

AUCKLAND DESIGN OFFICE

Terms of Reference: Auckland Urban Design Panel 2017



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Introduction

High quality, “distinctively Auckland” urban design thinking and built outcomes are critical to successful urban development. Local and international experience has demonstrated that using independent design review panels, comprising leading professionals from a mix of disciplines, is a cost effective tool for creating better quality urban environments. This thinking is in line with The Auckland Plan, which:

- “Demands good design in all development”
- “Realises quality compact urban environments”, and
- “Seeks to create enduring neighbourhoods, centres business areas.”

Prior to amalgamation in 2010, Auckland City Council and Manukau City Council had their own Urban Design Panels, which included respected practitioners of architecture, landscape architecture, planning and property disciplines. These Panels have achieved successful outcomes by influencing significant projects within their local areas. With the formation of the wider Auckland Council, Councillors supported the creation of the Auckland Urban Design Panel, which would cover all of Auckland.

The Auckland Urban Design Panel has been established to provide independent design review of significant projects, for both private and public developments. While the benefits of the Panel are many, the Panel’s primary purpose is to assist in achieving a high standard of design quality by reviewing projects and identifying areas for improvement early on in the design process, prior to their lodgment for planning approval.

In 2011-2012, a review was undertaken on the workings of the Auckland Urban Design Panel within the new Council structure. Recognising the value of the Panel’s independence, and its support from leaders within the development industry, the Auckland Urban Design Panel Governance Board was formed. The Governance Board has responsibility for appointing panel members and providing governance advice to Auckland Council on the operation of the Panel. The Board assists in strengthening Council’s partnership with professional institutes within the industry.

The new Auckland Urban Design Panel will be a key tool in improving the quality of the built environment across all of Auckland, as well as contributing to the realisation of the Mayor’s vision of Auckland becoming the world’s most liveable city.

Benefits of the Panel to Applicants

The Panel process provides an independent peer review from leaders in a variety of relevant professional institutes, including the development sector, practitioners and academic sectors.

Good urban design processes and outcomes add economic value to proposals, in terms of both capital and operating expenditure over the lifetime of a project, as well as the positive spin-offs associated with successful and attractive centres and neighbourhoods.

The Panel process has the potential to minimise time delays for lodged resource consent applications by supporting the resolution of complex issues early on in the design process, prior to lodgment. The reporting Urban Designers time is also focused on pre-application process, resulting in smaller billing charges at the consenting stage. The Panel process is also structured to provide consistent advice during the consenting process, and co-ordination (where necessary) of other Council departments.

Benefits of design panels are considerable and include:

- Bringing an additional source and mix of design expertise to further complement the skills available to the scheme
- Lifting the profile of design, by supporting Council and the development sector in requiring more from applicants, or their design team, in terms of design quality
- Providing decision makers with the confidence that they have the best possible independent advice on design quality
- Identifying weak and inappropriate schemes at an early stage, when significant design changes can be made with relatively little waste of time and effort
- Helping developers assess and identify which costly design elements add little value or are essential to the overall quality of a scheme
- Putting schemes in perspective and seeing the bigger picture
- Questioning the design brief or site assumptions and thus opening up new opportunities for improved development
- Offering opportunities to those observing design reviews for continued learning, particularly on how to assess good design

Terms of Reference

The Purpose of the Auckland Urban Design Panel

The purpose of the Auckland Urban Design Panel is to provide independent design review and subsequent design advice that promotes sustainable development and the creation of well-designed buildings and places that contribute to safe, healthy and attractive urban environments.

Design review by the Panel could be undertaken in the following situations:

- Pre-application advice to developers and council representatives on large, complex or locally significant development proposals, focusing on identifying issues for improvement to achieve better design outcomes;
- Design advice to the Council on large or controversial council-initiated projects;
- Advice to the Council on the assessment of development proposals that have been lodged for Resource Consent and that may (or may not) have previously been to the Panel, and have significant issues of concern;
- Advice to the Council on proposed policy and statutory tools that have an urban design impact or will shape the development of significant parts of the region.

The review undertaken by the Panel is not limited to the scope of the Unitary Plan, but is intended to encourage best practice approaches to development, specific to a site's context, that support the overarching objectives of the Auckland Plan.

