

**ITEM NO: 8****SUBJECT: MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWSON TOWN CENTRE  
REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN 2006****FILE NO: F01071**

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**Recommendations:**

1. *That the Council notes the further modifications and refinements (detailed within this report to the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan dated September 2006. Known as Option E 2007.*
  2. *That the refinements to the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 are acknowledged as remaining consistent with the Lawson DCP adopted by Council on 4 October 2005 and forming Part J of the Better Living Development Control Plan.*
  3. *That the Council notes that the Development Application for the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Subdivision and Civil Infrastructure Establishment, based on the concepts detailed in the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 as lodged for assessment is not significantly impacted by the design modifications.*
  4. *That the General Manager brings back to the Council a further report after negotiations for funding of the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment with the Roads and Traffic Authority have been held.*
  5. *That further public meetings and information sessions be held on the refinements, improvements and changes made to the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 and the reasons for the modifications including the input from the community to the Development Application.*
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**Report by Group Manager – BM City Services****Introduction**

This report advises the Council of further refinements and modifications to the Revised Lawson Town Centre Development Concept Plan 2006, adopted by the Council on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006, is a continuation of the Master Plan and DCP process and in response to public feedback.

**Background**

On 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006 the Council received an extensive report outlining a revised Lawson Town Centre Development Concept Plan 2006. The report noted that this was a complex and innovative project that culminates in the re-building of Lawson Town Centre, shaping the future of Lawson and the way it would serve the community of the Mid Mountains for generations to come.

The following resolutions were adopted by the Council:

1. *“That the enclosed Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan dated September 2006 be adopted”.*
2. *“That the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 be acknowledged as being consistent with Lawson DCP adopted by the Council on 4 October 2005 and forming part J of the Better Living Development Control Plan”*
3. *“That a Development Application for the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Subdivision and Civil Infrastructure Establishment, based on the concepts detailed in the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 referred to in Recommendation 1 be lodged for assessment”*
4. *“That correspondence be forwarded to the Roads and Traffic Authority advising them of the Council decision to lodge the Development Application for the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Subdivision and Civil Infrastructure Establishment based on the concepts detailed in the 2006 Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan”*
5. *“That tender documentation be prepared for the architectural design and construction of the retail/commercial development site located on the southern side of the un-named street within the Lawson Town Centre between the Staples and New Street intersections and that tenders be invited and recommendations be submitted to the Council for determination”*
6. *“That tender documentation for the subdivision and infrastructure works be prepared and that tenders be invited and that the recommendations be submitted to the Council for determination for the architectural design and construction of a public toilet block within the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Area”*
7. *“That the General Manager be authorised as a priority to enter into negotiations with the Roads and Traffic Authority for additional funding towards the cost of works associated with the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment to achieve that optimum outcome for the village as a consequence of the widening of the Great Western Highway to four lanes”*
8. *“That the Council seek the support of the State Local Member for the Blue Mountains the Honourable Bob Debus for a revised funding contribution base on the final concept plans and the latest costings”*
9. *“That the Council acknowledge the funding required to complete the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment and note the options to achieve it and that the General Manager brings back to the Council a further report after the negotiations with the Roads and Traffic Authority have been held”*
10. *“That further public meetings and information sessions be held with the various community groups on the improvements and changes made resulting in the*

*Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 and the reasons for these amendments as soon as possible”*

The modifications presented in Option E 2007 (attached) respond to issues identified through various public submissions and feedback, and go further in resolving issues identified in the DCP.

A Development Application for the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Subdivision and Civil Infrastructure Establishment, based on the concepts detailed in the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 was lodged in January 2007. The changes outlined in this report are not considered to impact significantly on the Development Application and therefore will not result in a requirement for the application to be re-exhibited.

The report recommendations enable the Council to move forward concurrently on a number of project initiatives, whilst continuing funding negotiations with the RTA and other relevant parties.

### **Summary of Public Submissions received in response to the Development Application**

The following is a summary of the various submissions and feedback to the Development Application lodged and exhibited for the town centre. The DA is being assessed for the Council by an independent assessor, however the matters raised in submissions are deemed to be a relevant consideration in the process of design refinement and this summary of the submissions is included for information. A total of 108 submissions were received.

- Safety hazard for pedestrians (41)
- Traffic congestion (31)
- Proposal is an over development (28)
- Proposed parking is unsuitable (24)
- Proposed new shops are not viable (23)
- Needs more consultation (21)
- Get on with it (64)
- Lawson needs better shops (55)
- Ignore misinformation and negative campaign (25)
- Excessive and extensive consultation (24)
- Provides better pedestrian access (24)
- Development is more viable than the existing shops (23)

### **Detail of 2007 Design Modifications**

The applicants response to feedback and the modifications to the Revised Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment Concept Plan 2006 are as follows:

1. Undercover parking has now been deleted. The building footprint for the highway shops remains the same.
2. A new pedestrian crossing has been provided in Staples Street adjacent to building A and the school, (at the request of the School Principal)
3. Additional 90 degree parking has been placed in the Unnamed Street. The road centreline remains the same.
4. The previous EFG building which was to be short term commercial space has now been deleted as a proposed building, including the proposed public road in this location. This area has been allocated as a future opportunity to develop a community hub of additional community facilities. This will be the subject of future needs assessment and subject to future submissions.
5. A new staff car park is proposed near the Mid Mountains Community Centre.
6. The car park and loading area nominated as the Unnamed Street car park has been reconfigured to provide additional parking and to improve accessibility. The design levels are currently being resolved. This will also maintain the current loading access to the existing supermarket.

