

**BEFORE THE HEARING COMMISSIONER APPOINTED BY WEST COAST REGIONAL
COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource management Act 1991 (the Act)

AND

IN THE MATTER of the West Coast Regional Council proposed Te Tai o
Poutini Plan Review – Appendix Three: Design Guidelines
- Te Āpitianga Tuatoru: Ngā Aratohu Hoahoa

**Statement of evidence of Alicia Caitlin Lawrie
Dated 7 May 2024**

MAY IT PLEASE THE INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Alicia Caitlin Lawrie. I am an Urban Designer at Barker and Associates Limited ('B&A') a planning and urban design consultancy with offices across New Zealand. I am based in the Wellington office, but was previously based in the Whangārei office.
2. I hold a Masters of Architecture (Professional) and a Bachelor of Architectural Studies from the Victoria University of Wellington. I am an associate member of the New Zealand Planning Institute and a member of the New Zealand Urban Design Forum.
3. I have approximately eight years' experience working in the field of urban design, gained in both the public and private sector in New Zealand. Of particular relevance to the matters that will be covered in my evidence, I have or have been a member of project teams for:
 - (a) The development of Whangārei District Council's Urban Design Guidelines for Residential Development and Urban Design Guidelines for Commercial Development.
 - (b) The development of Rotorua Lakes Council's Rotorua Intensification Design Guide.
 - (c) Northland urban design peer reviews, specifically acting as a consultant urban designer reviewing resource consent applications for a range of residential and commercial schemes on behalf of the Whangārei District Council and Kaipara District Council.
 - (d) Urban design lead providing urban design advice and urban design assessments for numerous residential and commercial schemes across Northland and New Zealand.

4. Since 2022, I have been employed as a Senior Urban Designer at B&A. In my current role, I am regularly involved in the preparation of urban design assessments to support resource consent applications. I provide up-front urban design input and advice into a wide range of development schemes for private clients and assess these against best practice urban design. I also regularly provide urban design advice and peer reviews to Whangārei District Council on various resource consent applications. Prior to my employment at B&A, I worked for 6 years in various Urban Design roles at Whangārei District Council. Within these roles I provided urban design advice on various resource consent applications, advised on urban design matters related to policy and plan changes and lead strategic and spatial planning projects for the Whangārei City Centre and rural and urban communities.

5. Although this is not a hearing before the Environment Court, I record that I have read and agree to and abide by the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses as specified in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2023. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I rely upon the evidence of other expert witnesses as presented to this hearing. I have not omitted to consider any material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

6. I have provided urban design evidence and completed a technical review of Appendix Three: Design Guidelines - Te Āpitianga Tuatoru: Ngā Aratohu Hoahoa (**'Design Guidelines'**) of the West Coast Regional Council proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan (**'pTTPP'**) in response to submissions. I have not visited the sites to which the submissions relate, and my evidence is focussed to matters in relation to the useability of the Design Guidelines and achieving recognised best practice.

7. The Design Guidelines referred to in my evidence include the Greymouth/Māwhera Town Centre and Mixed-Use Zone Urban Design

Guidelines (**'Greymouth Design Guidelines'**), Hokitika Town Centre Urban Design Guidelines (**'Hokitika Design Guidelines'**), Reefton Heritage Town Design Guidelines (**'Reefton Design Guidelines'**) and Westport/Kawatiri Town Centre and Mixed Use Zone Urban Design Guidelines (**'Westport Design Guidelines'**). My evidence excludes the Medium Density Housing Design Guidelines which are also in Appendix Three of the pTTPP.

8. My assessment is based on the following documents which are relevant to the submission points provided:
 - (a) Appendix Three:
 - (i) Greymouth Design Guidelines;
 - (ii) Hokitika Design Guidelines;
 - (iii) Reefton Design Guidelines;
 - (iv) Westport Design Guidelines.
 - (b) The relevant provisions of the pTTPP, including Mixed Use Zone - Te Taikiwā Hanum (**'MUZ'**) and Town Centre Zone - Te Takiwā o te Pokapū o te Tāone (**'TCZ'**). I have also reviewed the Historical and Cultural Values Chapter (**'HCV'**).
 - (c) The relevant submissions related to the Design Guidelines.