Recommendations from the Panel are to assist an applicant and their design team by providing a critique of the proposal and identifying areas for improvement. Many applicants value the insights provided by the Panel and how it supports the creation of a better product.

Recommendations from the Panel are to assist Council officers in forming their professional opinions with respect to a proposal and the requirements of the Unitary Plan. The advice of the Panel is in addition to the in-depth urban design assessment that takes place as part of the processing of resource consents, and is addressed in the Urban Designer's reports to the delegated decision-makers.

Not all developments qualify for review by the Panel, and only those recommended to the Panel from the Council's Urban Design officers are able to be presented for review. The triggers for Urban Design Panel review are included in this document.

During the pre-application stage of the consent process, presentation to the Panel is voluntary as is the entire pre-application process. However, it is strongly recommended to applicants to take up the offer when presented to them as it is intended to support the identification and resolution of urban design issues at the start of the design process when they are more easily resolved. Whilst the Panel's recommendations are non-statutory, they are an important benchmark for the assessment of resource consent applications.

The Panel may also make recommendations to the Council for regulatory changes, decision-making on modifications to infrastructure or development on sites that may be outside the scope of an application itself, but should be considered for the benefit of creating a quality urban environment.



The Appointment of Panel Members

The Panel members are highly-regarded professionals with specialist skills in the area of urban design, architecture, planning, landscape architecture, heritage, Māori design, development and property. Panellists are nominated by their respective Professional Institutes who are partners with the Auckland Design Office in the formation of the Auckland Urban Design Panel and its Governance Board. The nominations are taken to the Governance Board who are responsible for the appointments. The partnering institutes are:

- New Zealand Institute of Architects
- New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects
- New Zealand Planning Institute
- Property Council of New Zealand
- Ngā Aho Network of Māori Design Professionals

In deciding on its nominations, the Auckland Design Office consults other parts of Council and its associated advisory groups including the Heritage Advisory Panel, Disability Advisory Panel and Māori Statutory Board.

Panellists are selected for their individual experience and qualifications rather than as representatives of their professional firms. They

are expected to be leaders in their respective professions, with experience in relation to delivering high quality design outcomes.

Additional Experts

Provision is also made for independent experts from other professions to attend Panel meetings to provide expert advice to the Panel where there are complex or significant issues relating to areas outside of their expertise.

Examples include traffic engineering, ecology, retail, universal access specialists, Māori cultural heritage specific to the locality and additional heritage experts if requested by the Heritage Advisory Panel. This is to allow the Panel to reach a decision based on all the information available.

Quorum

A quorum of three members is required with at least one urban designer for each review Panel.

The Role of Council Officers

Council's Urban Designer, Planner and often Planning Team Leader are present for the duration of the Panel meeting to seek or provide clarification from/to the Panel during the meeting. Both Council Planners and Urban Designers have responsibilities in terms of assisting the Panel.

Planners are responsible for:

- Providing supporting information for the Coversheet;
- Approving a request by an applicant to present to the Panel following lodgement of a resource consent application;
- When invited, providing guidance to the Panel on relevant Unitary Plan matters, including general policy and regulatory matters.

Administrative support for the operation of the panel is provided by the Auckland Design Office, email the address below for any queries.

urbandesignpanel@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Urban Design officers are responsible for:

- Approving a request by an applicant to present to the Panel prior to lodgement of a Resource Consent. The Urban Designer can also

recommend an applicant present to the Panel at any stage of their proposal (pre and post-lodgement of a consent application);

- Advising their Team Leader on an appropriate mix of Panel members for the particular development;
- Ensuring the applicant's material is fit for presentation to the Panel, in terms of adequacy, quality and accuracy (Refer to Appendix B: Information Requirements for Panel Presentations);
- Identifying urban design issues and outlining the specific advice they are seeking from the Panel, through the Coversheet – a brief written report which accompanies the application material and Panel agenda;
- Informing the Panel about related Council policies, strategies, plans, or works that may impact the proposal;
- Advising their Team Leader on any additional experts that might be required to attend the panel meeting;
- Advising their Team Leader if there are significant heritage issues.

