

## **Proposed New Community Hub and Apartments**

21 December 2017

### **7A Britannia Street, Petone For Urban Plus and Hutt City Council**

We have been engaged by Urban Plus to undertake a preliminary concept and feasibility study for the provision of a new mixed-use facility incorporating a new Community Hub with residential apartments.

The existing building on the site that houses the Petone Library and general commercial is at the end of its viable life cycle. As Petone has evolved in recent years there has been a large growth of the local community. This is an opportunity to contribute to this growing community whilst adding much needed dwellings to the portfolio of Urban Plus.

The idea of this concept feasibility is to undertake a robust exploration into the opportunity this site presents. It explores why this site is fit for purpose, what yield options exist, and fundamental thinking around how this will work. This provides a sound basis to progress to a wider stakeholder engagement process to further develop the project.

#### **Location**



*Figure 1: Site location plan*

The location of the site offers many opportunities. It is well located for both people traveling by foot or those via public transport. This is important for the success of the building. Located just off the centre of Jackson St it is easily accessible to all types of people.

The site has a great outlook over Britannia St and receives good all day sun. This ensures both the community hub and the apartments get good daylight, sunlight, have an appealing outlook and high overall levels of general living amenity.

### **Benefits of mixed use developments**

The apartments and community hub work in tandem. The apartment tenants passively survey the community hub as they go about daily routine, and the community hub offers an active ground level providing a safe entry to the apartments.

The tenants also have the opportunity to use the Hub. The more frequently used the Community Hub is the more successful it will be. Ensuring it is well utilised is imperative to its success. Combining mixed use in this manner is an efficient use of the valuable commodity – developable land in an existing urban area.

### **Proposed and Considered Design Elements**

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#### **Scale and Form**

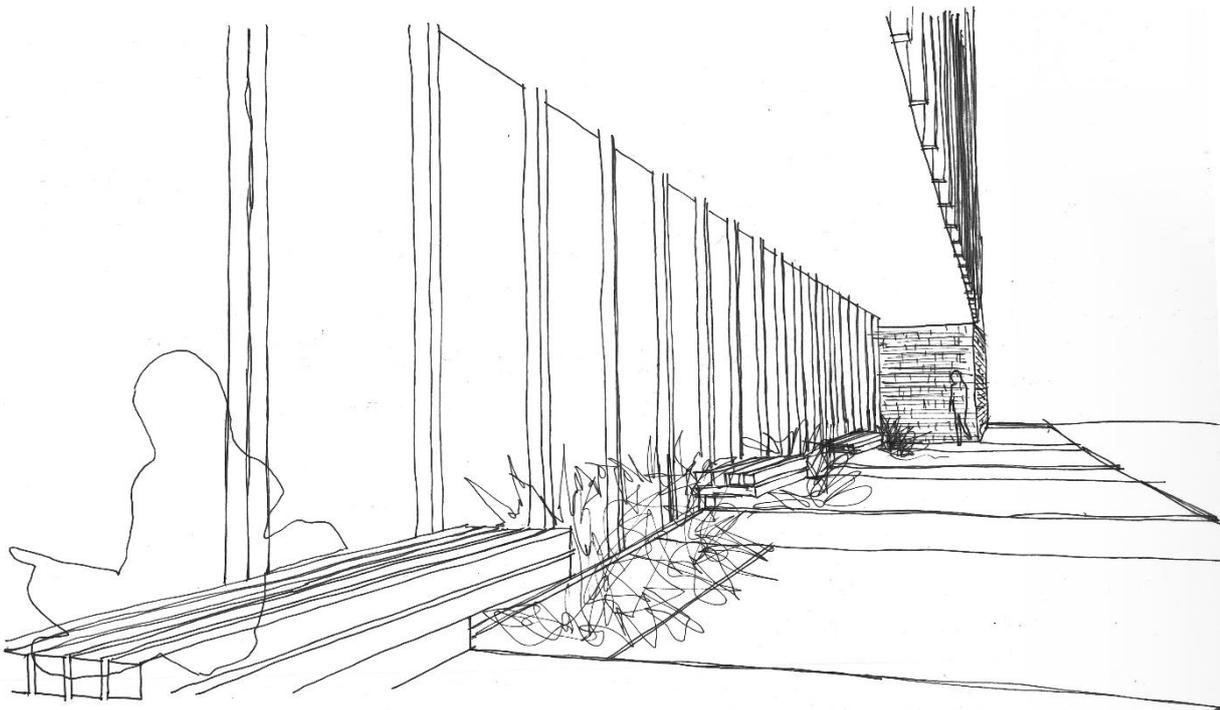
Overall it is proposed to create a three storey building comprising the ground floor Community Hub, with two stories of residential apartments above. The three storey form is consistent with the proposed and anticipated building heights for the Jackson Street precinct of Petone. The site is surrounded typically by two and three storey buildings.



