



# Newport Residents Association Inc.

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13<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Mr Ray Brownlee,  
The Chief Executive Officer  
Northern Beaches Council  
PO Box 1336,  
Dee Why, NSW 2099

Dear Ray,

Following our drive around Newport last December we discussed the Foamcrest Ave Newport car park and council's ability to clean it up and get better usage. We discussed the difficulty whereby the car park is divided into three lots with the centre lot owned by Woolworths and the outer two by council. You rightly commented that the ownership was not an ideal scenario.

I commented that our association was looking at possible alternate usages and that we would write to you with our suggestions which we summarise briefly as follows;

Possible scenarios include:

- NBC consider purchase carpark portion not currently owned;
- Then NBC revamp total carpark area, including integration of adjacent building's carpark, as per Masterplan;
- Develop underground carpark, with above area at least partially incorporating a green community space;
- Pursue total site sale (including Barrenjoey frontage & NBC parking requirements) to a purchaser committed to an integrated development, complying with Masterplan, eg, boutique residential hotel & upmarket arcade.

The overwhelming direction needs to be: What does Newport need to inject long term vitality into our village?

Should council be interested in acquiring this middle lot, which we think is necessary to give you maximum options to deal with, the NRA would actively seek support from our politicians to help fund such an acquisition. Also, we would be happy to sit down with council to explore these and other alternatives.

We also attach a copy of our notes re the history and future use of the car park prepared recently.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Butler

## History

- c 2008, when the Newport village had been without a supermarket for some 5 years (after the closure of a Woolworths smaller brand, Foodworks) the then GM of PWC, in consultation with the then mayor but without consulting Councillors, approached Woolworths with a view to encourage the company to develop a supermarket.
- A contiguous site made up of a privately held 4-shop-plus-arcade frontage to Barrenjoey Rd plus the centre section of an at-grade carpark which flowed through to Foamcrest Avenue, formed the base of the proposed site.
- Immediately abutting this carpark section, north and south, are 2 parcels of community land facing Foamcrest Avenue, which comprise the rest of that at-grade carpark.
- The GM entered Council into a contract, to sell the 2 parcels of land (believed to be for c\$4million), if Woolworths proceeded with a successful rezoning application plus a successful DA and included in the design at least as many public parking spaces as currently exist in the at-grade space (over the 3 separately titled Foamcrest sites).
- On this basis, a Woolworths property subsidiary purchased the privately held property from the owner, who had himself been unsuccessful with more than one DA for developing the site.
- This was revealed to the community – and Councillors – with the release of a Woolworths “concept design” for a boundary-to-boundary ground-level supermarket with levels of carparking above, rising to 3 storeys without set-backs, at the Barrenjoey Rd frontage of the site.
- This was just after the release of the Newport Masterplan, which had been developed with considerable community consultation over almost 2 years. It breached most aspects of the Masterplan and was consequently roundly rejected by the community.
- After much community agitation including a public rally of some 1200 people, Woolworths put forward a revised concept, which still had a boundary-to-boundary 3,200-3,500sqm supermarket but which put the 2-levels of parking underground.
- By this time the new 1,600sqm Coles supermarket had opened less than 220m north of this site so this was still roundly criticized by the community. However, after a 2-day Public Hearing, a Pittwater Council rezoning application – not Woolworths – was successful and the whole area was rezoned to accommodate shop-top housing, bringing it into line with adjacent zonings.
- This was apparently not conducive to Woolworths proceeding with a DA. As at April 2018 Woolworths have never lodged a DA. In an effort to understand the status of the contract the NRA formally asked Pittwater Council (now the Northern Beaches Council) and received a reply indicating that a new negotiation would have to happen as the condition of lodging a DA had not occurred so the contract was incomplete.

## Possible Other uses for the Woolworths + Foamcrest Ave site

During the fight against Woolworths building a mega supermarket, a number of architects and designers put a lot of effort into developing alternate plans which may have still allowed for a smaller supermarket but made better use of the public land comprising the car parks (including an allowance for enhanced parking).

### Boutique Hotel

One of the plans for the arcade and car park land was to incorporate a boutique hotel on the site. To this end one of the NRA members, Peter Middleton, put together a concept proposal

headed '**NEWPORT and its FUTURE as a SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AREA**' and we give an extract of this below.

### **The Concept**

The ideal extension to Newport village is something which complements – rather than overpowers the currently evolving retail offering. Valuable bonuses would be the further enhancement of what is on offer, while assisting to attract a controllable increase in visitation to the area.

A Newport addition which addresses all these aspects would be a small, four to five star, boutique hotel. Not an institution which would compete with the The Newport but an initiative which complements both the historical and the anticipated facilities of a revitalised The Newport.

For those who are familiar with the boutique hotel which for decades was The Sebel (Townhouse) at Elizabeth Bay, this would be a good philosophical model for what is envisaged for Newport village – not architecturally, because The Sebel was a c10-storey building on a narrow steep site, but conceptually, in the atmosphere and facilities which it offered to the international, interstate and intrastate clientele which it attracted.

As with The Sebel, this boutique hotel would incorporate:

- Less than 100 guest rooms and suites;
- A mid-to-up-market restaurant of c100 covers, overlooking or opening onto a public piazza;
- No public bars but a cocktail bar, open to inhouse guests and those eating at the restaurant;
- Conference rooms, suited to small to medium business seminars & meetings and sit-down banquets/receptions for up to c100 persons.

Additionally, the development would include:

- A shopping arcade, likely to attract even more upmarket boutique retailers than those already in the current village mix and hence enhancing the overall range and attractiveness of Newport's retail;
- Membership of an international hotel group, such as Small Luxury Hotels of the World, both to ensure the grade and the style of its service and to put it on the international map in attracting clientele.

It could be the decisive step which heads Pittwater towards the more environmentally conscious direction of, say, an original Noosa style, rather than the destructive evolution of the Gold Coast style.

Any such a concept proposal needs to address numerous community requirements (as reflected in the Masterplan) necessary to condone the sale of community land for private development and these criteria are currently being updated.