



VILLAGE VOICE

QUEEN STREET & WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION NEWS BULLETIN

APRIL, 1979

● Woollahra West Plan Analysed

An independent expert's view and Woollahra Council's reply

The association remains deeply active and concerned to ensure that certain aspects of Woollahra Council's Action Plan for Woollahra West which local residents find objectionable will not be incorporated when the plan is finally approved.

Our greatest objection is to a proposal for four and six storey residential development on three sites facing Oxford Street which would involve blocking off the end of Wallis Street.

We are also very concerned to ensure that the Council's new zoning proposals will continue to emphasise the preservation of old buildings and restrict high-rise development.

Last year we commissioned a distinguished town planner, Mr. P. J. Devery, BSc, MTCP, to make an independent report on the plan. Mr. Devery knew something of the background as he was engaged by Woollahra Council to report on one of its earlier plans for the area.

The association presented Mr. Devery's report to the Council at a meeting in November attended by the Mayor, members of the planning staff and interested aldermen.

Briefly Mr. Devery recommends:

-Rejection of a proposal to direct as much through traffic as possible into Ocean Street and acceptance of a proposal that all major streets be incorporated in

LOCAL RESIDENTS' FORUM

Organised by the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association

Holdsworth Street Playpark
Wednesday, April 18, at 7.30 p.m.

ALL LOCAL RESIDENTS INVITED

Come and put your viewpoint on:

- Woollahra Council's Action Plan for Woollahra West
- The redevelopment of disused commercial sites in Oxford Street
- Traffic control in the West Woollahra area
- Any other topic which concerns you as a resident.

Our three local ward aldermen have been invited to attend this meeting to hear and discuss your opinions.

Although the Queen Street Association's views on the Council's Action Plan will be outlined at this meeting, we emphasise that this is an "open forum" for all viewpoints to be discussed, whether they coincide or conflict with the association's.

Coffee and refreshments provided free

Preliminary Notice

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association will be held on Wednesday, May 9th, 1979, at Queen Street Galleries, 38-40 Queen Street, Woollahra, at 7.30 p.m. Nomination forms for the new Committee will be forwarded to all members and a further notice will appear in the next *Village Voice*.

Continued next page

WOOLLAHRA WEST PLAN ANALYSED

Continued

the pattern of traffic circulation in the area.

—Rejection of the proposed height levels of 12 metres and 18 metres fronting onto Oxford Street, and acceptance of a height limit of 9.5 metres generally for West Woollahra.

—Studying the feasibility of the redevelopment of sites incorporating land between Wallis Street and Oxford Street, parts of Wallis Street and land fronting Wallis Street for residential or other "amenable" uses.

—Compilation of a Development Code for West Woollahra which would be generally acceptable to the people of the area, the Council and other planning/controlling authorities. This would be adopted in the same way as the Development Control Code for Paddington.

At our November meeting with Council representatives, it was agreed that Council would study the report and meet with the association again as soon as possible.

We were rather disappointed that by the middle of March the Council had taken no initiative on this matter, other than to pass a resolution on December 19 thanking us for our interest and suggesting that our planning consultant should contact the Council's planning staff on what were seen as some misunderstandings in his report.

However, a request in mid-March to our senior ward alderman, Tony Perry, that the Council provide a written comment on our planning report resulted very promptly in the statement which we print in full below.

This acknowledges that there is room for the Action Plan to be amended in the light of further studies and experience — and we naturally welcome this.

In addition to printing the Council's statement, this issue of VILLAGE VOICE also contains a comment on it by the chairman of our architectural sub-committee, Mr. Douglas Gordon, and an article by Mr. Devery on his original report.

WOOLLAHRA COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE ASSOCIATION'S INDEPENDENT TOWN PLANNING REPORT ON THE WOOLLAHRA WEST ACTION PLAN

The Queen Street and West Woollahra Association has presented Council with an independent town planner's report on its exhibited Woollahra West Action Plan.

Councils very rarely have the benefit of such independent and objective assessments of their planning proposals. The initiative is therefore a welcome one and Council is appreciative of the association's contribution.

