

Artarmon Village Plan Coming Soon by Peter Wilton

The future shape of the Artarmon shopping village strip will become clearer when Willoughby City Council finalises the Artarmon local centre strategy. It is anticipated that the strategy will be released shortly.

Revitalising the Artarmon village shopping area is a key objective of the strategy together with reinforcing the Artarmon village community role and respecting its existing heritage character. Realising the strategy will require existing property owners to collectively redevelop their sites, something that will only occur if there is enough commercial incentive, from “development uplift”, to do so.

The existing planning controls limit the amount of development that can currently occur and provides little incentive for the rejuvenation of the retail spaces and the Artarmon village area. In February 2019, Council released a draft plan for public comment. This draft was developed from the feedback obtained from three scenario schemes contained in a 2018 discussion paper.

The draft strategy recommended allowing apartment development up to 10 storeys above the retail levels along Hampden Road between Jersey Road and Francis Road. The recommended scheme requires that the apartments are set-back from Hampden Road and separated by an area of open space that will reduce the visual impact and loss of views caused by the new apartments. The scheme also requires that any apartment development is conditional upon the amalgamation of existing small shop sites into larger lots and the street level retail space is improved. The draft strategy also proposes further improvements



Image: Willoughby City Council

in Wilkes Avenue, including a new community centre.

Since May 2019, Council officers have been considering the feedback obtained on the draft plan. Recently, the Artarmon Progress Association gained insight into the emerging final strategy when it participated in a Council meeting that included local retailers, property owners and their advisors. Although no firm details were given, the discussion provided an indication to the items still being considered and the shape of the likely final strategy. It appears that the final strategy will be largely similar to the draft. Council is still reviewing issues in relation to traffic movements on Hampden Road and the ability for residents to park close to the village area. The APA suggested that additional parking and access might be possible in Hampden Lane.

Council suggested the village green area, adjacent to the train station tunnel, as a possible site for new public toilet facilities and other amenities. Balancing the improvements in retail

and public space is the question of whether there is sufficient development uplift for it to be viable for existing property owners to either sell or develop their site, and whether there will be enough apartments close to the village area to enable a vibrant retail environment. Here, there is no real certainty and some changes to the allowable development might occur.

The APA recognises that apartment development is needed to enable the investment in new improved retail facilities and supports the key aspects of the draft strategy.

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