ATTACHMENT 2
MAP 2 – SUBDIVISION OF SUBJECT LAND
ATTACHMENT 3
MAP 3 – APPROVALS OF NEW DWELLINGS IN THE MERRI CORRIDOR
(1996-2000)

Source: ABS, Cdata 96 with MapInfo
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ATTACHMENT 4
PLANNING EVIDENCE PREPARED BY COOMES CONSULTING GROUP IN RESPECT OF AMENDMENT C6 TO THE HUME PLANNING SCHEME
Amendment C6
Hume Planning Scheme
Planning Evidence

Prepared for Best Hooper, solicitors
18 October 2000
1.0 Introduction

I have been asked by Best Hooper, solicitors, acting on behalf of the City of Hume to review the planning merits of a proposed amendment to the Hume Planning Scheme to rezone land on the south east corner of Pascoe Vale Road and Somerton Roads, Coolaroo.

The site, comprising approximately 18.5ha of essentially flat and featureless land is currently zoned Public Use. Approximately 5ha of the land, immediately adjacent to the intersection of the primary arterial roads would be zoned Business 2. The balance of the land would be rezoned Business 4. The zone boundaries would be defined by a recently constructed internal access road.

This report is based upon a review of:

- the Hume Planning Scheme
- the proposed amendment and supporting documentation
- relevant planning policy documents, strategies and guidelines
- an inspection and evaluation of the site
- my broader appreciation of metropolitan and retail planning policy development.

The report is structured to respond to the two critical issues in this matter.

- Is the proposal strategically appropriate?
- Are the proposed zones appropriate to manage the intended outcome?

2.0 The proposal

I understand that:

- The Melbourne Water Corporation owned the land, and sold it to the Urban Land Corporation, having no further use for the land.
- The land has no further role in a public use or ownership.
- The land proposed to be zoned Business 2 and 4 might respectively accommodate approximately 20,000m2 and 50,000m2 of commercial development.

I have sighted a development plan, not forming part of the amendment, that shows part of the Business 4 land to be developed for 7 bulk goods outlets and a fast food outlet.
The bulky goods outlets would range in size between 316m² and 2,970m² (total floor area 7,840m²).

The fast food outlet would be sited adjacent to the intersection of the internal road and Somerton Road. The development would contain and have an outlook onto a consolidated central car park, also located adjacent to the above intersection.

I understand that a planning permit has already issued for a hotel on the site.

The fast food outlet is the subject of an Application for Review before the Tribunal.

3.0 The strategic merits of the proposal

3.1 Overview

The context for the assessment of the business and retail proposals is provided by both the State and Local Planning Policy Framework of the Hume Planning Scheme and the 1988 Retail Development Guidelines.

While the intended locational and sectoral expectations of the Municipal Strategic Statement of the Hume Planning Scheme have a significant bearing on the suitability of the proposal it is important to not lose sight of the intent of State, retail and activity centre policy, articulated in the report of the Retail Development Policy Review Panel (1994).

"Land use policy should seek to regulate development for the benefit of a broader community, but should not resist change or stifle competition.

It should intervene through regulation and evaluation only to the extent necessary to ensure adequate retail services to the community; to preserve amenity and investment in public and private assets; and to respond to the community’s social and environmental concerns."

And

"The Panel is strongly supportive of the principle of aggregation of uses into activity centres, coupled with the provision of more walking distance convenience and weekly shopping facilities. The Panel considers this to be in the interests of infrastructure efficiency, equitable access, environmental concerns, and the creation of a healthy sense of community."
And

"The fundamental test of any retail development must be whether it benefits the broader community."

3.2 The site in the Hume Policy Context

The site is located 4.1km north of Broadmeadows District Centre, at the interface between the developing and emerging Merri Growth Corridor to the north and the established suburbs of Meadow Heights and Broadmeadows.

The Merri Growth Corridor and Sunbury will accommodate most new population growth in the municipality over the next 25 years. The Merri Growth Corridor is expected to accommodate 80,000-90,000. The population of the established areas are predicted to remain stable or decline during the same time period (Municipal Strategic Statement Clause 21.01-5).

Rapid population growth needs to be matched by physical, community and social infrastructure. While acknowledging the established activity and employment centres the Municipal Strategic Statement notes that several new activity centres are planned for the Merri Growth Area (page 6 of 8) and that the development of activity centres is a key issue affecting the city (Clause 21.01-6).

The broad planning objectives for the city include the following relevant consideration (Clause 21.02-4).

- "The cost effective and orderly management of urban growth in a way that achieves the greatest social benefits to the community, but does not diminish the unique character and identity of the city.

- The generation of new job opportunities that meet the needs of a growing population and that stimulate greater employment sustainability in the region, and improved access of local residents to local jobs.

- A rational hierarchy of attractive and accessible activity centres that maximise resident spending within the city and provides for a range of retail, community and entertainment services and facilities."