In this particular instance, Council is encouraged by the general endorsement of its basic planning concepts for West Woollahra. The association's report disagrees with Council on only two issues and even in these the differences are not great.

Perhaps the major issue in the recent planning of West Woollahra is the conservation question.

It has long been felt that a zoning along the lines of the Paddington 2(g) zone was appropriate to the Queen Street/West Woollahra area. Such a zoning was proposed in the Action Plan and, although the exact details of the zoning had not been developed at that time, the basic concept was proposed.

The association's report also commended this aspect.

Since that time Council has evolved a new approach to conservation in more detail which hopefully will be an improvement on the present 2(g) concept. This was foreshadowed in the exhibited Action Plan.

The association's report also supports the other basic concepts advocated in the Action Plan. The only two areas of contention relate to redevelopment proposals on Oxford Street and the question of traffic on Ocean Street.

Even on these the Council finds very little to argue with in the association's report as far as it goes.

The association's report objects to the Oxford Street proposals solely on the grounds of height. The author of the report, Mr. Devery, otherwise takes the same view as Council.

He agrees that redevelopment should be encouraged in the Oxford Street/Wallis Street area. In fact he even allows for the possibility of higher densities to bring the redevelopment about.

He also sees merit in the consideration of non-residential alternatives and rightly points out that any increase in traffic generation is unlikely to create major problems.

Mr. Devery's suggestion that Main Road's setbacks be waived is one Council has also considered and will be pursued further as work on the Action Plan proceeds.

The association's report also agrees that proper feasibility studies need to be carried out before the validity of the redevelopment concept can be properly assessed. Council has initiated such investigations along the lines of the "Planning Balance Sheet" technique.

With regard to the second area of contention, namely traffic on Ocean Street, Council has always taken the view that further investigations need to be carried out before plans are finalised.

Now that the Oxford Street by-pass is operating, the effect on the local street

network is being carefully monitored. Council also has a transportation model available that it intends to use to test various traffic distribution alternatives.

It will be some time yet before the results of these studies are concluded and the opening of the Eastern Suburbs Railway will also be relevant and critical. In the meantime Council will continue to observe the existing situation closely.

Council is confident that satisfactory solutions can be found for the problems raised by the association.

As work on the Action Plan proceeds, Council will be endeavouring to resolve these problems and looks forward to the association's continuing participation in the action planning exercise.

Mayor's letter

In a separate letter to the association's president, Mr. Leo Schofield, the Mayor of Woollahra, Alderman Brenda Backhouse, said that the association's views on the Plan would be discussed at the next meeting of the Community and Environmental Planning Committee.

"I feel I can speak for the whole Council in saying that it is our clear intention to prepare a new plan for the Woollahra (West) area which takes into consideration all relevant opinions and most particularly those of local residents," she stated.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE FOR RENEWAL

This issue of *Village Voice* is being sent by post to everybody who was a member of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association on December 31, 1978.

We extended to that date the membership of everybody who paid a subscription between June 1, 1977, and May 31, 1978, in order to make the association's subscription year correspond in future with the calendar year.

However, all subscriptions fell due again on January 1, 1979, and members will receive a subscription renewal form with this issue of *Village Voice*.

We ask that you return it promptly with your cheque as a gesture of support for the work we are doing for the local community.

Village Voice is also distributed by letterbox drop throughout the association's area. If you are reading this and you are not an association member — we invite you to join us by filling in the coupon on the back page of this newsletter.

Only members who have paid their 1979 subscription will be entitled to vote at the association's annual meeting on May 9.

COMMENT ON COUNCIL STATEMENT

The chairman of the association's architectural sub-committee, Mr. Douglas Gordon, has written the following comment on the Council's reply to Mr. Devery's report on the Action Plan. The Council's statement is printed in full opposite.

By Douglas Gordon

The association was very pleased to get some response from the Council after what seemed to us to be rather a long time.

There is no doubt that there are great demands on the Council's planning staff in respect of so many issues these days, so that I suppose we can be grateful for such an optimistic reply, even though it is somewhat superficial.

