers for referral to the panel include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) New buildings and alterations/additions to buildings within the Town Centre Design Guide Overlay; b) New buildings visible from a public space or Residential zone within the Outer Commercial Design Guide Overlay; c) Alterations and additions to the façade of buildings within the Outer Commercial Design Guide Overlay; d) Additions to buildings within the Outer Commercial zone visible from a Residential zone where the addition is greater than 20% of the gross floor area of the existing building.
5.3.22	To require that new buildings or alterations/additions to the front façade of existing buildings on Display Frontage Streets be provided with a verandah appropriately designed and maintained to achieve pedestrian shelter.
5.3.23	To provide for and enable the inclusion of elements of Maori culture in the design of buildings and structures in the town centre, in particular, to recognise and reflect the importance of Te Awa / the Whanganui River.
5.3.24	To encourage use of energy efficient systems and products and other environmentally sustainable elements in new building and development.
Comment	These policies recognise that the design of new buildings and alterations/additions to existing buildings impact on the quality of the built environment. Where policies have been altered it is to give certain aspects greater strength and improve their clarity.
Benefits	<p>The increase in specific policies relating to building design provides greater understanding of the matters the Council considers important and will allow for better guidance when considering applications. The proposed policies will also result in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality building design which fits with its context • Maori design/culture being reflected in building design

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater awareness and use of energy efficient building products and systems. <p>Collectively this will assist developers to design appropriately first time, saving them time and costs and enable a positive design outcome which has universal economic social and cultural benefits.</p>
Costs	Costs to developers of applying for resource consent. Costs to Council for processing of consent applications and establishment of Urban Design Panel.
Effectiveness and Efficiency	These policies are effective as they create more precise guidance for decision makers. The policy relating to the establishment of an Urban Design Panel should provide efficiencies for developers as it allows any issues to be dealt with at an early stage.
Appropriateness	These policies are appropriate as they create more precise guidance for decision makers. They are in accordance with the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol and align with other local authorities. The introduction of a policy relating to verandahs is seen as appropriate to strengthen existing rules around verandahs.
Risk of acting or not acting if there is uncertain or insufficient information about the subject matter of the policies, rules, or other methods	Council considers there is sufficient information regarding the subject matter of the above policies. The risks of not establishing a policy framework relating specifically to building design can potentially result in poor quality design outcomes, and lack of direction to developers.

3.5

PROPOSED RULES/GUIDELINES

The following methods have been identified as being suitable for achieving the relevant objectives and policies outlined above.

3.5.1

Rules/Guidelines

A review of the existing rules and current Building Design Guidelines (Appendix G) was completed. The proposed rules/guidelines, and amendments to relevant Planning Maps are considered the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives and purpose of the Act. The proposed amendments to the rules, and new design guidelines are attached as Appendix 2.

Comment	New design guidelines are proposed to replace the existing guidelines and new design guidelines are proposed for parts of the Outer Commercial zone. New rules are proposed to be added to various zones where the design guidelines apply. Existing rules are proposed to be amended to reflect current practices in terms of activity status (change from controlled to restricted discretionary). Amendments to the relevant Planning Maps are also proposed to show the
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	boundaries of the Town Centre Design Guidelines and Outer Commercial Design Guidelines.
Benefits	<p>Environmental – New buildings and alterations/additions to reflect the design elements of heritage buildings and not dominate adjoining heritage buildings. Protect and enhance visual linkages between town centre and riverfront, and reserve areas.</p> <p>Economic – Potential benefits in terms of increased property values from quality development. Flow on effects in terms of tourism, and investment in local economy as a result of high levels of amenity. Consent processes will be more targeted and clearer, minimising wasted effort on the part of both applicant and council.</p> <p>Social & Cultural – People feel a greater sense of wellbeing and connection with places due to the quality of the built environment. Encouragement of Maori design/culture to be reflected in building design can enhance feelings of belonging and offers chance for increased awareness and understanding of Maori culture/history.</p>
Costs	<p>Environmental – None identified.</p> <p>Economic – Minimal in town centre as resource consents are needed currently for development in the Central Commercial zone and the Old Town. Resource consent costs for developers in Outer Commercial zone for new buildings as consents will now be required.</p>
Effectiveness	The proposed rules will be an effective method to achieve the relevant objectives because the benefits identified above far outweigh the costs. Rules are targeted to manage the effects of building design and activities are only restricted where necessary to achieve objectives and purpose of the Act.
Efficiency	The Plan change is efficient as the small cost of the review has developed and updated the provisions to more appropriately manage adverse effects and achieve objectives. Amending the Planning Maps to show new Overlays where the design guidelines will apply is the simplest and clearest way to identify properties that are affected.
Appropriateness	<p>The rules, in conjunction with the design guidelines are considered appropriate as they allow for new buildings while ensuring that environmental effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated.</p> <p>Applying the Town Centre Design Guidelines to the area identified on the Planning Maps as 'Town Centre Design Guide Overlay' is considered appropriate based on the number of listed heritage buildings in the area, the quality of the streetscape and the high level of amenity.</p>

	Applying the Outer Commercial Design Guidelines to key streets within the Outer Commercial zone on the Planning Maps is considered appropriate given the area's proximity to the centre of town, and the fact that sites chosen are on main thoroughfares. This is also the place where developers look to establish large format retail and these buildings are often criticised as being "box-like" buildings with little design appeal.
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3.7 PROPOSED ANCILLARY CHANGES

The following ancillary changes are proposed to the Plan as a result of this plan change (see Appendix 3 for text changes):

- Amendments to the Cultural Heritage Chapter (Chapter 9) and the Signage Chapter (Chapter 16) to update references to the existing Design Guidelines.
- Add the definition of "active frontage" to the Definitions section. This term is used in the Riverfront zone and is relevant to the design guidelines, however, no current definition is provided. This addition of this definition helps to add clarity for plan users.

The changes have been identified as being suitable for achieving the relevant objectives and policies outlined above.

3.8 CONCLUSION

PC49 (Design Guidelines) proposes to remove the existing Central City Building Design Guidelines (Appendix G) and replace them with two new sets of guidelines – Town Centre Design Guidelines and Outer Commercial Design Guidelines. The Whanganui District Council is satisfied that the new objectives, policies, rules and design guidelines are the most appropriate, efficient and effective means available to Council to preserve and enhance the amenity and the quality of the built environment within Whanganui District in accordance with the purpose of the RMA.