

20 October 2006

Re: Johnsonville Town Centre Plan

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington.

1) Support for the proposal

The Architectural Centre gives reserved support for the proposed Johnsonville Town Centre Plan. Our caution is largely due to the lack of detail revealed in the Town Centre Plan which, while advocating all the right things, sounds dangerously close to generic excerpts from a urban design/planning text-book. This is problematic as exactly "how" such principles are implemented will be critical to the success of such projects. While these principles are sound and immensely agreeable, such a plan needs more specific detail related to the particulars of Johnsonville to ensure meaningful public consultation. We therefore make the following suggestions and submit a draft plan for the Town Centre.

2) Key Issues

Currently Johnsonville is a very unfriendly area for the community. There is no sense of place, nor any provision of shelter. In particular there is nothing supporting pedestrians or the increasing elderly population. The new plan for Johnsonville Town Centre must rethink the current linear strip. This strip is unsuccessful and the Town Centre must be refigured. In addition, it is a concern to us that new shops on the immediate fringe of the Town Centre (just outside the main pedestrian flow), are clearly struggling to survive. The proposed Town Centre Plan must ensure that the Town Centre's commercial and social vitality increases the current size of the central area of pedestrian activity, and make provision for new shops on the perimeter of the central area. The proposed new central Green Space (see below) is intended to assist this.

3) Specific suggestions

a) Carparks

We strongly encourage the Johnsonville planners to discourage carparks which surround buildings. We consider that carparking and the design of carpark buildings will be key to the success of Johnsonville and strongly suggest the council run a design competition for the design of carparking buildings, the results of which might inform other developments in the Wellington region.

b) The need for two-storey mixed-use development and active edges

We encourage two-storey mixed-use development where the ground floor is retail with active edges. We endorse the identified need to reinforce the form of the street, especially through building up to the footpath edge to provide well-defined streets.

c) Anticipating the need for 1-3 multi-storey towers

We believe that the Town Centre Plan must identify preferred locations for at least one, and up to three, multi-storey, small footprint, towers, with shops and offices below and apartments above. These should be located within or close to the main triangular block of the Johnsonville Centre, and positioned to define the Johnsonville Town Centre's position within the valley. Possible locations include:

- (i) at the south corner of the block, on the corner of Johnsonville Rd and Broderick Rd.
- (ii) in the small area between Frank Johnson St and Burgess Rd.



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or

(iii) on Wanaka St, just south of the Keith Spry swimming pool building.

d) Green Space

We consider that there is a real need for green space in the inner centre of Johnsonville to provide visual relief. This would be a mix of paved and green surfaces, with strategic planting of very large trees to provide spatial definition. This area would also include a public gathering space around an open-air stage (or covered rotunda) and a safe children's play area. Such a space would be sheltered from the north-west wind by a new two-storey arcade/Mall building, with shelter also provided from the southerly wind. We also point to the increasing need for councils to provide UVR shelter, using materials such as transparent polycarbonate for warm shade (e.g. Thorndon Pool), to allow pedestrians to both enjoy the warmth of the sun and gain appropriate sun protection.

We also suggest the accommodation of activities and events such as a Farmers' Market in ample public spaces in the Town Centre.

e) Significant Heritage

We are concerned that the location of the Maori pa is unknown and consider that locating the pa site is an important part of Johnsonville's heritage which is in need of rectifying/addressing in the near future. Appropriate acknowledgement of the pa site is needed. This would of course be done in consultation with tangata whenua.

f) Supermarkets and similar developments

Large retail stores (e.g. the supermarkets, proposed malls and other big box retail) need to assist in making the Johnsonville Town Centre a successful place for pedestrians and in making the Town Centre part of a thriving community. We suggest that both the supermarkets and new development are set back one shop depth from the central pedestrian space, so that people are drawn up into this pedestrian area from the underground carpark, and then, via the shops and offices, into the supermarkets and the inter-connecting Mall concourse.

4) The proposed plan (attached)

The attached plan puts forward a sketch design which shows how many of the principles the council is advocating might be put into practice. The proposal includes:

a) Transport: roading, rail and buses

- 1) the removal of Gothic and Hawea Streets
- 2) a new road between Moorefield and Broderick Roads
- 3) the insertion of a roundabout at the intersection of Moorefield Rd, Wanaka St and the new proposed road (see point 1)
- 4) shifting the railway station south a few metres, with the bus/rail interchange redesigned on the site the buses currently use

b) Pedestrian Spaces

- 5) pedestrianising part of Johnsonville Road
- 6) increasing pedestrianised urban spaces and making two public squares creating a wind-sheltered pedestrian square, above the underground carpark and bordered by the new Mall.

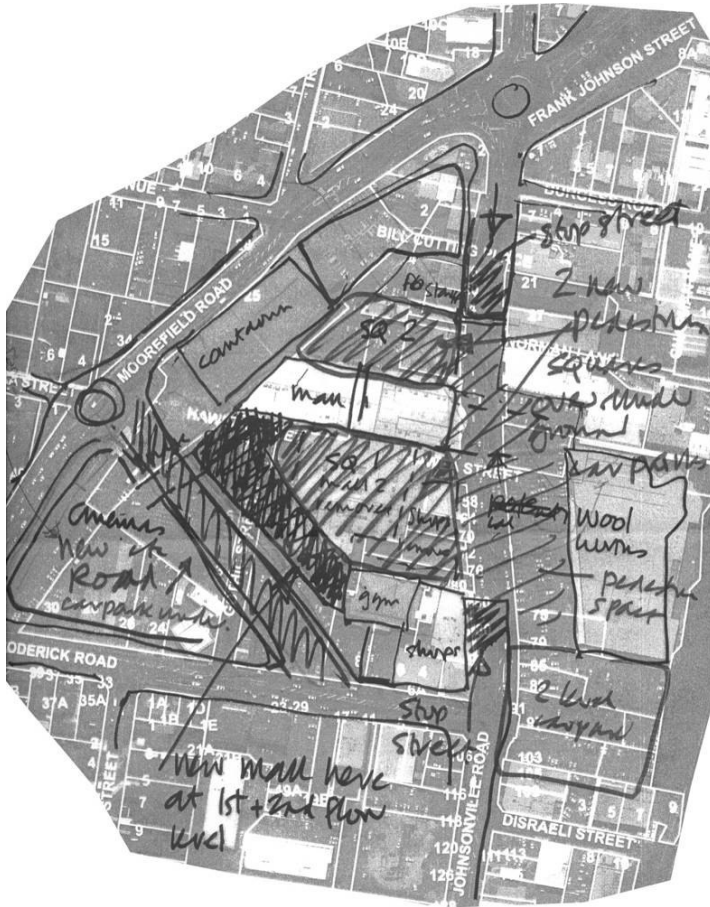
c) Mall Development and Cinema Complex

- 7) a new two storey mall aligned with the new road above street level
- 8) a cinema complex near the bus depot and rail hub.

d) Carparking

- 9) a two level carpark near the intersection of Johnsonville and Broderick Roads
- 10) new underground carparking which aligns with the existing carparking in front of Woolworths & Countdown. This would mean that the new pedestrian square can be

taken across it, with escalators down to the existing level of Woolworths. (We do note that another better option also exists for Woolworths to be raised one level.)



3) Conclusion

We support the proposed Johnsonville Town Centre Plan with the additional detail we have suggested. In addition to the points raised above, also draw your addition to the need for a range of architecture in the design of the Town Centre's urban form and the importance of employing good designers with proven track-records to ensure the success of the project.

Yours sincerely

Christine McCarthy
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The Architectural Centre