



VILLAGE VOICE

QUEEN STREET & WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION NEWS BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER, 1978

COUNCIL AND ASSOCIATION MEET ON PLANNING ISSUE

At the invitation of the Mayor of Woollahra, Alderman Tony Perry, four committee members of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association had a three-hour meeting with him and Council officers on August 25 to discuss the Council's Proposed Action Plan for Woollahra West.

The invitation followed the publication in the last *Village Voice* of our initial comments on the Plan and our criticism of the proposal to allow the erection of four and six storey blocks of flats on sites along Oxford Street, facing Centennial Park.

The association's deputation consisted of the president, Leo Schofield, the vice president, Robin Brampton, the chairman of the architectural and planning sub-committee, Douglas Gordon, and the treasurer, Tom Wilhelm.

Council officers present included the Town Clerk, Mr. Douglas Ford, and the Council's Town Planner, Mr. Peter Jensen.

In a press release issued before the meeting, the Council accused the association of having distorted and misrepresented the plan, and in opening the meeting the Mayor said the Council believed the association had "over-reacted" to it.

The association opened its side of the discussion by expressing its disappointment that it had been offered no opportunity for consultation with the Council's planning staff when the present Action Plan proposals were being formulated.

This was in great contrast to the situation with the previous planning proposals for West Woollahra which the Council adopted in 1976, and which presumably will now be superseded.

When the former proposals were being evolved, the association was fully consulted by Council officers and as a result



Suddenly the old Glebe area of Edgecliff, where part of "Caddie" was filmed, is enjoying a renaissance. Interesting old properties are being restored and new homes being built. A wave of concern among residents about the future of their "Mini Paddington" has led to the formation of the Edgecliff Preservation Society . . . see report overleaf.

submitted its own action plan to the Council.

This was based on the work of local architects and other experts and a special survey of residents' opinions which the association commissioned.

At our August meeting, the Council gave no explanation for the change of policy on consultation, except that the Mayor emphasised that the new proposals were still only tentative and could be changed in response to resident reaction.

The meeting then got down to a very frank exchange of information and ideas which generally centred on two issues:

—Whether the Council's new zoning proposals for our area are significantly different from those adopted in 1976.

—The desirability of the proposal for four and six storey residential development on three sites in Oxford Street — and the possible alternatives to it.

In the previous proposals, much of our area was zoned Residential 2(g) (Redevelop-

ment). The association welcomed this zoning as it would provide a very satisfactory type of planning control which emphasises preservation and restricts high-rise buildings.

The new proposals are for a mixture of 2(a) and 2(b) zoning in our area.

However, Mr. Jensen stated emphatically that the intent of 2(g) zoning would be maintained because a Conservation Zoning would apply to the whole area. To use the words of the press release, "The change is a change in name only."

Why then was any change necessary? Many people interested in preserving their environment have got used to the 2(g) zoning and feel secure in the protection it gives to their environment.

The answer from Mr. Jensen was that 2(g) is a crude control and the Council wanted to take advantage of a new and more advanced planning philosophy ("avant garde" was the phrase used by

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MEETING WITH COUNCIL

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the Mayor) which would give the Council greater flexibility while still preserving the spirit of conservation.

Mr. Jensen explained that the old 2(g) was a land use zoning which made it difficult to apply to the full range of dwellings in the municipality. With the new form of zoning, instead of one control there would be three — covering land use, density and height.

"Conservation Zoning gives exactly what was meant by 2(g) in the earlier planning scheme," Mr. Jensen declared. "But it is a more sensitive and flexible form of 2(g)."

Our architectural expert at the meeting, Douglas Gordon, hoped that this view would be confirmed by the independent report on the Council's proposals which the association has commissioned from Mr. P. J. Devery, a distinguished town planner.

On the question of the use of the three sites in Oxford Street for four and six storey blocks of flats or units — which would mean, among other things, closing off the end of Wallis Street — Mr. Jensen said this was "potentially a very fine piece of residential area."

He pointed out that the architectural saviour of Paddington, Walter Bunning, while believing that the West Woollahra triangle should be zoned 2(g), had suggested that further studies would show "that a group of tall residential towers along the high land in Oxford Street would be an advantage in heightening the contrast with old Paddington and would make the visual landscape more interesting."

This was written 10 years ago, and Douglas Gordon pondered whether in view of the rejuvenation of old property which has since taken place in the area, the late Dr. Bunning would have taken the same view today.

The core sites of the areas concerned are the controversial Diamond Horseshoe Nightclub building, the "flat iron" building at the corner of Wallis Street, and the now-disused Parisian Laundry.

Council officers put it to us that their schemes for residential development were a defence against the possibility of the sites being allowed to be used for obnoxious commercial purposes — in the hiatus after they were no longer reserved for road widening.