In specifically addressing the matter of activity centres the Strategic Framework Plan notes at Clause 21.02-5.
"A rational hierarchy of activity centres which provides a wide range of shopping, entertainment and community services accessible to the local and wider community. The hierarchy will support the continued growth of the Broadmeadows District Centre and the Sunbury Town Centre, Craigieburn Shopping Centre and the Campbellfield Shopping Centre as sub-regional order activity centres. The development of new activity centres will also be encouraged to service the needs of existing and future residents of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park."

The strategic statement does not specifically address or distinguish between bulky goods retailing and the more conventional convenience and comparison shopping centres.

The intended role, function and composition of Roxburgh Park and Craigieburn as activity centres is expressed in the broadest of terms at (Clause 21.03-2).

"To provide for a high quality residential development, vibrant and accessible activity centres in Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park, neighbourhoods that offer a wide range of retail, commercial, community and cultural facilities and services, a comprehensive transport network attractive open spaces and access to a range of employment opportunities."

The intended development of the activity centres is vested in local structure plans, although with regard to Craigieburn the MSS is more specific.

"Encourage the development of a regional order activity centre and employment area at the intersection of Craigieburn Road west with the proposed E14 arterial road to provide a focal point for the area and ensure maximum accessibility to a range of retail, office, education, recreation, entertainment, cultural and open space services and facilities."

To appreciate the role and relationship of the subject site to the Roxburgh Park Activity Centre it is necessary to cross reference the MSS with the Roxburgh Park Local Structure Plan. The Local Structure Plan was prepared for the land owned by the Urban Land Corporation and covered the development of the residential estates as well as siting the sub-regional and neighbourhood shopping centres. It did not seek to provide a structure plan for the whole of the Roxburgh Park Activity Centre.
The MSS explicitly left the future role, use and development of the subject site open for further and later resolution in the strategies for the Broadmeadows and Meadow Heights precinct (Clause 21.03-1).

"Identify appropriate uses for the former reservoir site located on the south east corner of Somerton and Pascoe Vale Roads as part of the General Plan review and implement the findings of this in the first review of the Planning Scheme."

The draft of the General Plan Review, undertaken by GHD in 1998-1999 recommended that the site be recognised for commercial/light industrial purposes that do not detract from the Broadmeadows District Centre. The final draft of the plan has yet to be considered by Council.

The Roxburgh Park Local Structure Plan did not consider the future role of the subject site because its purpose was specifically limited to addressing the use and development of land north of Somerton Road. Since 1994 (and in subsequent drafts) the LSP has identified the land to the immediate north of the subject site and bounded by David Munroe Drive, Somerton Road and the railway as the location for a sub-regional shopping centre comprising 19,000m² of retail floor space including a discount department store, supermarket, a mini-major and approximately 35 retail specialty shops and personal services. The first stage of this centre including two freestanding take away food premises and a petrol station have been completed.

The Municipal Strategic Statement is silent on the spatial extent and specific location of activity centres. Apart from a schematic representation of the location of the Broadmeadows District Centre there is no plan to show the preferred site or location of new activity centres. The subject site is explicitly shown as "future urban development site".

From a policy perspective I conclude that there is positive support to consider the site for use intended by the Amendment. In particular I rely upon the following:

- The site reinforces both State and local policy to aggregate retail activity in established and identified activity centres.
- It reinforces local employment policy objectives in a location where considerable social benefits to the community might be achieved by the co-location with other retail/business services and by its centrality to both the established and emerging suburbs of the municipality.
3.3 Peripheral retailing and big box use policy


At the time it noted that these uses provided the most compelling reason to review retail policy.

The terms big box and peripheral sales refer to retail uses that generally require in excess of 1,000m2 of floor space and are difficult to integrate in established centres because of their substantial site requirements and their relatively low turnover per square metre of floor area, making it difficult to command "town centre" sites.

Historically the uses emerged in a haphazard manner, strung along main arterial roads and highways or scattered in high exposure industrial estates. In more recent times and in the context of policy influence there has been a more focussed and orderly approach to this manner of use with particular mention warranted for the "homemaker" centres that have emerged adjacent to a number of higher order centres such as at Fountain Gate/Narre Warren, Highpoint West, Knox and Northlands. These centres, offering a broad range of bulky household lifestyle products, have established adjacent to existing shopping centres, but as in the case of the subject site separated by a road. Patrons of these facilities tend to be car bound and benefit from the aggregation retail of uses. They are destinations in their own right as well as part of a broader retail experience.

To a degree the Broadmeadows District Centre exhibits these characteristics with peripheral sales outlets including Bunnings located at the northern extreme of this centre. Approximately 1.5ha of land is available land for further development. A permit for its use has expired.

The Review Panel concluded that peripheral uses should be assessed against adequate criteria in relation to community benefits, amenity, traffic and other off-site impacts, as well as in relation to any strategic plans for the area under consideration.
It noted:

"huge peripheral sales stores have the potential to significantly distort the retail hierarchy and significantly change shopping patterns."

"Councils need to either direct such uses to the edge of an existing retail precinct or set up a newly zoned area for this purpose, perhaps where they wish to rationalise existing development remote from retail centres."

It recommended a regional approach to planning for these uses placing the following priority for big boxes and similar developments as follows:

- favour sites in the centre (ie in existing built-up areas)
- if no central sites, accept locations on the outskirts
- if no sites on the outskirts, accept locations on the periphery controlled by access conditions (parking and public transport provision).