The major local issues of traffic control and management; husbanding the planting and open space of the area; and the time-worn issue of respect for the rights of individual property owners, must be enough to keep the Council busy maintaining the status quo.

Therefore there is limited time to rush into major new initiatives in areas which are already enjoying spontaneous renewal without the dubious benefits of government intervention.

The response by Council seems to us to be optimistic and enthusiastic and plays down the apparent differences which it notes exist between the Council's proposals and the views of residents.

From a global standpoint, one could hold that neighbourhood problems are matters of small consequence. To those living in the neighbourhood, however, the future of their property and its environs are matters of the greatest importance.

The Council must deal fairly with the whole of the municipality, whereas we in West Woollahra have the greatest concern for those issues which affect us directly.

The Council has expressed a willingness to enter into dialogue with us in an effort to achieve a consensus as to the most desirable manner of dealing with our neighbourhood in planning terms.

We welcome this opportunity and hasten to add that we are ready and waiting for the opportunity to become involved further and in more practical ways.

We now have the willingness and the resources to contribute to our own future in the most tangible way. We look forward to meeting the Council's challenge and only await the opportunity.

TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE FOR AN ARTICLE BY MR. P. J. DEVERY, COMMENTING ON HIS REPORT ON THE ACTION PLAN



Parisian Laundry Views

A development application has recently been lodged with Woollahra Municipal Council to convert the disused Parisian Laundry building, with frontages on both Oxford and Wallis Streets, into an arts and crafts gallery.

At present the site is zoned 2(e) residential and for the proposal to succeed, Woollahra Council would need to obtain an Interim Development Order.

At the time of writing, the association's committee had formulated no policy on the proposal, other than to seek further information on how strict an Interim Development Order would be in preventing the use of the site in future for other less desirable commercial purposes.

However, Mrs. Linda Wilhelm, a resident of Wallis Street, has circulated a strongly worded letter to local residents asking them to protest at the scheme.

Below we publish two views of the project, one written by Mr. Tom Wilhelm, the association's treasurer, and the other by the Editor who discussed the scheme with one of the joint applicants, Mr. Peter Grossman.

It is emphasised that neither article represents an official association viewpoint. They are published to give local residents maximum information on the project and its possible implications.

RESIDENT SEES IT AS A THREAT

By Tom Wilhelm

At first sight this application has its merits. The presently derelict building would be cleaned and renovated (though not altered structurally) and would provide some amenity for the residents of the area.

The proposed arts and crafts centre seems much less obnoxious than the last proposal, in October, 1977, for the building to become a car sales and servicing centre.

But the new proposal, though different, presents the same problems to nearby residents.

Continued next page

DEVELOPER SEES IT AS AN AMENITY

By the Editor

The application to use the old Parisian Laundry building as an arts and crafts gallery has been made jointly by Mr. Peter Grossman, of Artcraft Galleries in Bondi Junction, and his father.

They regard it as a viable, low-key commercial usage and say it has gained the support of such bodies as the Visual Arts Board, the Craft Board and the Community Arts Board.

"There will be no external effects from the proposed use of the building -

Continued next page

RESIDENT SEES IT AS A THREAT

Continued

The old laundry is now zoned residential 2(e) and both uses – the car showroom, proposed and defeated after a long struggle by residents in November, 1977, and the recent proposal for an arts and crafts centre – would necessitate changing the zoning to permit a commercial usage.

Residents are very concerned about this change of zoning, innocuous sounding enough at first glance, but with severe implications for the long-term future of the area.

The effect of the Council aldermen voting to seek an Interim Development Order (IDO) to permit the zoning change and allowing thereby the proposed arts and crafts centre would be to set a precedent for owners of other derelict properties in the area (also zoned residential) to seek commercial usages.

All redevelopment in this area of West Woollahra near Oxford Street during the past two years has been entirely residential renovation of houses and flats.

Even if the IDO is written with extreme strictness and permits only the arts and crafts centre and no other usage for the site, it will be the first openly commercial usage granted by the Council outside the Queen Street business district for many years.

