

NEUTRAL PRECINCT MINUTES
Tuesday 9 April 2024, commenced at 7:10 pm

1. Guest: Mr Tim Atkins, Director Titanium Property - Update + Q & A on Coles proposal for Grosvenor Street supermarket and a plaza for Grosvenor Lane Carpark

GC welcomed Mr Atkins to the meeting.

Mr Atkins advised that the Coles Development Application (DA) was submitted to Council in September 2023. The DA sought a Section 4.6 variation to the current height controls on the Coles owned supermarket site to allow the design of the building to provide sunlight into a proposed plaza to be created on the Council owned Grosvenor Lane public carpark.

Coles chose not to submit a Planning Proposal (PP) for re-zoning the height of the supermarket site as this is decided by the State Government. Coles preferred to submit a DA to the Council, which included the development of Council owned land (Grosvenor Lane Public Car park).

Council appointed an independent assessor to the DA because Council is an owner of land included in the DA.

The current position:

- The Independent Assessor has responded that is Council policy not to deal with changes under Section 4.6. Council prefers to have a PP submitted to rezone the land.
- Coles has not had formal feedback from the Council and has not yet met with Council officers.
- In response to community feedback Coles is considering changes to the DA. This is a work in progress. Any changes will be submitted to the Council but a timeframe has not yet been determined.

Questions and Answers

Q. Are you the developer for Coles?

A. No, Titanium Property is a property advisor to Coles.

Q. Who would build the proposed plaza and what would happen to current car public parking spaces in Grosvenor Lane?

A. The Coles DA proposes a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) which would see Coles underground 76 of the above ground car spaces and replace the area with a landscaped plaza and some parking spaces to be decided. The plaza would be built by Coles when the design was agreed with Council.

Q. How high is the adjacent Pienza development in Waters Road?

A. Pienza has approval to 24 metres (6 storeys). Through a VPA Pienza has made a cash contribution of approx. \$2.9m - \$2m to Council for the enhancement of public areas.

Q. The original proposal by Pienza was to pay for an upgrade of the Grosvenor Lane Public car park. How is that different to the Coles proposal?

A. Coles proposal is to put 76 public car spaces underground in an area that would extend approx. 11 metres south from the Supermarket boundary line under the existing public car park. The parking spaces would be accessed through the proposed Coles customer carpark entry in Grosvenor Street.

Coles would create a landscaped plaza on top. There are several options for the plaza being circulated in the community. Since 2013 it has been Council's long term plan to create a plaza where the current public car park is located. Council's 2024 Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study has one option. Another has been proposed by other land owners around the current public car park.

Q. How many tons of carbon would be going into the construction site?

A. Mr Atkins said he didn't know but said it will be substantial. Mr Atkins took this question on notice and will provide an answer to the Precinct.

Q. I have friends who live in an apartment in a mixed use development. They say it is a nightmare dealing with residential and commercial/retail owners. Where are you in the context of mixed use developments?

A. There are various opinions. A growing cohort of people who live in these developments do so because they treat the shops downstairs as their pantry. The convenience factor is big for many people. There are some issues such as providing commercial access with residents access, location of plant equipment and loading docks. There is a noise factor but building standards are much improved.

The Coles proposal is for the loading dock to be located 4 levels down. Trucks will drive in and be taken down in a lift, unloaded, turn around on a turntable, return in the lift and drive out to the street. There will be approx. 140 movements a day. (is that 140 residential , I thought)

Q. Going back 25 years there was a plan to have a level plaza with the buildings on the south side. Can this be achieved?

A. There is a 3 metre drop across the public car park from south to north at Coopers Lane. A staggered solution is proposed but will be inform the landscape design with the Council.

Q. What are some of the changes being considered to the DA?

A. We are considering:

- A new setback of 9 metres from the edge of the boundary site at Coopers Lane creating much less overshadowing to the buildings on the other side of Coopers Lane. Controls require a minimum 1.5 metre setback on all boundaries. The proposal is 3 metres in Water Lane.
- Penetrating the 24 metre height line. We are working out the economics of this versus the proposed VPA. We may come back with a revised proposal to get agreement.
- Removing the community centre **room** from the DA

Q. Tree selection is important. What is proposed?

A. Aspect Studios Landscape Architects is the Company engaged by Coles for the DA. They are very knowledgeable on this issue. Additional tree planting will be made along Grosvenor Street boundary. Coles proposes to remove the gum tree at the entrance to the current car park. Decisions on landscaping of the Plaza will be with the Council not Coles. Council will submit a DA re landscaping the Plaza. The landscaping when decided will be done by Coles under Council's direction.