*Figure 2: Concept Sketch of Proposed Britannia Street Scale and Form*

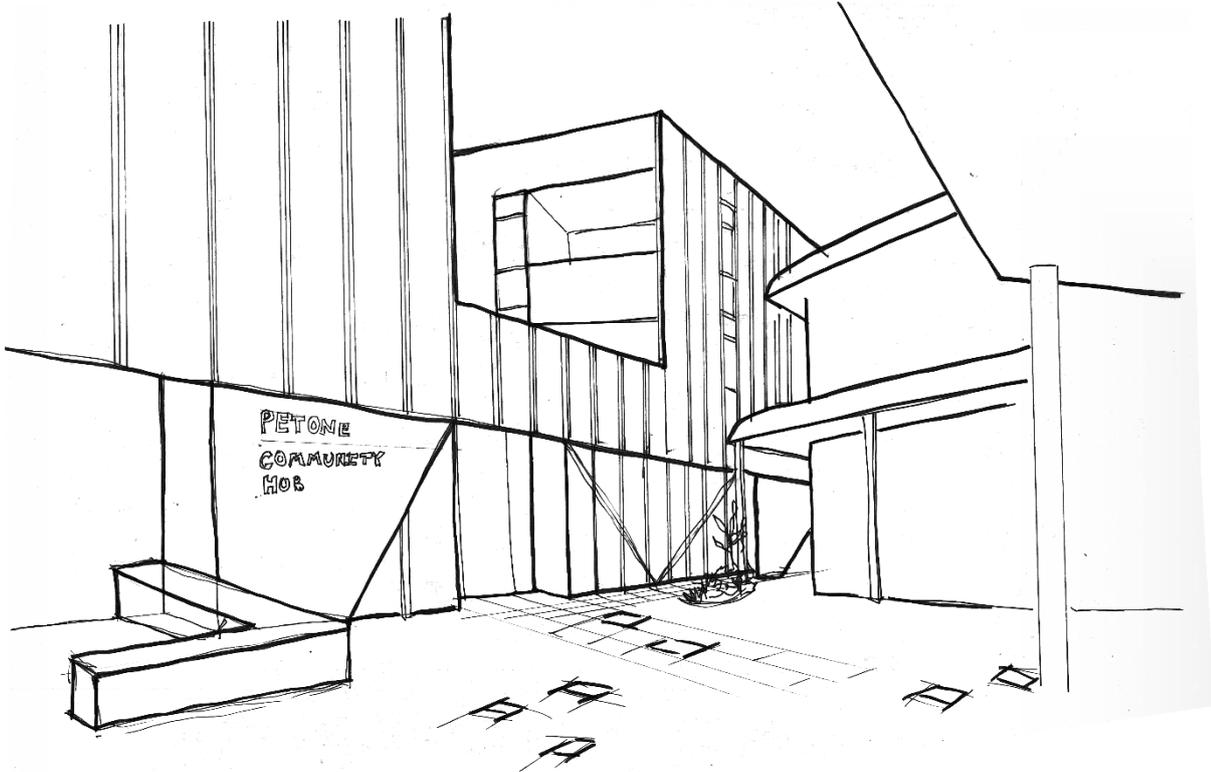
The proposed scheme utilises majority of the site area at ground level with a courtyard and apartments on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. The building deliberately creates a strong street

edge along Britannia street. However, the design has carefully considered how the building relates to the human scale at street level. A covered walkway is carved from the building volume creating a sheltered covered walkway to Britannia Street. At ground level this covered area combines with the footpath to create a wide, welcoming and usable space that creates a public scale and connection to the street.