It was also stated that the drawings which appeared in *Village Voice* were misleading in that the blocks of flats superimposed on the photographs were not shown set back from the road, illegal windows were shown in the side walls, and the bulk of the buildings would be well in excess of the floorspace limit proposed.

(The editor of VILLAGE VOICE is happy to concede that the drawings could lay no claim to architectural accuracy. They were prepared by a cartoonist to draw public attention to the broad implications of the scheme.)

Council officers produced their own drawings, showing how the Wallis Street-Flat Iron site might be developed on what they considered to be sound architectural lines, with considerable open space and two-storey homes on the street frontages, stepping back to a six-storey block in the middle — with a total of more than 140 homes.

While acknowledging this evidence of the constructive approach the Council had taken by actually producing a suggested housing scheme instead of waiting for a developer to do so, we were still concerned by the impact of introducing such a large number of additional residents to such a small area.

The association representatives at the meeting strongly urged the Council to consider, as an alternative to demolition, that the buildings on the sites could be rejuvenated — and perhaps in the case of the Diamond Horseshoe and Parisian Laundry put to other uses, perhaps very low-key commercial, which would present no threat to the amenities of the area.

We pointed out that there were already signs of architectural rejuvenation in this area of Oxford Street, a process which the Council might stimulate rather than discourage with proposals which would mean buildings disappearing under the demolisher's hammer.

However, it appeared that Council officers have little faith in the ultimate triumph of the rejuvenation process here, particularly as a developer who gained planning permission for a restoration scheme in this area of Oxford Street 18 months ago has never proceeded with it.

More hopeful for our cause was the Mayor's frequent statement that the proposals were only drawn up to elicit resident reaction.

Perhaps in view of the strong adverse reaction — which began quite spontaneously long before our "misleading" drawings were published — we have solid grounds for hoping that the provision for tall blocks of units will be scrapped or modified in the final plan.

Although at times heated, our discussions with the Council were very valuable — we trust on both sides — in affirming viewpoints and re-establishing a dialogue on planning matters between the association and the Council which has been sadly lacking in the past two years.

As a result of the meeting, it was decided to form a working party, led on the association's side by Douglas Gordon, to work with the Council on its proposals which it hopes to have ready to submit for State Government approval in about a year's time.

PRESERVING EDGECLIFF

Queen Street and West Woollahra Association wholeheartedly welcomes and supports the Edgecliff Preservation Society, a new residents' action group formed in July.

Covering the Edgecliff area, bordering our own, the new group has largely evolved as local residents close ranks in violent opposition to the plans of Aquila Developments Pty. Ltd. for the area.

This development company is proposing to construct three highrise blocks of flats, an office complex and a squash court in the area bounded by New South Head Road, New McLean Street and Glenmore Road.

For this purpose, Aquila has bought a large parcel of the Glebe lands formerly owned by the Church of England.

Residents' protests against the proposed six and eight storey buildings are based on the fact that they would cause unwarranted noise, air pollution and inconvenience. Also they would be completely out of character with the Edgecliff-Paddington area.

In addition to supporting the new society, our association has written to Woollahra Council voicing its own protest against the Aquila scheme.

The Preservation Society was formed at a meeting attended by about 40 people, held appropriately under the protective umbrella of a large Moreton Bay fig tree behind Cameron Street.

Official interest in this spontaneous example of resident action was shown by the fact that no less than six aldermen attended (Aram, Donohoe, Backhouse, Monkhouse, Piat and Warnecke), and supported the residents in their decision to form their own society.

The vice-president of the Queen Street Association, Robin Brampton, acting for Leo Schofield who was overseas, attended the first meeting, and several additional committee members attended a second meeting a fortnight later.

Another welcome visitor at the first meeting was Mrs. Gillian Bunning, widow of the late Walter Bunning whose recommendations have done so much to protect the character of Paddington in recent years.

The new society decided that its first task was to "get our facts straight and survey the battleground."

In addition to appointing a small central committee under the energetic leadership of Karl McPhee, a Film Australia film director who lives in Bowes Avenue, the new society has set up five special working groups.

These have five separate areas of investigation, negotiation and — where necessary — protest to official bodies:



One of the groups of musicians who will bring their special brand of gaiety to this year's Queen Street Fair — the NSW Permanent Building Society Band.

1. *The proposed 18-storey highrise development on the corner of Ocean Street and New South Head Road which was approved some time ago on appeal to the Lands Tribunal, after Woollahra Council had rejected the application. This group will also consider a proposed roadway through the top of the area.*
2. *The proposed Aquila highrise development below the Edgecliff Centre.*
3. *Resident parking and safeguards for driving in Edgecliff.*
4. *Tree preservation.*
5. *Negotiations with the Church of England to see if they would give a suitable building for a community centre in the area.*

Alderman O'Donohoe, chairman of the Council's Planning Committee, indicated to the formation meeting of the Preservation Society that although the Council had not yet received the Aquila application, under the proposed building codes what Aquila wanted would be unacceptable.