9. My evidence will address the following:
 - (a) pTTPP Context
 - (b) Responses to matters raised by submitters
 - (c) Conclusion

PTTPP CONTEXT

10. It is my understanding that the pTTPP, is a combined District Plan proposed for the Buller, Grey and Westland District Councils. It will replace the existing individual District Plans for each of these councils.
11. The pTTPP includes four sets of Design Guidelines within Appendix Three for the town centre and mixed use zones. One set of Design Guidelines for each of the four main centres of Greymouth/Mawhera, Hokitika,

Reefton, and Westport/Kawatiri. How these guidelines are referenced throughout the plan varies:

- (a) The Design Guidelines are referred to in the Commercial and Mixed Use Zones Objectives and Policies Chapter in policies CMUZ-PREC1-P3, CMUZ-PREC1-P5, CMUZ-PREC2-P7 and CMUZ-PREC4 – P14.
 - (b) The MUZ and the TCZ chapters refer to Design Guidelines within each chapter overview, stating the purpose of the Design Guidelines are to ensure that new building development in the town centres is of a high standard and that it enhances the characteristics and qualities that contribute to each town centre's unique sense of place.
 - (c) The Design Guidelines are directly referred to in the TCZ, as either a rule (TCZ-R2.5; TCZ- R5.5) in the case of the Hokitika Design Guidelines and Reefton Design Guidelines; or as an advice note (TCZ-R3, Advice Note 2; TCZ-R4, Advice Note 2) in the case of the Greymouth and Westport Design Guidelines; or as a matter of discretion (TCZ-R13 (c.)). As drafted TCZ-R2.5 and TCZ-R5.5 require new buildings and additions and alterations to any main street frontage façade to demonstrate compliance that they meet the Hokitika and Reefton Design Guidelines. Failure to demonstrate compliance with these guidelines trigger the need to apply for non-complying resource consent. As drafted, if relocated buildings do not comply with TCZ-R13, discretion is restricted to the extent to which the building meets any relevant Town Centre Design Guidelines. Advice notes within TCZ-R3 and TCZ-R4 do not change the assessment of permitted activities nor trigger resource consent.
12. The pTTPP was publicly notified on 14th July 2022. There was a total of 534 submissions on the plan with over 15,000 submission points received. As noted in paragraph 6 of my evidence, I was asked to review the 16 submissions received on the Design Guidelines. 12 submissions

were for specific Design Guidelines (three for Greymouth Design Guidelines, two for Hokitika Design Guidelines, one for Reefton Design Guidelines and five for Westport Design Guidelines); and four submissions referenced all of the Design Guidelines (Appendix Three).

RESPONSE TO MATTERS RAISED BY SUBMITTERS

13. I have reviewed the 16 submission points pertaining to the Design Guidelines. Four of which are in opposition, four which support the Design Guidelines as written, and eight which have put forward amendments. The following relevant issues have been raised:
- (a) Implementation of Design Guidelines
 - (b) Colour and colour application
 - (c) Alternative urban design methods
 - (d) Other matters
14. I have not responded to The Proprietors of Mawhera Tiamana Mawhera Incorporation submission (S621.032) as this submission point seeks to delete 2.1 Context – paragraph 1, 2 & 4; and 2.2 Guidelines - IW1, IW2, IW5, IW6 and IW7. No reasoning for the deletion has been provided from an urban design perspective.

Implementation of Design Guidelines

15. In my experience, Design Guidelines are best referenced in District Plans as matters of discretion or as advice notes. This is because urban design is outcome focused, and there are multiple methods that can be applied to a development to achieve good design outcomes. These methods can also vary depending on the development site and context, activity and scale. In my opinion, including urban Design Guidelines and principles in a District Plan as advice notes and/or through the matters of discretion can positively influence the design of new development while providing flexibility as to how the guidelines can be used, interpreted and applied. I consider that, including the guidelines as rules in the plan may better

support decision making within a resource consent process. However, compliance will limit creativity and flexibility as to how design outcomes can be achieved as well as restrict how the guidelines can be written.