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

In order to maintain the confidence of developers, meetings with the Panel at pre-application stage are confidential and closed to all but the applicant's nominated representatives, Council officers and the Panellists, unless the applicant indicates a willingness for it to be public.

All Panellists, and any additional experts in attendance, are also required to declare if they have a conflict of interest.

Cost to the Applicant

Auckland Council funds the operation of the Panel, including the payment of the Panellist fees, and provides administrative support.

Urban Design Specialists charge their time to applicants for; the preparation of cover sheets, panel meeting attendance and post-panel follow up with the applicant.

Dedicated Panel sessions are charged directly to the applicant.

Where additional independent experts are required to attend a panel meeting to provide advice on issues outside of the expertise of the Panel, the applicant may be requested to fund their attendance. This will be discussed and agreed with the applicant prior to the Panel meeting and may vary depending on the expertise required.

Assessment Process

The design criteria used to assess development proposals are consistent across all applications and are based on the Auckland Plan's design outcomes sought for the city, and urban design best practice. Consideration is also given to the requirements of the relevant Unitary Plan Assessment Criteria as well as any applicable urban design frameworks, design guidelines or strategic documents specific to the locality.

In reviewing proposals, the Panel will focus on the appropriateness of the building or development in relation to its physical, social and cultural context, including any identified heritage values. In striving for excellence in design the Panel will consider the overall quality of the development and its architecture, as well as its appearance from the street and public spaces, and contribution to the sustainable development of Auckland.

Elements the Panel might typically look at are:

- The fit of the proposal, its activity, and mix of activities, within the context;
- The project's incorporation of best practice urban design principles, including principles relating to sustainability and universal access;
- The quality of the proposed activities, including type and density, and the appropriateness of the activity to the site's context;
- Building bulk, location and design, scale, layout, and articulation of façades, including how these respond to the functional and environmental conditions of the site and the character of the surrounding neighbourhood;
- Materials and any important construction details integral to the success of the project;
- Landscaping and interface with the public realm, including the design of any proposed streets, or alterations to existing streets;
- Ground floor activities and the relationship to the street/public realm;
- How the development works for both users and the public, e.g. the relationship of public and private realms; safety for users and passers-by; circulation and servicing; treatment of public and semi-public spaces;
- How the development impacts upon any Council or public project, including strategic planning and proposed works within the public realm;
- The inclusion of and contribution to the wider network of green infrastructure, including low impact/water sensitive design features;
- For residential developments, the standard of living amenity created for existing and future residents.