In view of the environmental and architectural problems in the Edgecliff area, which is in such a state of flux, we urge all local residents to join the new body.

You can do so by contacting Karl McPhee at 24 Bowes Avenue, Edgecliff. Phone 32-9446 (home) or 467-0111 (work).

The Society is due to hold its next meeting at 104 Cameron Street, Edgecliff, at 2.30 pm on Sunday, September 10.

ALL SET FOR THE FAIR

Plans are going ahead smoothly for the seventh annual Queen Street Fair, to be held on Saturday, November 25.

Woollahra Municipal Council has now fully approved our scheme to bring new excitement to the Fair by devoting the whole of the area from Victoria Avenue to Oxford Street to re-creating a Victorian street scene.

Leo Schofield, who is organising this part of the activities, is hoping to bring back a horse-drawn bus which originally plied to Queen Street from the city at the turn of the century.

We are also planning to have about 30 stalls in this area, allocated to charities and a few non-charities who will provide a completely Victorian stall to support the theme.

Stall fees in this section will be purely nominal, but we will insist that "Victoriana Street" stallholders sell only merchandise which is Victorian in character, and that all workers on the stall wear Victorian costume.

The association is arranging Victorian band entertainment — including Luft-hansa's German Band, which has played at every Fair, and the famous NSW Permanent Building Society Brass Band — but we also hope buskers will turn up in true Victorian fashion to give extempore entertainment.

The more modern section of the Fair, on the same scale as previous years, will stretch from Victoria Avenue to Ocean Street and contain approximately 215

stalls — the same number as we had in total last year.

This year kerbside stalls will cost \$68 at the ordinary rate and \$48 for charities, while island stalls will be \$125 at the ordinary rate and \$75 for charities.

This charge includes the special \$5 fee for a "pedlar's licence" from Woollahra Council. However, stallholders selling food, whether in the Victoriana Street or modern section of the Fair, will have to obtain a special licence from the Council, costing \$10 for charities and \$25 for non-charities.

This year the Fair is again being run by a joint committee of association officials and Woollahra Council officers, under the chairmanship of association vice-president Robin Brampton.

And again we are getting great support from the Council to ensure the smooth running of the Fair.

The Fair administration is being handled by association committee member Pixie Nolan; while the general direction of the Fair, including provision of facilities, will be the responsibility of Mr. John Sweet-apple of Road Runner Delivery Service.

From Monday, September 11, when bookings for stalls open, until October 11, we are having a priority booking period to enable us to meet Council requirements that we give preference to certain categories of applicants.

These are charities, both local and general, local community organisations, and people and groups who either live or conduct their businesses in the Municipality of Woollahra.

Others may apply during the priority booking period, but their applications will not be considered until after October 11, when all applications in the higher preference categories have been granted.

From our experience last year, we believe it will be possible to satisfy all applicants who get their application forms in during the priority booking period.

Stallholders in the 1977 Fair and others who have indicated their interest in having stalls this year will be sent application forms automatically.

If you have not had a stall before and would like to apply this year, write to the Queen Street Fair Secretary, Ms. Pixie Nolan, at Box 16, P.O. Woollahra, N.S.W. 2025.

Forms may also be obtained from Anne Schofield Antiques, 36 Queen Street, or Kaleidoscope, 42-44 Queen Street.

Telephone inquiries to Ms. Pixie Nolan, 32-1283, between 10 am and 3 pm. (This is a special number being arranged by Telecom for the Queen Street Fair Office. In view of the disruption caused by the recent Telecom dispute, it may not yet be in operation when this issue of *Village Voice* appears.)

THE QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

A residents' action association covering the area bounded by Jersey Road, Edgecliff Road and Oxford Street, West Woollahra, N.S.W. Affiliated to the National Trust.

Address: Box 16, P.O. Woollahra,
N.S.W. 2025.

Subscription: \$3 a year. Life membership
\$25.

Patron: Joan Sutherland

President: Leo Schofield

Vice-President: Robin Brampton

Secretary: Monica McDonald

Treasurer: Tom Wilhelm

Committee: Peter Billing, Sandra Cameron,
Douglas Gordon, Mollie Lenthall,
Pixie Nolan, Grant Roberts

Chairman of the Architectural Committee:
Douglas Gordon

Village Voice is published approximately every three months. Letters and other contributions on local topics are invited. The editor is Robin Brampton (357-1488 day, 32-4475 evening and weekends).

PADDINGTON GARDEN TOUR

The private gardens of Paddington and Woollahra are one of the neighbourhood's principal delights.

