

Newmarket recalls rail's glory days



Auckland will have a train station to be proud of again when the Newmarket interchange is completed in January 2010. While the central Britomart Station is an architectural delight, the Newmarket project harks back to the glory days of rail travel when stations were statements of grand monuments to public transport. Opus architectural designer Stefan Geelen, who came up with the design for the Newmarket station, says the project offered more scope for design than the standard suburban station. "It has been really challenging – it's not a run-of-the-mill station with a standard kit of parts. This was big for the clients too and it was something that was outside their usual station upgrades."

The station, which marks the interchange between the Southern Line and the Western Line, has caused logistical and organisational challenges for client agencies Ontrack and ARTA, especially during "block of line" shutdowns, where one track is kept live while work is carried out on the other two tracks.

It also presented challenges for Opus.

"We weren't really strongly experienced in rail design prior to this, but it has really expanded our knowledge base."

The design will resurrect Newmarket Station from its old, cold, exposed state of shabbiness to a modern, sleek building that offers passengers a sense of space as well as protection from the elements.

"The main access is from Remuera Road and it's very modern with high canopies and lantern box entries; these are well-lit glass enclosures through which passengers can access the main concourse

"There is a plaza being built off Broadway as well and two access ways are being widened to connect with that."

The concourse itself is a glass box enclosure featuring a floating canopy supported by metal trees and covered by a ventilated glass surround, which will allow diesel fumes to escape while protecting passengers from the weather.

The design offers a nice, light environment, despite the station being surrounded by a virtual canyon of tall buildings.

"You enter the concourse and it is a large-scale environment, eight metres high with plenty of space and light. Then you take an escalator down to the platforms below, which have an innovative layout. Instead of being perpendicular to

the platforms as you would normally find in a train station, the shelters are at an angle, to make the most of a somewhat constrained space."

The finished article, which is due to open in January 2010, will complete the transformation from a rather down-at-heel, functional station with little in the way of passenger comforts. "There is a high standard of quality in the materials used and for the budget we were given and that is good because it is an investment for 50-plus years for our clients," Geelen says. "It will be a spacious, grand environment bringing back the grandeur of our old railway stations."

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