

NEUTRAL PRECINCT MINUTES
Tuesday 11 February 2025, commenced at 7:00 pm

1. CB welcomed the 21 residents to the meeting and introduced guest speaker Meredith Trevallyn-Jones Convenor, Neutral Bay & Cremorne Progress Association, Chair Willoughby Bay Precinct and Community Representative of the North Sydney Local Planning Panel to present her analysis of Arkadia's Planning Proposal for Military Road sites.

Meredith outlined the framework of the Council endorsed Neutral Bay Village Planning Study (NBVPS). Council has endorsed increasing the maximum building height from 16 metres (4-5 storeys) to 21 metres (6 storeys). The draft planning study recommended 8 storeys for keys sites for the reason those sites are part of and close to bus stops, will interface with the proposed plaza, will avoid site isolation issues, will limit overshadowing, are of a size to support appropriate urban form, and will deliver public benefits.

Meredith made the following points about the Arkadia planning proposal in the context of the reasons set out in the draft NBVPS and took questions:

The 3 sites proposed are: Site 2A1 Grove Arcade (1,379 m²); Site 2A2 Community Centre (971 m²); and Site 2B Theos Arcade (1,838 m²).

Building heights

The proposal to rezone the 3 sites for 9, 11 and 12 storeys is far in excess of the NBVPS. A diagram was shown depicting the degree of overshadowing at the winter solstice. Overshadowing would occur over May Gibbs Place and up to the corner of Wycombe Road and beyond to Rangers Road. The approved development of retail and residential on the corner of Wycombe Road would be impacted. This is, however, not as significant as the current proposal for the Rangers Road Woolworths development overshadowing of residences in Yeo Street.

With respect to good urban form, public space is the critical outcome with open spaces, streets, public facilities, a strong sense of place providing local character. Scale & massing of a development needs to respond to desired local character. Planners want developments on these sites to have legible, walkable linkages and to avoid street "wall effect" and have an active frontage to the proposed plaza.

Site isolation

The Blue and White Dry Cleaners will be left in isolation between the proposed towers. The site left would be very difficult to develop in the future. Leaving the site isolated does not meet good planning principles.

Q: Why has Arkadia identified the Neutral Bay Community Centre site?

A: Arkadia has incorporated the existing community centre site as part of its planning proposal and proposes to relocate the community centre elsewhere within the development.

Support of appropriate urban form

The NBVPS included pedestrian links from Military Road to the proposed plaza on the Council owned public carpark. Arkadia has included both covered and uncovered pedestrian links. The gradient between Military Road and the proposed plaza means a lift is proposed for disability access for the link located between site 2A1 and 2A2. There is a question as to whether this is the best outcome.

There is a question as to whether the proposed Arkadia towers represent good urban form. The Pienza apartments at 12-14 Waters Road was cited as a site of a good size for a development. This site is 1,627m² with 3 road frontages for good vehicular access, a loading dock off Waters Lane and a carpark entry off Waters Road and allows for windows/ balconies on 3 sides of the building.

Q: Will there be retail premises in the Pienza development?

A: Yes. Retail space is proposed around the Waters Road and Grosvenor Street boundaries.

Vehicle access to the proposed Arkadia sites

Only Site 2A-1 has vehicular access from Grosvenor Lane; Arkadia proposes vehicular access to Site 2A-2 (Community Centre) from Grosvenor Lane via a ramp across the proposed Plaza, and Site 2B (Theo's Arcade) from Grosvenor Lane across the Council owned public carpark. Sites 2A-2 and 2B require acquiring an interest in public land.

Q: Will the proposed Plaza have vehicle parking?

A: This is up to Council to decide. The NBVPS showed some parking could be provided at the eastern (Waters Road) end. The Council objective is to provide a "Village Centre" for Neutral Bay and has released an expressions of interest tender to underground the current public car park and create a plaza on top.

Q. What about the Plane trees in the now public car park?

A: No decision has been made about the trees.

Q: Are Coles and Arkadia talking together?

A: Coles say they have had lots of meetings. Arkadia has said no they have not met.

Compromised building separation standards

If Arkadia was required to comply with the State Government's Apartment Design Guide (ADG) which has the force of a DCP then changes to Arkadia's planning proposal would need to be made to provide setbacks from boundaries and adjacent towers.

The artists impression of the proposed buildings shows windows and balconies on side boundaries which are not allowed, there would be blank walls on the westernmost and easternmost side boundaries.

Neutral Bay Community Centre

The existing centre built in 1973 is on a 318 m² site with a 600 m² facility, approx. 350 m² Community Centre (CC). The Community Uses on Council Land Study (2016) identified a number of options for a CC in Neutral Bay:

Option 1. Upgrade within amalgamated site (paid for by PPP, VPA or development contributions).

Option 2: Relocate to new facility in Barry Street with a ground only facility of 350 m² or two floors 979 m². This was identified as part of Site 4 in the draft Military Road Corridor Planning Study. Site 4 was not included in the Neutral Bay Village Planning Study in 2022.