There will be a rare chance for everybody to appreciate some of the best examples when the Paddington Woollahra Garden Club holds an Open Garden Day on Sunday, September 17 from 1 pm to 4 pm.

Tickets costing \$2, including afternoon tea, will be available at the starting point of the tour, St. George's Church Hall, Five Ways, Paddington.

Inquiries to the Club's honorary secretary, Ms. T. Moore, 357-6857.

WELCOME PETER BILLING

Tom Wilhelm, who was elected a member of the association's committee in April, has now agreed to accept the position of treasurer which was not filled at the annual meeting.

To fill the committee vacancy caused by Tom's elevation into the realms of high finance, we have co-opted Peter Billing who for some years has conducted an interesting decor shop in Queen Street.

Peter has kindly agreed to conduct the bric-a-brac stall which the association will run as part of the Victoriana street section of the Queen Street Fair to raise funds for its own activities.

Peter needs everybody's help in providing secondhand goods to sell. If you have any unwanted items about your house, please phone him on 32-4342.

PROTEST FROM WOODS AVENUE

As announced in the previous issue of VILLAGE VOICE, the association has expressed its full support for a scheme, approved by Woollahra Municipal Council, for a restoration of the Helen Keller Hostel building, facing down Waimea Avenue.

In addition to restoring the magnificent Georgian residence to its former splendour, the new owner, Dr. Bill Kelly, plans to build seven town houses behind the core building, with access to Woods Avenue.

Several Woods Avenue residents are objecting to this part of the plan on the grounds that it will cause so much congestion in their narrow street that their lifestyle will be impaired.

Their views are expressed in this letter to the Association from Mr. J. Porter, of 3 Woods Avenue.

I note with interest your article on the restoration of the Helen Keller Hostel site in the *Village Voice*.

As a resident of Woods Avenue, Woollahra, who has objected strongly to the present proposed concept of the development, I feel I must take issue with you at the use of the term "altruistic".

Surely all that Dr. Kelly is doing is pursuing a business venture in which the profits of the sale of the town houses will be used to finance the restoration of the hostel and his own personal residence.

Any form of altruism in this type of transaction is purely a matter of how you view the eventual result.

I have enclosed a copy of my objections to the proposed development which I have presented to Woollahra Council and I think these cover adequately the feelings of myself and other residents of Woods Avenue.

Notwithstanding the terms of these objections, it would be true to say that if there has to be a development, we would certainly see the advantage in not having such an extensive number of town houses. That an attempt has been made to blend these proposed town houses in with the existing residences, is appreciated.

Of course, we would contend that Woollahra Council should long ago have taken the initiative to retain the present existing open space and carry out the restoration and renovation of Waimea House itself.

However, as it has now reached a stage of a development project being approved for the area, we are concerned at the resulting effect that, under the circumstances, such a relatively high-density development is going to substantially reduce the present quality of life of the residents of Woods Avenue.

A more realistic development, in keeping

with the restricted nature of the Avenue, would be one or two town houses on either side of the present roadway.

For some time, we, as residents of Woods Avenue, have been concerned at the apparent neglect of the area generally, as exhibited by Woollahra Council, and now we find ourselves about to be involved in this proposed development in a manner which appears to us to be to our distinct disadvantage, whilst much play is being made of the aesthetic quality of the project.

We acknowledge that some development of a more intense nature could have been decided upon instead of the present one which does, as we have acknowledged, blend in with the general area.

However, we feel that not enough consideration has been given to the effects of this development on the residents of Woods Avenue, and this is basically the reason for my approach to you in this letter: to seek some support for the views that we have expressed in the enclosed objections.

Let me once again stress that we are most concerned that improvements should be made to our small cul-de-sac and we are not trying to be, in any way, opposed to some orderly form of development.

However, we are concerned that the increase of 50 per cent in the number of dwellings in an area which has, through no fault of our own, become extremely restricted in access, can only produce very detrimental effects.

Yours faithfully,
J. PORTER

JOAN SUTHERLAND ACCEPTS

The Association is very pleased to announce that Joan Sutherland has accepted an invitation to become our Patron.

Miss Sutherland is probably the greatest living former resident of Queen Street. She lived there for approximately 12 years when she was in her teens and early 20s.

In a letter to the Association's vice-president, Robin Brampton, she says:

"Of course I am delighted to accept your invitation and only regret I shall be on the other side of the world the last Saturday of November! (The day of Queen Street Fair.)

"I presume you are aware that Harold Williams and Essie Ackland also come from the area between Moncur Street and Holdsworth Street on Queen Street, and Augustus Juncker, the composer, lived on the corner of Edgecliff Road at the bottom of Nelson Street!!

"My best wishes for the success of the Association's projects.

Sincerely,
JOAN SUTHERLAND"