Triggers for Urban Design Panel Review

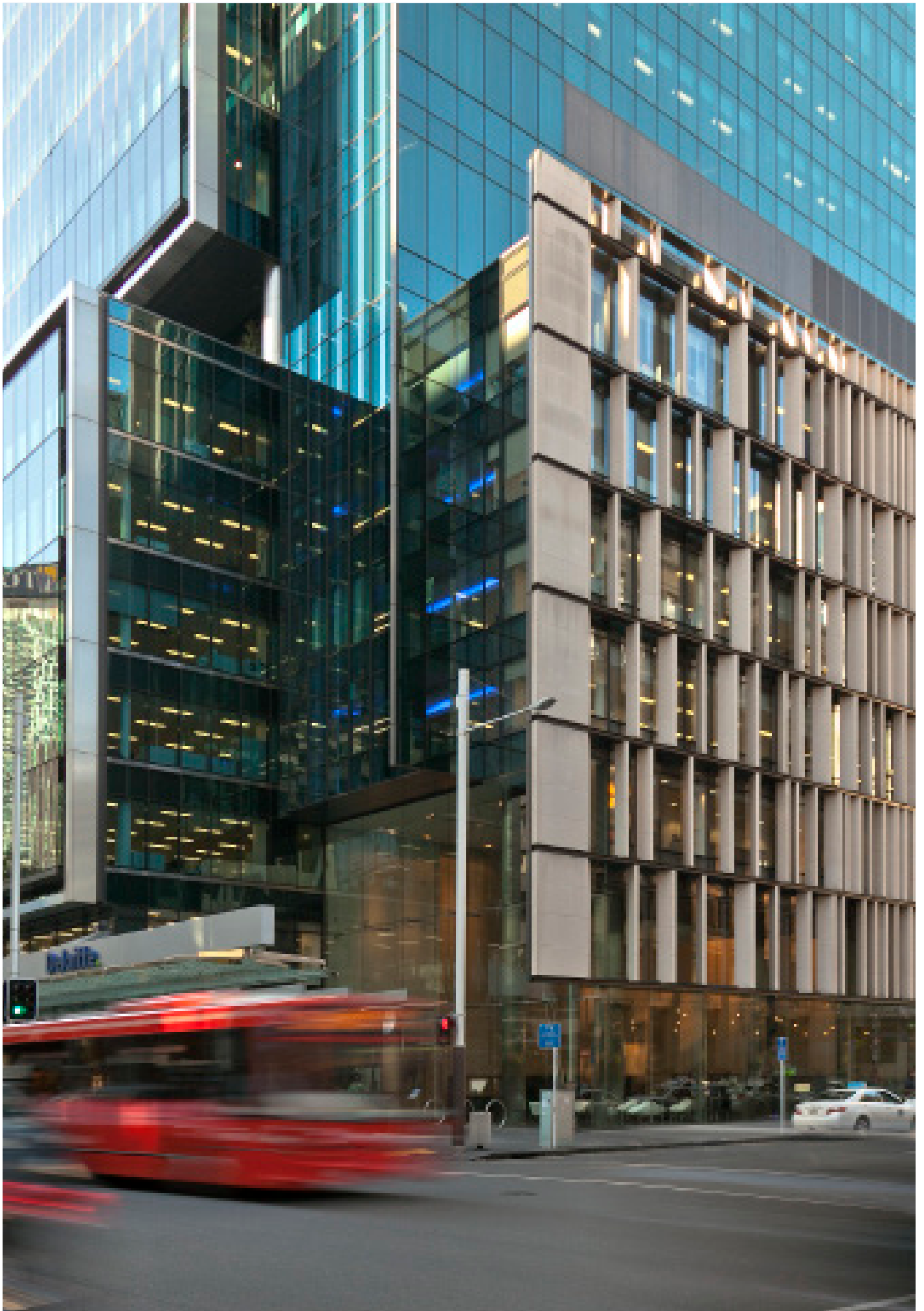
Council officers are responsible for determining whether an application should be reviewed by the Panel, with the final decision resting with the Auckland Urban Design Panel Programme Leader. However, triggers include:

City Centre Applications – Any significant development within the City Centre including - waterfront, new buildings and substantial alterations as well as open space projects and infrastructure projects with open space impacts.

Auckland-wide Applications – Applications across the region that are considered to have significance at a regional or local level. For example:

- Any project deemed “transformational”, currently identified by urban design or planning officer, or listed within the top priority centres within the Auckland Plan;
- Any large development near or within a town centre such as a new large format retail, shopping mall, supermarket or apartment building;
- High rise apartment, office buildings or large mixed developments;
- Large scale residential developments over 20 units;
- Major infrastructure projects such as motorways or new schools that are part of a designation process or subject to resource consent;
- Masterplans for any new greenfield or brownfield development;
- Any locally significant development that council officers believe would benefit from independent urban design review;
- Major scale Council and CCO projects (with a total value of over \$5 million), including streetscape upgrades and community facilities, to ensure the Council demonstrates best practice in its own development projects.

There may be applications made from other types of buildings and activities not included above which would benefit from a review, in which case Council Officers with approval from the Auckland Urban Design Panel Programme Leader will determine whether an application is to be reviewed by the Panel.



Panel Process

Step One – Booking Initial Meeting Through Planner

The applicant liaises with the Council Planner regarding a new proposal. A time for a pre-application meeting is set up. Invites to the pre-application meeting are sent by the Planner to any relevant Council specialist such as an Urban Designer, Traffic Engineer etc.

Step Two – Pre-application Meeting

The pre-application meeting is held.

The Urban Designer will check the proposal against the Triggers for Panel.

Step Three – After Pre-application meeting

The Council Urban Designer will confirm with Auckland Urban Design Panel Programme Lead, if the scheme will go to the Panel. Due to the nature of the proposal, the Urban Designer and Team Leader will decide if additional experts are required to advise the Panel, i.e. on heritage, sustainability, universal access issues.