The Military Road Corridor Planning Study also identified including the CC on the Arkadia site with 1,000 m² on first floor, public toilets, family room, store for community events at ground level.

The Neutral Bay Village Planning Study identified a community centre on the Arkadia site with 1,000 m² on first floor and a lobby at ground level. No brief has been prepared and the services that a centre may provide have not been specified. Arkadia's planning proposal includes a 730 m² tenancy on a first floor with lobby at ground floor. No public toilets have been identified at this stage.

It is not a finalised development plan at this stage. It appears that the developer is wanting to acquire Council land at ground level, which is more valuable, and relocate the community centre to a higher level in the development.

Arkadia proposes charging Council a peppercorn rent for 40 years for the 1,000 m² CC which they value at \$9.35 million. Arkadia proposes acquiring the existing Community Centre site from Council for \$7.95 million. Arkadia claims this would be a net public benefit of \$1.4 million.

In summary Arkadia's Public Benefits Offer is:

A Community Centre tenancy; a 2.5 m wider footpath to Site 2A & 1.5 m to Site 2B (ground floor only). Through site links from Military Road to Grosvenor Lane including a 4 m open to sky western link with a lift; a 3 m open to sky link where the existing community centre is; and a 4 m wide arcade on Theo's site. This would be a proposed VPA total of \$17.05 million.

There is no mention of Council land acquired for vehicular access.

Q: The whole proposal is boring. Why can't we have something more interesting?

A: This is a good point to give as feedback to the Council.

It would be ideal if Arkadia could purchase sites around the Military Road/ Waters Road corner then a development would have greater road frontages providing better opportunity for windows/balconies and improved vehicular access.

Q: Do we know the time frame for this proposal?

A: The proposal was submitted to Council in October 2024. Any proposal this size can take from 2-3 years for the rezoning.

Q: How as a small community group do we best express our feedback on the Arkadia proposal?

A: Feedback can be provided directly to Council by email to yoursay@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Council has a policy of not approving a planning proposal that is not consistent with a Council-endorsed planning study. If Council refuses the Arkadia planning proposal, Arkadia can request a rezoning review with the State Department of Planning.

CB added that the Precinct provides feedback to Council through minutes of our meetings and submissions to Council on identified issues.

Q: With all the development proposals in Neutral Bay at the moment, can the Council require developers to commence at different times?

A: No, a developer with a development consent can proceed when it suits them. The consent will normally have conditions regarding a construction management plan.

Q: What is happening to Young Street?

A: Council has endorsed landscaping with one vehicular lane open going south onto Military Road.

There were no further questions, so CB thanked Meredith for her presentation and leading the discussion.

Precinct Meeting

2. Apologies – Nil

3. Additional items added to the agenda.

a. Report on proposed rates increase decision at last night's Council meeting.

CB and AK attended the meeting where approx. 200 residents turned up. Unfortunately, the Council chamber has a small gallery capacity, and many people outside could not hear the proceedings. CB addressed the Council meeting as one of 44 people registered to speak.

Councillor Carr attended the Precinct meeting and was invited to provide an overview of the proposed special rate variation agenda item at the Council meeting. Councillor Carr advised the following:

- It was a lively meeting with community speakers very much against the proposed option for an 87% rate increase.
- There was robust discussion between the Councillors
- 7 Councillors (Baker, Beregi, Antonioni, Holding, Welch, Santor, & Hoy) voted for the motion and 3 Councillors (Spenceley, Keen & Carr) voted against.
- Councillor Carr indicated she voted against the motion because Council had not listened to residents, who responded to the survey consultation over the Christmas/New Year period. Of the approx. \$500M that will be raised only \$50M is required to complete the Olympic Pool project. Approx. \$146M will go to addressing maintenance & infrastructure issues. The rest will go to meet the cost of the 10 strategies that Council had developed in consultation with the community but had not indicated at the time that Council could not afford to implement without a rate rise.

Q. Why is the Olympic Pool costing so much?

A. The history in a nutshell is: The main pool has been leaking for many years. Council consulted the swimming users, and they explained that they just wanted the main pool fixed and the other 25 metre pool to be retained. The Council, at that time, decided to redevelop the whole site and design work had not been finalised when the contract was signed by the ex-Mayor on advice from the former General Manager. When the contract was signed the Council had \$63M available. This has blown out to \$120M. A number of mistakes have been made by a number of individuals. A contributory factor to the cost over-run was when the structural steel supporting the roof over the indoor swimming pool was not strong enough and the steel had to be remade.

Q. Can the State Government contribute to the cost of the Pool?

A. The Federal Government at the time had provided some funding for the pool renovation.

Q. What are the next steps regarding the proposed rates rise?

A. The proposal will go to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a decision. Council cannot raise rates beyond the rate peg imposed by IPART.