Q. Is there any delineation between Coles parking and the Council parking?

A. Coles DA does not propose any delineation it will need an agreement between Coles and the Council as to how it is managed.

Q. Has Coles responded to the Neutral Bay Town Planning Study (NBTCPS)?

A. There plans in the NBTCPS for a 28 metres (8 storeys) height. A negative factor for Coles is the associated impact of applying an increased Floor Space Ratio (FSR) to require more commercial space which does not work for the Coles proposal. Coles has responded to the NBTCPS on this issue and generally supported the plan to create a town centre plaza.

Coles wants to put a supermarket back into the site. If the DA is not supported and agreement cannot be made, Coles back-up plan will be to building a supermarket into the existing site with the loading dock in the current location off the public car park.

Q. How long will the construction take?

A. The objective is to open the new supermarket and underground parking within 24 months without interfering with the current small retailers around the current public car park. Building the residences will take approx. 9-12 months longer. If it is just a refit of the supermarket then it will be 6 months.

The proposal is to allow 9-16 metres between the construction site and the current small shops with 50% of the current car parking spaces on grade to be retained during construction. The reality is that the amenity of the area will not be improved without some disruption.

Q. Does Coles intend to keep the current Coles Big Bear operating when the new supermarket opens?

A. Yes

Q. The NBTCPS proposes 78 parking spaces into undergrounding the plaza. Is this possible?

A. Under North Sydney Council policy there is a max. number of car spaces that can be provided. There are currently 105 parking spaces under the Woolworths supermarket. The spaces will increase from 105 to 180. There have been multiple discussions with varying opinions on what should be the result. The small businesses are concerned about loading dock access.

Q. Can we keep cars out of the Plaza entirely?

A. You need to make this clear to Council if that is what you want.

Q. What is happening with the Young Street Plaza?

A. CP advised that the current Council decided not to proceed with the previous Council's plans to make the plaza permanent. Instead it was drawing up new plans which we understand will include the opening of one lane of traffic and landscaping the remaining area. It is not known whether the one lane will be an entrance to or exit from Military Road. LS advised that it is understood pending the results of a Councillor briefing on 15 April the proposal for Young St will go on exhibition for 42 days from 17 April to 29 May. This will allow the precincts and community to review and provide feedback on the proposal.

Q. A community concern is that the Council owned land, being the public car park, will be privatised and sold/given to Coles. Can you tell us if you have discussed or plan to discuss this with the Council planning staff?

A. Coles has put in the VPA draft terms that Coles is happy to purchase the land but is not committed. Coles could take a lease and manage the land. Coles has not had any discussions / conversations at this stage. Coles plans a completely integrated underground car park (Coles customers and public carpark) that is available to all.

Q. Can you explain in more detail the proposed staged construction plan for the site that is aimed at minimising the impact on the small businesses located around the current public car park?

A. Coles has a preliminary proposal that will be refined when feedback is received from the Chamber of Commerce. 50% of the current car spaces will be available at all times during the construction period.

Q. Residents in Grosvenor Street are concerned that the proposed height of the northern side of the development will mean they are looking at a blank wall. Can you explain the architecture of the building on the Grosvenor Street side of the development?

A. Elevations as originally proposed have been changed to soften the edge of the building fronting Grosvenor Street.

Mr Atkins will provide the Precinct with a sketch of the revised northern face of the building.

Q. Siting the loading dock in Grosvenor Street is concerning to residents living opposite the site because of increased noise from delivery trucks. Is there an alternate access point on the site for the loading dock?

A. There is no alternative that works as well as it does from Grosvenor Street. The solution to minimising noise is that drivers will drive in, shut the loading dock door, go down in a lift to basement 4, unload, turn around, return back in the lift and drive out in a smooth movement.