16. In my assessment of the Design Guidelines as notified, I consider there to be inconsistent language across all four documents. Some of the Design Guidelines that are considered rules within the pTTPP are ambiguous and open to interpretation. For example, the Hokitika Design Guidelines includes *“GF11 Outdoor dining areas – these are encouraged on footpaths adjoining buildings within the town centre to give vitality and encourage occupation of the street,”* and *“GC1 – complement the existing built context with visual links through similarity of overall bulk and form.”* Other Design Guidelines that are considered advice notes are written with more ridged language that could be interpreted as rules requiring strict compliance. For example, the Greymouth Design Guidelines includes *“BF1 Mass/Scale – New buildings shall relate to the scale of adjacent buildings,”* and *“GF2 Visual Permeability - fully glazed facades will not be permitted unless there are vertical solid breaks at frequent intervals.”*
17. I also note that there are contradicting statements within the Design Guidelines. For example, the Hokitika guidelines includes *“BF1 Mass/Scale - Where a building over three stories is proposed, the section above three stories should be stepped back from the line of view from the street,”* and *“BF2 Location to front – Buildings are to be positioned so their front walls abut the (footpath) boundary.”* These two guidelines are inconsistent and could cause interpretation issues when it comes to enforcing the Design Guidelines as a rule.
18. As previously noted, the Design Guidelines are inconsistently referenced in the pTTPP. I support the change of all the Design Guidelines to be referenced in the plan as advice notes rather than rules. I consider that it will be difficult for an applicant to demonstrate compliance with the

Design Guidelines as a rule and that referencing the Design Guidelines as an advice note is a more appropriate approach.

19. I also support the change of the Hokitika and Reefton Design Guidelines to advice notes rather than rules to ensure consistency with the Greymouth Design Guidelines and the Westport Design Guidelines. From a practitioner's point of view, a consistent approach and application to Design Guidelines is that it provides more certainty as to how they will be applied.

Colour and Colour Application

20. This section covers the following submission points:
- (a) Robert Burdekin (S378.008), and Joanne and Ken Dixon (S213.002) oppose the Westport Design Guidelines, indicating that building owners and businesses should be able to determine their own building colour;
 - (b) Kirsty Dittmer (S412.001) and Grey District Council (S608.483), seek amendments to the colour guidelines within the Greymouth Design Guidelines. This is due to colour guidelines being too restrictive and can potentially be construed as regulation;
 - (c) Jan and Heward (S353.002) seek amendments to all Design Guideline's to remove the limitations on the range of colours; and,
 - (d) Richard Arlidge (S419.006) seeks amendments to all Design Guideline's. The suggested amendment is the development of a Tai o Poutini/West Coast indigenous colour palette to incorporate into the Design Guidelines.
21. The common issue raised within the above submissions noted is that applying particular colour controls to a building is too restrictive.
22. The Greymouth Westport and Hokitika Design Guidelines include a specific guideline on colour (GF8 within Greymouth and Westport Design Guidelines and GF7 within Hokitika Design Guidelines). The Guideline

informs the application of colour on a building, as well as applies limitations on what colours should be used. Specifically:

- (a) Building colours should highlight features such as joinery, decoration or repetition of the building form;
- (b) Side and rear walls should be painted the same colours as the building's main facade;
- (c) Painting the whole building one block colour as a "sign" to brand the building is not acceptable;
- (d) Use colours that are consistent with the existing range of colours in the town centre. Within the Greymouth Design Guidelines, this continues to say, "*and be consistent with the Pounamu and Māori Heritage colour palette developed as part of the CBD Redevelopment Plan;*" and
- (e) Bright colours designed to call attention to the building are not acceptable.