Even leaving aside the fact that the proposed arts and crafts centre would have to trade seven days a week and some evenings to be viable (a fact openly admitted by the applicant), I find it rather strange that the Council would even consider granting a commercial usage to a building outside the Queen Street business district when businessmen and entrepreneurs have had such difficulties with the Council in merely changing usages in old commercial premises in Queen Street.

The residential redevelopment of old houses in this southerly part of West Woollahra is far from complete, but the Council's vote in this matter could easily change the whole course of events to commercial development where commercial development is so sadly inappropriate.

Residents hope that the Council will once and for all take a firm stand for uses permitted under the current 2(e) zoning.

The over-commercialisation of Double Bay and its pursuant problems will perhaps be a guideline in this matter. It has not been demonstrated to residents that the laundry site is non-viable for small-scale "residential" development such as is taking place in Edgecliff, and to this end residents wish the current zoning to remain.

Residents are very aware of the protection the residential nature of their community receives from the current 2(e) residential zoning that the Council itself recommended for the area in 1977.

DEVELOPER SEES IT AS AN AMENITY

Continued

no smell, dirt, noise or pollution of any form," they state.

Typical of the "machinery" to be used would be simple hand looms for weaving, pottery wheels and photographic dark-room equipment.

Only one half of one of the three floors in the building would be used for craft work. The rest of the gallery would be devoted to static displays of arts and crafts.

Mr. Grossman told me he believed local residents had been given a wrong impression of the extent to which the gallery would be used by the public.

It would be open in the evening only for the small number of people undertaking craft work – not for selling – and as local people would be encouraged to use the craft facilities, Mr. Grossman regards these as a useful local amenity.

Despite the seven-day opening, Mr. Grossman does not envisage that at any one time there would be more than 20-25 people in the building due to the continuous display over normal working hours.

Parking for 10 cars would be provided actually on the premises.

Mr. Grossman and his father are planning to spend a substantial sum to bring the interior of the building up to a very high standard, with carpeted floors and panelling.

The interesting external character of the building would be retained, and there would be only a small identification sign.

Mr. Grossman believes that, by their support or opposition to the plan, residents have the choice between:

(a) *Allowing him to convert an unoccupied, unsightly building into*

an attractive and useful property providing an amenity to the surrounding community while causing no inconvenience to the immediate residents

(b) *Accepting, for the foreseeable future, the building in its present and worsening state.*

It is worth pointing out that the Parisian Laundry is on one of the three controversial sites fronting onto Oxford Street on which the Council was proposing to allow the construction of four and six storey flats in the Action Plan published last year.

The association has expressed its strong opposition to such a development, and this view is supported by the report of our independent town planning expert, Mr. P. J. Devery.

Interestingly, at one of our meetings with the Council last year, Council planning officers suggested that a commercial use for the site would be less acceptable to local resident opinion than their multi-storey flat proposal.

Although only putting a point of view informally at the time, we said we believed that, depending on the proposal, the association might not oppose some very low-key commercial use for the Parisian Laundry building.

The association has generally supported the "recycling" of commercial buildings, provided the subsequent use was in character with the structure and not detrimental to the amenities of the area.

Even Mr. Grossman's opponents acknowledge that the development would be low key in character, and the Council will probably have a very difficult task to decide whether its impact on local residents would be sufficiently detrimental to rule out what is otherwise a very worthwhile scheme.

1978 QUEEN STREET FAIR – INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME:	\$	\$
Donations	554.61	
Revenue from Stalls	20,368.90	
Council Licence Fees – Contra	<u>1,410.50</u>	
	22,334.01	
Interest from Building Society	<u>160.56</u>	22,494.57
LESS EXPENDITURE:		
Licence fees – contra	1,410.50	
Hire of stalls, stages, bins, toilets	5,546.11	
Cleaning and Security	2,074.91	
Printing and Stationery	1,034.54	
Promotion and Entertainment	1,665.85	
Insurance	1,376.25	
Telephone, Postage, Office Expenses	409.85	
Administration costs	2,443.41	
Miscellaneous expenses	<u>242.80</u>	
		<u>16,204.22</u>
SURPLUS FROM FAIR		6,290.35

FAIR YIELDS \$6290 SURPLUS

The 1978 Queen Street Fair, held in beautifully sunny weather on November 25, was the most successful ever financially – producing a surplus of \$6290.