Step Four – Booking a Panel Date and Panel Selection

The Council Urban Designer will check with the Urban Design Panel Assistant to select possible dates for the Panel session, which is to be confirmed with the applicant. Panel sessions are held weekly, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon's. Sometimes it is possible to have two sessions, held concurrently.

The Urban Design Panel Assistant will send an invitation to the Panellists, the Applicant, the assigned Urban Designer and Planner

Step Five –

Panel Information Requirements

A follow up email and calendar invitation will be sent to the applicant and Council Officers by the AUDP Panel Assistant outlining dates and timeframes for submitting Panel Information Requirements.

Step Six–

Draft Information Pack 2 weeks prior

Applicant to submit their draft electronic Information requirements to the Council's urban designer for vetting of adequacy and relevancy. Council's urban designer to advise the applicant on any information gaps.

Step Seven – Final hard copies 1 week prior

By Thursday at 12pm, 1 week prior to the Urban Design Panel meeting, all final documentation for the Panel session should be received by Council.

The hardcopy documentation package should be sent to:

Auckland Design Office
Auckland Council
Level 21
135 Albert St
Auckland Central 1010
Attn: Auckland Urban Design Panel Assistant

Note: The application will be rejected if the above criteria is not met.

Step Eight – Preparing a Coversheet

Once the Panel documentation has been received, the Planner and Urban Designer will jointly prepare a Coversheet and supporting material to highlight the key issues of the application, and a short summary of the proposal that will be used in the Panel Agenda.

Supporting material should include the following:

- Urban designer to source minutes of any previous application(s) on the subject site
- Planner to summarise design-related

assessment criteria and consent matters.

The finalised Coversheet, supporting material and summary is to be sent one week prior to the panel date (i.e. Thursday) to: urbandesignpanel@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

The Agenda, Coversheet, supporting material and applicant documentation package are then collated and sent out by the Urban Design Panel Assistant to the necessary parties.

Step Nine – Urban Design Panel Session

The Planner, Urban Designer and Auckland Urban Design Panel Assistant attend the Panel meeting along with the Applicant and Panellists. Meetings are always held in Auckland Council offices in Auckland CBD. Panel sessions operate on a tight schedule to ensure business is completed by close of day, following the schedule below:

Schedule for Panel Meetings

- Chairs Briefing – Council staff and Panellists meet before the Panel session to identify key issues to be explored during the meeting.
- Welcome From Chair - The Chair invites the applicant into the room, and introduces the parties involved. The Chair may ask the Planner or Urban Designer for introductory statements, to make explicit any issues Council would like

the Panel to consider.

Applicant's Presentation - The applicant presents the scheme, which should be limited to 20 minutes.

Questions/Clarifications by Panel – Panellists may seek clarification of points after the presentation. A discussion of issues with the Applicant occurs, the then Applicant leaves the room.

Panel Discussion and Recommendations - The Panellists discuss the scheme amongst themselves with Council staff present. The Panel drafting recommendations led by the Chair, written up by the Auckland Urban Design Panel Assistant.

Close – The Panel session should be no more than 3.5 hours

Step Ten – Meeting Minutes and Feedback

The Urban Design Panel Assistant is responsible for circulating the recommendations to Council staff and the Agent within 24 hours of the close of the meeting.

In instances where the Panel is unable to complete the recommendations within the scheduled meeting time, draft recommendations will be emailed to all Panellists, any suggested changes should be sent in a 'reply to all' email, with the Chair responsible for providing the final recommendations to the Urban Design Assistant

within 3 days for circulation.

Council's Urban Designer will discuss the recommendations with the Applicant, and any issues that were raised during the panel session to provide clarification where required. Once the applicant has had time to make any necessary design changes, they are encouraged to meet again with the Urban Designer and Council Planner prior to the lodgement of Resource Consent to review the revised scheme against Panel recommendations

Schedule for Panel Meeting - 1:30pm - 5:00pm

Chair's briefing to Panellists	1:30pm
Applicant Seated & Welcome from Chair	2:00pm
Applicant's Presentation	2:05-2:30pm
Questions & Clarifications by Panel	2:30-3:30pm
Panel Discussion & Recommendations	3:30-4:30pm
Close	5:00pm



Find out more: phone 09 301 0101
or visit www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