23. The Reefton Design Guidelines are structured differently to the other three Design Guideline documents. This document includes guidelines on colour in the context of 'Historic buildings,' 'Contributory Buildings,' and 'New Single Storied Buildings.' In general, these include:

- (a) Guidelines on the restoration of original colour schemes (with particular reference to the Resene and Aalto Heritage colours for the period pre – 1920). This is included in the guidelines for repairs, maintenance, restoration and reconstruction as well as additions to 'Historic buildings,' and 'Contributory Buildings,' and guidelines on 'New Single Storied Buildings.'; and
- (b) Guidelines on additions to Historic and Contributory Buildings which states that when making additions, these should "*not contrast harshly*" within the original building colours.

24. As previously noted in paragraph 18 of my evidence, there are contradictions in the Design Guidelines as notified, including the guidelines around colour. For example, the Greymouth, Westport and

Hokitika Design Guidelines state that *“side and rear walls should be painted the same colours as the building’s main façade”*. It also states that *“painting the whole building one block colour is not acceptable.”* These statements are inconsistent and in the case of the Hokitika Design Guidelines, difficult to comply with as they are written into the pTTPP as a rule.

25. Further, I consider the implementation of a particular colour scheme will be difficult to achieve. In the case of Hokitika and Reefton, colour restrictions will also be difficult to enforce through a resource consent process. Compliance will only be triggered by a new development, significant alteration to an existing building or alterations to building façades in identified locations. However, outside of this process, landowners are able to paint their buildings at any time and with any colour without requiring a resource consent.
26. In my opinion, colour is subjective. What is more important in urban design is the application of colour rather than what colours are used within a building. Variation of colour, materials and/or textures within a building can be used to achieve contrast and highlight particularly features and parts of a building. This will create visual interest which will assist in establishing engaging building frontages. These are important design outcomes for town centres and mixed-use environments. Further, this is an outcome being sought within the TCZ and MUZ. The chapters state that *“public spaces and the interaction between individual buildings and the public pedestrian environment, will strongly influence the attractiveness of the TCZ and MUZ”*.
27. I recommend any reference to colour restrictions within the Design Guidelines be amended as below:
 - (a) **Material and Colour** – use materials, texture and colour to highlight the building’s form and details such as joinery, decoration or repetition of the building form.

Alternative Urban Design Methods

28. This matter covers submission points raised by Foodstuffs (South Island) Properties Limited and Foodstuffs South Island Limited (S464.003, S464.053, S464.054, S464.055). Foodstuffs have raised concerns that the Design Guidelines are not relevant to activities such as supermarkets, which have additional or different operational and functional needs. They submit that other urban design methods can be applied to achieve good quality design outcomes.
29. I disagree that supermarkets should be exempt from the guidelines. In my opinion large-format building typologies, such as supermarkets could have adverse urban design effects on the surrounding context in the form of bulk and scale effects and limited opportunities for activation and engagement with the street. Applicants should be able to demonstrate how certain good design principles are being used to achieve the same or similar outcomes sought within Design Guidelines for such developments, while recognising their operational requirements.
30. From an urban design perspective, there are multiple design methods and principles that can be applied to the design of a building to achieve good outcomes. A good example of this is frontages which engage with the public realm. Buildings which contain large windows that allow views in and out of the building, are built up to the street edge to create a strong building line, and have strong front entrances which face the street will create the greatest opportunities for visual engagement and activity. However, this is not always a practical solution. Therefore, I acknowledge other methods could be applied to create visual engagement between the building and the street. These could include:
 - (a) Designing the façade and boundary treatment to create visual interest and support the pedestrian experience.
 - (b) Establishing other active functions at the edge of the public realm such as outdoor dining or key walking routes.

(c) Creating alternative opportunities for passive surveillance from the building and the surrounding environment.

31. In my view, the Design Guidelines should acknowledge alternative design approaches. This can be achieved by amending all the Design Guidelines so they are advice notes rather than rules. This will allow alternative design approaches to be explored for better design outcomes relevant to the activity, site and context.