We also felt that the quality of the stalls and their presentation was somewhat better than in the previous year – although there is still plenty of room for improvement.

However we believe our decision to give each fair a definite theme, starting with our Victoriana Street section at the 1978 Fair, inspired stallholders to use a little more imagination.

There were one or two particularly bright spots – TV personality Jeannie Little reading teacups with zany distinction, the giant panama hat outside Polain Interiors, the Japanese art stall, and the demonstration of Chinese noodle-making near Ocean Street.

The Victoriana Street section, where a lovely clanking old traction engine helped to set the scene, drew some interesting contributions.

One of the best was a demonstration of Victorian bicycles, but the interpretation of some other stallholders of what is typically Victorian was, to say the least, somewhat broader than ours.

What is the association going to do with the \$6290 surplus on the 1978 Fair?

We already have in hand a fund of \$2000 from the previous fair earmarked for improvements to Queen Street.

This year we believe that there is such a strong threat from the planners and officialdom to the very individual nature of our area, that it would be prudent to keep a large slice of the 1978 surplus in reserve in case it is needed as a “fighting fund”.

However, the committee has decided to immediately allocate \$2000 for grants to local community service organisations on the following basis:

–\$500 each to the Woollahra Children's



and Community Association based at Holdsworth Street Playpark; the Woollahra Senior Citizens Welfare Association; and the Parents and Citizens Association of Woollahra Demonstration School.

–\$250 to the Pensioners Christmas Fund Appeal, organised in Paddington by Alderman George Warnecke.

–\$250 to be allocated to other community service work as the committee may decide during the year.

We would also like to emphasise that the fair also makes a considerable contribution to the work of charities and community service groups by allowing them to book stalls at a special concession rate.

At the 1978 Fair, the total amount involved in these concessions was \$2250.

Getting away from the financial side, the 1978 Fair was again a great crowd-puller, drawing a crowd again estimated at more than 30,000 and unfortunately taking people away from the Paddington Festival which, for some reason best known to its organisers, was held on the same date.

Our fair was officially opened in the middle of the Victoriana Street section by Alderman Tony Perry, senior ward alderman of the Cooper Ward which includes the association's area.

Afterwards Alderman Perry toured the fair from end to end to help judge the annual presentation awards. The other two judges were association president Leo Schofield and vice-president Robin Brampton, who is also chairman of the Queen Street Fair Organising Committee.

Results were:

BEST NON-COMMERCIAL STALL:

The Nimrod Theatre, with a fit-up in the Victoriana Street section providing continuous entertainment and selling goods to benefit the funds of the theatre.

BEST COMMERCIAL STALL: Gillian MacIntosh, of Wallis Street, Woollahra, with a stall selling floral costume jewellery and silver balloons.

BEST STALLHOLDERS' COSTUMES: The Designers Association in the Performing Arts (appropriately DAPA), with stallholders dressed elegantly in black and white to match the general black and white theme of their stall in the Victoriana Street section.

BEST SHOP WINDOW IN QUEEN STREET ON FAIR DAY: Decor, the glassware boutique at the corner of Queen Street and Moncur Street, with a well set out Christmas display.

The winners will receive special plaques and be entitled to a free stall at the 1979 Queen Street Fair.

Already we are getting many inquiries for this year's fair. Subject to the approval of the association's new committee elected in May and Woollahra Municipal Council, this will be held on Saturday, November 24.

Our theme this year will be children, to acknowledge the fact that 1979 is The Year of the Child.

If you were a stallholder in 1978, you will automatically receive an application form to participate in the 1979 Fair, but these will not go out until August.