Discussion points:

- You need to complain/send your views to IPART. Send copies of the IPART submission to your local State Member Felicity Wilson. Ms Wilson asked in State parliament today for an inquiry to be established into North Sydney Council's decision to require significant rate rises.
- The Precinct will email to Precinct members a link to make a submission to IPART when it opens the review of Council proposals for rate variations. It is likely to open soon.

b. Lime rental bikes on sidewalks

AK reported the significant nuisance of rental Lime bikes being left on footpaths, particularly on the corner of Kurraba Rd and Wycombe Road impacting pedestrian safety. Contact with Lime Bikes has not yet resolved the issue. Other residents reported the bikes being left at other locations on footpaths in NB and as the bikes are very heavy being unable to move the bikes to a safe position. The Precinct Committee undertook to identify action that could be taken. Since the meeting the following has been obtained from the Council

"Information from Council regarding Lime Bike

Lime Bikes can legally operate in the North Sydney LGA, as long as they comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements. Local governments cannot prevent bike share companies from legally operating in their area.

If you find a bike that is parked unsafely or has fallen over and is blocking the footpath, move the bike to a safe position if you are able and it is safe to do so. If you are unable, please contact Lime Bike via the QR code on the bike, which will con-

nect you directly to the local team. Email at help-sydney@li.me or support-au@li.me

Lime's 24/7 hotline:1800 861 305. If you have no response from Lime Bike, please contact Council's Rangers on 9936 8100 and they can move the bike to a safe place. If a bike is unattended for 7 days, Council will ask Lime to move it. If they have not moved it within four days, Council can impound the bike"

4. Business from minutes of meeting held November 2024:
 - i. December minutes were confirmed as accurate, proposed by GC and seconded by TM.
 - ii. Council responses to Precinct motions at December meeting.

Grosvenor Lane Council Car Park

The Precinct asked Council to i) ensure the underground parking for the village centre is fully integrated with both the Coles and Arkadia sites. ii) Ensure the design of the proposed plaza maximises green space, & iii. Be transparent with the community on the tender specifications for the Grosvenor Lane car park development. The requests have been forwarded to the Director Open Space and Infrastructure. Awaiting response.

Arkadia Planning Proposal P4/2024

Neutral Precinct requested the Council to:

- i. Reject the Arkadia Planning Proposal P4/2024 as the proposed heights far exceed the 2024 Council endorsed. Neutral Bay Village Planning Study.
- ii. Require the Arkadia development to provide retail parking, not just private parking.

Council has noted and the submission forwarded for consideration. Open/Ongoing

1-7 Rangers Road and 50 Yeo Street

The Precinct requested the Council to require the developer of 1-7 Rangers Road & 50 Yeo Street to: i). Revise the drawings to comply with the provisions of the NSDCP as voted for by Council in relation to overshadowing of dwellings in Yeo Street and the impact of the carpark entrance in Yeo Street on pedestrian safety and traffic flow. ii. Reduce the number of retail and commercial customer car parking spaces to no more than 180 and reduced the exit lanes. iii. Demonstrate the development will not cause any adverse conflict with traffic flow on Yeo Street.

Noted by Council. Open/Ongoing.

Special Rate Variation

The Precinct finds all three of the proposed options for a Special Rate Increase to be outrageously excessive. The Precinct objects to the "Have Your Say" survey not allowing progress from Q7 to Q8 without agreeing to a minimum of a 65.38% increase in rates. This is steering an outcome of

the survey, unethical and not genuine community consultation where alternative options/suggestions are sought.

Council noted the Precinct's motion and advised that the report on the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) for long-term financial sustainability was presented to Council on Monday 10 February. Following the meeting an application has been submitted to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART will conduct its own consultation process before making a determination in May 2025.

5. Relaunch of Neutral Precinct's Face Book page and website
AK reported work has been done to update the Neutral Precinct's Facebook Page and Web site www.neutralprecinct.com.
6. Update: Warringah Freeway Upgrade
CB reported the Precinct had received a response to our December letter to the Minister for Roads and Transport requesting a number of actions be taken to ameliorate the temporary closure of the Alfred Street Off Ramp. The response had been sent to the Precinct's email list and is attached to the minutes.

A resident commented that the main purpose is to join the Warringah Freeway with the new Western harbour tunnel. It is not an upgrade to the Freeway

7. Ilbery Reserve – need for lights?
Residents raised the need for lighting to be installed in the park a safety measure for children and others such as dog walkers using the park in the evenings. There are a number of younger people congregating in the area late at night and lighting can be a deterrent to unsocial behaviour.

MOTION:

The Council consider:

- i. **Installing low level LED /non spillage lighting in the Ilbery Reserve similar to other lighting that has been installed in public places in Neutral Bay**
 - ii. **Asking AUSGRID to sponsor/provide the lighting for Ilbery Reserve**
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8. Upcoming meetings were noted
 - i. Neutral Precinct – 11 March www.neutralprecinct.com
Councillor Maryanne Beregi has accepted an invitation to address the March meeting
 - ii. Council – 24 February, 10 March www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au

The meeting ended at 8:50pm