**Further Investigation**

Design consultants have suggested an opportunity to extend the Adelaide Street car park, as noted. This is still subject to additional investigation and a report on the findings.

A significant change is that all of the trunk drainage will be deleted from this DA. This is a result of Council taking on the responsibility to resolve the existing drainage problem on the King property and subsequently the drainage from the Benang St/Bellevue St catchments as part of its normal maintenance and capital works program.

The Council is negotiating an agreement with the RTA to drain the town centre water to its proposed trunk drainage system for the new highway. The RTA is currently investigating options but has confirmed that the line will run down New Street and discharge into the existing Golf Course dam which will be enlarged to provide for onsite detention to retard flows to pre development levels and to also retain water for future recycling by the Council.

Once the RTA has developed an acceptable option they propose to prepare an amendment to their REF for the Highway. The RTA has indicated that they would like to start construction of this trunk drainage before the second quarter of 2008 which will fit in with the Council's current timelines for the town centre infrastructure works.

The Safety Audit Report prepared by Transport & Urban Planning is currently being reviewed to cover Option E 2007. A revised subdivision plan is currently being prepared to reflect the current approach.

**Summary of Benefits of Changes**

The refined plan, presented as Option E 2007 maintains the original road pattern. The benefits of the refinements include:

1. By deleting the underground parking the complex land ownership 'stratum' is no longer required. The Council's long term maintenance burden for the car park structure, proposed lift etc is significantly diminished and the safety issues raised by the Community are removed. The deletion of the underground parking also reduces the construction complexity, the need for the expensive retaining wall, the need for the Council to construct the EFG building and allows the Council to give the RTA back the responsibility and risk of building the service road. It also allows the new shops to be developed while the existing shops remain in place.
2. A reduction in the proposed gross floor area of retail space to accommodate current projected demand and the opportunity to develop a more integrated Community Services hub around the existing Mid Mountains Community Centre.
3. The revised car park area identified as the Unnamed Street car park will improve parking yield, improve pedestrian access and maintain the servicing requirements of the existing supermarket and shops.

**Consultation**

Option E 2007 has been developed in response to a review of the Community issues raised in response to the DA.

A significant number of discussions have also been held with a variety of land owners, RTA, Lawson Chamber of Commerce and Industry, shop keepers, school and the general Community. This includes a Public Information evening held at the Mid Mountains Community Centre on 20 September 2007.

The consultation has indicated a positive response to the proposed refinements.

**Financial Implications**

The ability to simplify and stage works will have an impact on the overall cost and enable the Council to stage works over a sensible period.

Preliminary discussions have been held with the RTA on the matter of a renewed commitment by the RTA/State Government to additional funding for the project. Negotiations are continuing on the basis of detailed investigation and analysis of overall project costs based on the revised design. The outcomes of these negotiations will be a determining factor in the Council providing for future funding in the LTFS and capital works forecasts.

A separate report will be presented to the Council outlining the outcome of the current funding negotiations and the expected funding implications for the Council.

The Council is also investigating the opportunity to prepare a Section 94 plan which will confirm developer contributions for any car parking requirements and other facilities generated by additional retail space.

### **Legal and Risk Management Issues for the Council**

Any project of this magnitude carries risks associated with acquiring the balance of required land, the risk of delay and the risk of cost escalations and budget blow outs.

The refined Option E has attempted to reduce the risks to the Council by moving responsibility for components of the project back to the most appropriate authority, such as:

1. The reconstruction of Douglass Square is now being managed by the RTA with Council and community input.
2. The service road, associated parking and footpaths are now the full responsibility of the RTA.
3. The trunk drainage system is now the full responsibility of the RTA.
4. The Council will be no longer required to construct early in the program the building referred to as the EFG Building, which was required under the previous design to temporarily house the displaced retail and commercial businesses following demolition of the buildings on the Great Western Highway. This removes the high commercial development risks being faced by the Council in financing and constructing such a building.
5. An agreement negotiated with the RTA will mean that the Council will now act in the capacity as a “land bank” for residual parcels of land acquired by the RTA. The Council will not however be required to fund the acquisitions until the parcels are on-sold or otherwise traded, e.g. through the process of land swap, either as individual lots or as consolidated parcels. This will ensure that the Council is not unnecessarily tying up cash reserves and holding valuable land that will ultimately be sold off or swapped for future commercial development.

The Council will need to continue to manage and minimise all risks associated with the project.

### **Conclusion**

The Lawson Town Centre project has a long and protracted history. The RTA road widening is now a committed reality that is going to occur in the foreseeable future.

The Council has worked with a number of the interest groups to refine the current plan to address concerns raised by the various groups, improve constructability, minimise and share the potential risks and to allow the works to be staged to assist in funding.

The recommendations at the beginning of this report are presented to address the many issues raised and guide the Council on the suggested way forward.

The adoption of the recommendations will allow the project to move closer to the point where further meaningful negotiations can continue with the RTA, the financial commitments be understood and construction of the local infrastructure can commence.

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