If you would like to have a stall this year, but did not participate last year, just drop a note to The Secretary, Queen Street Fair, PO Box 16, Woollahra, NSW 2025, and you also will be sent an application in August.



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: Pixie Nolan

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).

CONGRATULATIONS, DAME JOAN

Joan Sutherland, a former Queen Street resident who is patron of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association, was created a Dame Commander of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours List. On the association's behalf, our president, Leo Schofield, sent her a congratulatory telegram. Dame Joan replied as follows:

"Thank you very much for your telegram of congratulations. I was naturally delighted to receive this honour and have received so many wonderful letters from friends everywhere. Please thank the Queen Street Committee and West Woollahra Association for their good wishes. I do admire the work they are doing."

EXPERT'S VIEW OF ACTION PLAN

Following its dismay at certain aspects of Woollahra Municipal Council's "Proposed Action Plan for Woollahra West" released early last year, the association commissioned an independent report on the Council's proposals from Mr. P. J. Devery, BSc, MTCP.

Mr. Devery is a distinguished town planner who knows something of the background as he was engaged by the Council to report on one of its earlier plans for the area.

Mr. Devery's report, which was presented to the Council in November, is too long for inclusion in full in VILLAGE VOICE. However, in the following article he summarises his views:

BY P. J. DEVERY

There would seem to be little disagreement with the statement that the West Woollahra area has a character which should be maintained.

However there may still be different opinions as to what are the essential elements of that character — elements which, if changed, would destroy that character.

Is it the scale of development? The areas of the blocks, the size, shape and appearance of the buildings, the pattern of circulation, the contribution from vegetation to the landscape, etc — are these the major components of this character?

Or does the human element, by way of its various uses in the area, play the major role?

Or is it simply a satisfactory blending of many of these aspects, which has developed over time?

It is essential that these features be identified, and planning action taken to

safeguard the area against unnecessary changes. To date, Council's suggestions fall very far short of what could be considered as desirable safeguards for the area.

In my view, a Development Control Code for West Woollahra should be compiled that would be generally acceptable to the people of the area, the Council and other planning/controlling authorities.

Work on the Control Code could be done simultaneously by the Council and the local organisations, and any differences resolved at a Conference.

It is important also that the Council and local organisations express their Codes in different terms, and not just a lot of waffly jargon.

The Control Code should be stated in much greater detail than the Woollahra West Action Plan exhibited by the Council, and hopefully be an improvement on their Paddington Control Code.

9.5 m height limit

Two major aspects in which there are planning problems in West Woollahra at the moment are the uses of land fronting Oxford Street and traffic circulation generally.

With respect to the land fronting Oxford Street, the height levels of 12 metres and 18 metres proposed by Council for some areas (Woollahra West Action Plan of Council) should be rejected, and a height limit of 9.5 metres adopted generally for West Woollahra.

The feasibility of redevelopment of sites, incorporating land between Wallis and Oxford Streets, parts of Wallis Street and land fronting Wallis Street, should be studied for residential or other amenable uses. The results of these studies could then be a guide to those interested in development of the sites.

The traffic pattern will be (or is) a major problem for West Woollahra, and all current changes (eg the Bondi Junction By-Pass, Eastern Suburbs Railway) should be studied before final plans are adopted for the circulation pattern of West Woollahra.

Ocean Street is the critical element, and contrary to the exhibited Council intention of channelling as much traffic as possible into Ocean Street, the alternative of utilising other patterns to assist Ocean Street should be examined. One traffic stream which will need careful monitoring is the Hargrave Street flow.

This year, 1979, will be critical for collection of data on which to make decisions.

Printed by
VAUCLUSE PRESS
18 Old South Head Road, Vaucluse, 2030
Phone: 337-4404

THE QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

ENCLOSED IS MY SUBSCRIPTION OF \$3 FOR ONE YEAR.
IF YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN A MEMBER, PLEASE PUT A TICK HERE

NAME

ADDRESS

POST TO: The Secretary,
Queen Street and West Woollahra Association,
PO Box 16,
WOOLLAHRA, NSW 2025.