*Figure 3: Demonstrating the buildings sympathetic scale to pedestrians*

At first floor level, a generous courtyard provides a communal outdoor space to the apartments. Whilst the main function of this space is to create high amenity levels to the residents, the way that this space is carved from the overall building mass also positively contributes to the ground level public courtyard space. This reduces the mass from ground level for pedestrians, brings light to this ground level outdoor space, and minimises the bulk form impact relative to the existing neighbours. This reduces the perception of scale of the apartments from courtyard with them appearing to be only two stories.



*Figure 4: Reducing the scale of building through it's form*

**Have active and engaging edges along the Britannia St and the proposed southern pedestrian link.**

It is important that the building has a strong connection to Britannia St. By glazing the ground floor level, we have created a strong visual connection between the street and activities going on within the Hub.

By suggesting the front of house and foyer runs along the southern side of the building and is fully glazed again creates an active and well utilised space connecting passers by with the facility. The intent is that there is the perception that the foyer space and the outdoor laneway have a sense of blurred boundaries, such that the there is a sense that the say 4 metre wide foyer space, the laneway, and the existing undercover verandah space of the neighbouring building all combine to "feel" like an 8 to 9 metre wide space divided into various circulation, display and activity/interaction zones. The urban laneway space needs to provide an inviting connection through to the public courtyard space in the centre rear of the site.

## **Entries off Britannia Street**



*Figure 5: Community Hub Entry and laneway space*

A definitive recessed entry has been located on the prominent and obvious corner of the building as it is approached from Jackson St. The apartment entry has been located further down Britannia St. It is appropriate to separate these entries giving some privacy to the apartment tenants, whilst a safe and comfortable pathway is provided past the community hub.

### **Connecting the new hub to Jackson Street**

We envisage a well designed laneway down the southern side of the community hub, connecting to the existing public space behind and then through to Jackson Street. (Refer to drawing PDC 004 and PDC 007) We imagine the section of laneway from Britannia Street to the rear courtyard to be a defined urban laneway which is visually well connected with the Community Hub foyer/entry. The glazing of the community hub offers the opportunity for displays to be viewed by people as they are passing by. It will also make the laneway feel more generous visually borrowing space from the interior to ensure people feel the laneway is comfortable and safe.

We think it is imperative this is developed into a welcoming space. It will be important people can see a glimpse of the public space beyond which makes them want to use these pedestrian links.

Combining mixed use in this manner is an efficient use of commodity – developable land in an existing urban area.

## **Public space**

The Community Hub in conjunction with carefully designing these connecting pedestrian links offer the opportunity to upgrade the existing public space behind Jackson St. Our intention is that this space will offer the opportunity for people to spend time, read a book or have their lunch. With the community hub and apartments overlooking this outdoor area we believe it has potential to be a great urban space (Refer to Figure 4).

We feel the existing arcade pedestrian link from Jackson Street is currently underutilised and will really benefit from an upgrade. By making the community hub and apartments a destination we believe people will have more of a reason to use this walkway.

## **Rejuvenating the existing surrounding context**

The proposed community hub will be well designed and will increase the pedestrian traffic through the existing arcade. This will create a more lively environment and in turn neighbouring properties will more likely see the value in upgrading their own facilities.

## **Covered access**

To ensure public spaces are well utilised they need to be comfortable. This scheme proposes a modern interpretation of a verandah to provide shelter. The apartments overhang the Community Hub and act as cover. By setting the Community Hub back it widens the footpath and creates space for seating and planting. This gives the community hub a civic nature and encourages people to spend time there (Refer to figure 03).

This covered area also links to existing covered walkways ensuring people can walk from Jackson Street all the way to the apartment entry under cover.

## **Spaces for people to dwell**

Successful public spaces are areas designed for people to interact and spend time. We are designing the opportunity for people to interact. Having the entry recessed and generous allows people to pause as they meet people coming in and out of the building. Having seating out the front under shelter means there is a space to sit if you are early or waiting to be picked up. The public space out the back is a safe zone for children, an area where you could eat your lunch or read a book.