Q. Can you provide more detail from the traffic study and what it says about the impact of traffic movements in Grosvenor and the surrounding streets?

A. Mr Atkins will extract an answer from the Traffic Study report and send to the Precinct. There will be a net increase in traffic movements but it will be minimal. The Traffic report will need to be updated when decisions are made by the Council regarding the Young Street Plaza.

Q. Will Coles be putting power underground in Grosvenor Street.

A. Mr Atkins said it seems logical but he took the Q on notice and will provide an answer to the Precinct.

Q. Will Coles be the developer for the residences?

A. No. Coles will engage a developer to build the residences.

Q. Will the Coles supermarket be smaller/larger than the current Woolworths?

A. Coles will be 40-50 square metres larger than the current Woolworths. Back of house services/ office space will be located in a basement.

Q. What is the timeline to provide an updated DA?

A. There is a stumbling block around Coles receiving feedback from the Council. Coles doesn't know when they will get a response.

Q. Can you provide examples of other similar Coles developments?

A. The current Lindfield development in conjunction with Thirdi is a good example. It includes a supermarket and 79 apartments. Apartments are designed specifically for the local market so may be a different design in Neutral Bay.

Q. Can you let us have copies of the slides with the sketches of the development and plaza you have shown this evening?

A. When it is possible Tim Atkins will send them to the Precinct. GC advised they will be put on the Precinct website. www.neutralprecinct.com

GC thanked Mr Atkins for attending and the room applauded the presentation.

Meeting

2. Apologies – EC, BH, HW

3. No additional items added to the Agenda.

4. Business from minutes of meeting held 12 March 2024:

- i. March 2024 minutes were confirmed by GC and seconded by TM
- ii. There were no motions from Precinct to Council at the March meeting

5. Update: Warringah Freeway Works Upgrade

GC provided an update on proposed works this coming week:

- North Alfred Street will be closed to through traffic while sewer pipes are moved.
- A concrete pour is taking place under the Mount Street Bridge.
- The last of the trees in the Merlin Street Reserve will be removed.
- The Western Harbour Tunnel works have commenced on the western side of the Warringah Freeway. The Freeway upgrade works are primarily on the eastern side.

Discussion: Many trees continue to be lost in relation to both projects. Residents have noted that lots birds have migrated to the Merlin Street Reserve in the last few months, presumably from the many trees removed from nearby Cammeray Park. Residents are concerned about where the birds will go now! A great loss to Neutral Bay.

GC advised that it is understood the trees lost from the Warringah Freeway / Western Harbour Tunnel works will be replaced 2 for 1 but they can be planted anywhere from the harbour to Killara. There is a proposal to plant some replacement trees in Berry's Bay.

A meeting attendee asked the question – “ Why is the local State MP Felicity Wilson not representing the community’s ongoing concerns?”

GC advised that the Neutral Precinct Committee recently met with Ms Wilson. Ms Wilson supports the Warringah Freeway Upgrade as it was a key project of the previous State Government of which she was a member.

The issue of worsening traffic movements through Neutral Bay was raised. GC advised that it is all very bad news for Neutral Bay and Cremorne. We have lost the pedestrian/bicycle underpass of Military Road / Falcon Street at Merlin Street.

Military Road will be a queue for vehicles wanting to join the Freeway. The intersection of Ben Boyd and Military Road is already officially designated a ‘D’ intersection. After the \$millions spent on ‘upgrading’ the Warringah Freeway, Transport for NSW has identified that this intersection will be designated ‘F’ for failed.

6. Current & Ongoing Community consultations

- i. The meeting noted Council is preparing an Open Space & Recreation Needs Study to identify strategic directions and priorities to inform the preparation of a new *Open Space & Recreation Strategy*. The Strategy will provide a road map for how the Council will deliver open spaces and recreation facilities that meet the current and future needs of residents, workers, and visitor. Stage 1 Early Engagement has been completed. Residents were encouraged to register their interest to be informed.

<https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/os-rec-needs-study>

7. Upcoming meetings were noted

- i. Neutral Precinct – 14 May www.neutralprecinct.com
- ii. Council – 22 April, 13 May www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Meeting concluded at 8:35pm