Other matters

32. Kirsty Dittmer (S412.001) has raised particular issues around the restrictiveness of the Greymouth Design Guidelines as well as requested changes to improve clarity and readability of the Greymouth Design Guidelines.

33. I agree in part with some of the changes requested, particularly those to do with the readability of the Greymouth Design Guidelines. This includes minor amendments to guideline IW6 in the Greymouth Design Guidelines. I note that the submissions from Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, Te Runanga o Ngati Waewae, Te runanga o Makaawhio (S620.385, S620.386, S620.387) seeks to retain the Design Guidelines for cultural landscapes as notified. This is because they help to balance the colonial and Ngāi Tahu history to the community. I have recommended changes to IW6 to clarify the interpretation of the guideline (based on submission point S412.001). In my opinion, this does not change the intent of IW6 as notified.

34. Kirsty Dittmer (S412.001) also raised particular issues around the restrictiveness of the Greymouth Design Guidelines. This was with particular reference to guidelines around height (BF4), symmetry (GF1 & GF5), glazing (GF2), activity/activation (GF3), verandahs (GF6) and the heritage character of Mackay Street and Māwhera Quay (GL1).

35. I disagree with the submitter (S412.001) who requested amendments aimed at reducing the restrictiveness of particular guidelines. The

changes noted below are good urban design principles which can be used to achieve good design outcomes. I make the following comments from an urban design perspective:

- (a) BF4 – Taller buildings will create opportunities for a visually interesting facade and create a stronger and more defined street edge. The request to remove reference to buildings being two stories or greater in height, contradicts the TCZ controls which state an activity is permitted if the maximum height above ground level is 20 metres.
- (b) GF1 & GF5 – Symmetry within the façade created through rhythm and repetition can achieve visual interest and engagement between the building and public realm. This urban design principle is noted upfront in the Greymouth Design Guidelines as a contributing factor to the character of the town¹.
- (c) GF2 – As noted in paragraph 27 of my evidence, buildings with large windows/glazing allow views in and out the building. This creates visual engagement and activation between a building and public realm. They also create greater opportunities for passive surveillance between the building and the street. Blocking views with treatments such as opaque glass will not achieve the same design outcome. I also note that this directly links to the Main Street Frontage controls within the TCZ.
- (d) GF3 – Having active uses, such as retail spaces, cafes or reception areas at ground floor will create opportunities for activity as well as passive surveillance.
- (e) GF6 – Verandahs contribute to the architectural character and continuity of the street edge. They are also considered a key feature in the Greymouth Town Centre² and are subject to controls under the TCZ and MUZ. Placing structures or signs on

¹ Greymouth/Māwhera Town Centre and Mixed Use Zone Urban Design Guidelines. 2.1 Context – Existing Built Character.

top of a verandah could visually obscure or dominate a building's architectural features, and therefore, should be discouraged.

36. The matters outlined above are considered good urban design principles that can be used within a building design to achieve good design outcomes. An amendment to guideline GL1 Mackay and Māwhera Quay was also requested. I note that the corner of Mackay Street and Māwhera Quay contain scheduled Historic Heritage items which have Architectural values (HH70, HH75, HH79 & HH69). This character is referenced in GL1. As the Greymouth Design Guidelines are advice notes rather than rules within the pTTPP, I consider acknowledgement of the heritage character of this area is not too restrictive. Further, as the Design Guidelines are included in the pTTPP as advice notes combined with the policy direction, I consider them to be not too restrictive and instead encourage best practice urban design principles to achieve good design outcomes.

CONCLUSION

37. I have reviewed the submissions with respect to the Design Guidelines. In general, I consider that the key urban design issues raised by submitters have been largely addressed in the further amendments proposed to the provisions. I consider the majority of the issues raised will be addressed through the change of Hokitika and Reefton Design Guidelines from rules to advice notes.
38. I have reviewed the S42A recommendations and agree with the proposed changes and consider that they will improve the workability and useability of these guidelines.

Alicia Lawrie

Dated 7 May 2024