Each space offers a different type of interaction, whether it is a quick hi or goodbye, a space to enjoy lunch or a spot to sit under shelter as you wait. This variety is important and key to ensuring this building sits well in its context and is well used.

## **Passive surveillance**

It is important for public spaces to be well surveyed to ensure they feel safe and people want to use them. The Community Hub as well as the apartments above overlook the laneway and public space to the south.

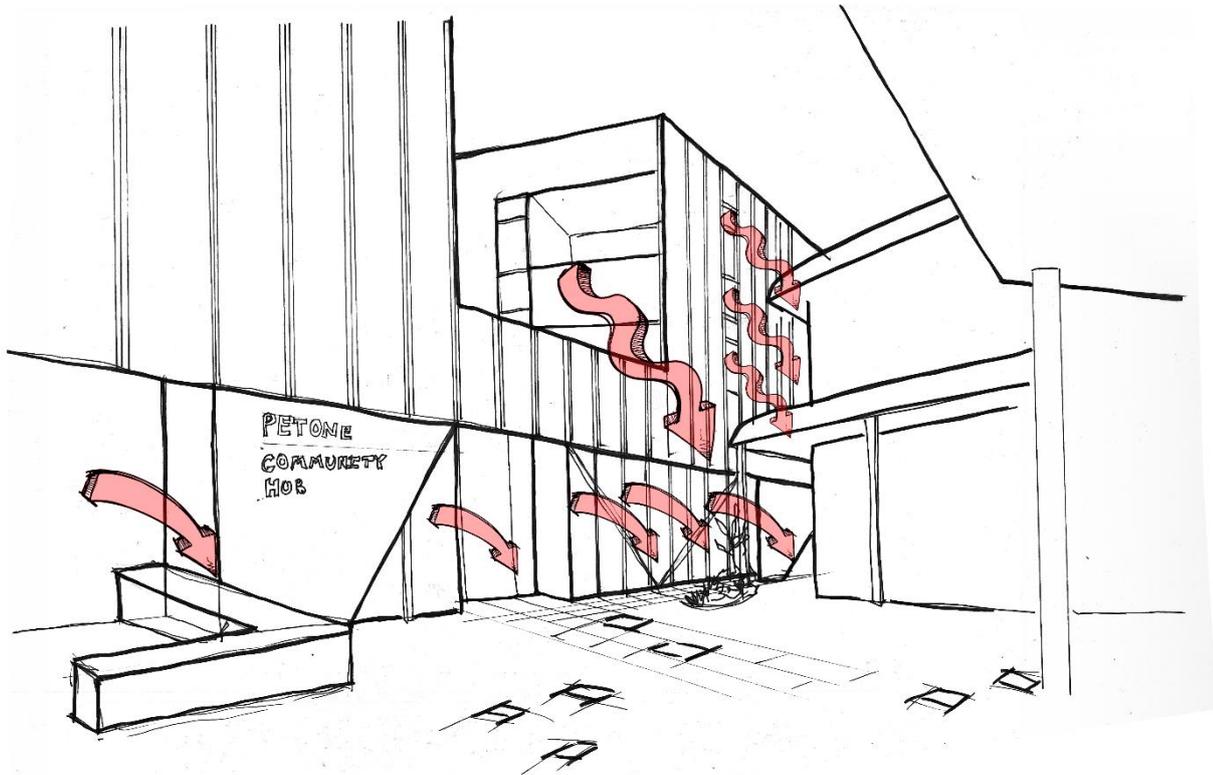


Figure 6: Demonstrating how public spaces are positively overlooked.

### Variations in ground textures to encourage pedestrian movement:

Variation in the ground materials will help encourage people to move down the laneways and use the spaces.

### Conclusion and Summary

We envisage the new community hub to be a vibrant node and addition to the Petone Urban fabric. A building which will be carefully designed to consider the users, community and surrounding context. It will offer a variety of flexible space where the community can gather, socialise and extend their learning. It will be a great place to live.

We welcome the opportunity to build upon this initial thinking to engage with the wider stakeholders that will lead to the ultimate success of this project and bring together their needs and further thoughts to realise the potential this project has.