

Willoughby City Council
Ordinary Council Meeting
Tuesday 25 June 2007

22.1 Northbridge Plaza & Car Park

Councillors Coppock, Lamb and Rutherford indicated their intention to move the following Notice of Motion:

That, in relation to the potential Northbridge Plaza redevelopment, Council wishes to clarify that it is inviting AMPCI to prepare a master plan with a retail floor space increase of approximately 10%.

Presentation to Council by John Becroft, Northbridge Progress Association
NORTHBRIDGE PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC
Statement by John Becroft to Council on June 25 2007

On behalf of Northbridge Progress Association, I wish to support the motion to restrict to approximately 10% the expansion of retail space in a Masterplan for the Plaza site. We believe it's a fair compromise and that it's better to have a measurable restriction than a qualitative one. The 10% restriction will limit traffic generation from the site and minimise the impact on local strip shops in Northbridge, Castlecrag and other nearby suburbs. We believe most Northbridge residents will support the limitation.

We would prefer that the motion clarifies the starting point for the 10% increase. The present Plaza shopping centre contains commercial space (for example, two banks) and professional space (for example, an optometrist) within it. We presume that the maximum 10% limit is based on the total retail, commercial and professional space in the present Plaza shopping centre. In other words, we would not want AMP to expand retail space by 10% but commercial space by 70% to achieve its aim of 80% expansion!

There are two other issues that Council has already discussed and that we ask you to consider. The first is whether it is in the community's interest for Council to manage the Masterplan work, rather than AMP, the interested party. We would much prefer that Council should manage the work, as it did for the Northbridge Town Centre Masterplan, through a lead consultant, perhaps at AMP's cost.

The second issue is whether Council should enter into negotiations for a Memorandum of Understanding now, rather than waiting until the Masterplan is completed, assessed and approved (or not approved). We know that the MOU is intended to be non-binding. However, it seems to us that Council would be entering into an implicit agreement to lift the 40-year old covenant and to sell or lease the land, whatever the outcome of the Masterplan. In its position of Trustee of these public lands with a fiduciary responsibility to the community of Northbridge, we believe that Council should not deal with the lands in any way until the Masterplan outcome is known to the community.

Q: How would you reword the motion to clarify it?

A: “That, in relation to the potential Northbridge Plaza redevelopment, Council wishes to clarify that it is inviting AMPCI to prepare a Masterplan such that the total retail and commercial space over the entire Masterplan area shall be approximately 10% greater than the total retail and commercial space now contained within the present Plaza shopping centre.”

Q: How would you visualize Council carrying out the Masterplan when it has no budget funds and no staff available?

A: As with Northbridge Town Centre Masterplan, Council would select a lead consultant to carry out the work. With the approval of Council officers, the consultant would commission the necessary studies and consult with AMP and its advisers as necessary. AMP would be asked to pay the costs of the work.

Q: What would be your preference about ownership of the land?

A: We would strongly prefer that the land remains in Council’s ownership and control. Otherwise, we can see a situation where AMP could seek the State Government as consent authority over the site. We have nightmares about high rise residential and commercial buildings on that land, in our wonderful residential suburb.