In my opinion the proposal is consistent with this policy intent. On one view it satisfies the first, above priority. It is to be noted that the policy does not constrain the co-location to District Centres but clearly the benefits will be greater with sites adjacent to higher order centres.

3.4 A regional perspective and alternative locations

Both the above policy and the 1989 Retail Development Guidelines challenge the planning authority to take a regional approach to the siting of peripheral sales and big box facilities and consider the merits of alternative locations.

In my opinion the subject site is sustainable in this context. The Merri Corridor is a major committed growth area in which a substantial number of new households will establish, seeking access to acquire the spectrum of household products generally associated with peripheral sales and big box retailers.

- Indoor and outdoor furniture
- Floor coverings
- Lighting
- Whitegoods and household appliances
- Bicycles
- Lifestyle products.

The notable established centres of these services are either highly dissipated, such as along the Hume Highway through Broadmeadows to Somerton or in relatively distant centres
such as Highpoint West (15.2km), Northlands (14.2km), Wintergardens on the Melton Highway (15.1km) or Epping Plaza (13.1km).

The Broadmeadows District Centre while proximate cannot be held to offer either the range of services or land necessary to serve this emerging market.

In establishing a new focus of peripheral sales to serve this emerging market, and discounting the Broadmeadows District Centre as having a meaningful greater role in this regard, two options are immediately apparent, the Roxburgh Park and Craigieburn sub-regional activity centres.

The Craigieburn Local Structure Plan is schematic and relies on information drafted in 1992. It is anticipated 55,000m² of retail floor space will be established including peripheral sales.

Roxburgh Park has both locational and timing advantages. It is located more centrally within the corridor, able to serve both the under provided established areas and the emerging areas to the north.

It is already established as a retail node and surrounded by residential estates that are ready to support and have a need for the range of services that these sites might offer.

Craigieburn is both more distant to the market, the shopping centre is not established, and it is located on the metropolitan fringe. Its locational merit and accessibility is in part dependant upon the construction of the E14 Freeway. In the short to medium term it has poorer north-south access, nor does it have immediate access to fixed rail in the manner offered by Roxburgh Park.

Roxburgh Park’s location on Pascoe Vale Road, reinforces links with the Broadmeadows District Centre, enabling trips by residents in the corridor to the latter, to be combined with the purchase of goods associated with big box and peripheral sales outlets.

3.5 Site and locational attributes

The broader strategic and regional attributes of the site are reinforced by the site’s constraints and opportunities.

- The site is highly accessible, with frontage to north-south and east-west arterial routes, bus services and proximity to the proposed Roxburgh/Somerton Railway Station.
• The site has the potential to enjoy high exposure, essential to the proposed manner of retail and commercial development.
• The site is adjacent to the Roxburgh Park sub-regional centre but part of the activity centre.
• The site, use and development have the potential to serve the “gateway” function foreshadowed by Pascoe Vale Road in the local policy (Clause 21.03-1).
• The site is large, flat and featureless, essential prerequisites for the proposed use.
• The site is integrated into the local network by signalised intersections, enabling orderly vehicle movement, and safe pedestrian passage between the adjacent residential areas and shopping centre.
• The site is separated from the adjacent residential areas by Pascoe Vale Road, providing a buffer to offset any potential off-site amenity impacts.
• The use and development would serve an appropriate transitional zone between the residential areas to the west and the industrial areas to the east.
• The site is relatively isolated from residential areas, separated by arterial roads and the railway line. From an amenity and integration perspective it is not particularly suited to a residential role.

In conclusion from a strategic perspective there is little if anything constraining its use in the manner proposed and a lot to commend it.

### 3.6 The site and an office role

As Section 4.0 of this report details the Business 2 zone foreshadows development for offices and associated commercial uses.

From my awareness of the region and appreciation of the metropolitan office market, Coolaroo is unlikely to emerge as a notable focus of office activity.

The suburban office market has not favoured the northern suburbs, with the major focuses of significant suburban office use being in the eastern and southern suburbs. Where larger offices have been established outside these preferred locations they have tended to be led by and dependent upon 1 or more public sector tenants, with the decentralisation of the Australian Taxation office to Dandenong, Box Hill, Cheltenham and Moonee Ponds being the outstanding example.

Historically Broadmeadows has struggled to perform a major office role and within this context ought to be the preferred or priority focus for this manner of use.
Coolaroo is not a recognised business address and in my opinion it would require a significant project and the creation of a special environment (along the lines of the Tally Ho Business Park in the eastern suburbs) to have any real attraction. The prospect of that manner of development, investment and outcome is improbable.

For the above reasons peripheral sales, commercial uses and some small scale office based activity serving the adjacent local market and needs are a more probable development outcome.

This is explored in greater detail in the next section of this report.

4.0 The appropriateness of the proposed zoning

4.1 Background

Section 2.0 of this report has outlined the terms of the proposed amendment as they apply to the zoning of the land.

The purposes of the Business 2 land (approximately 5ha to be located at the apex of Pascoe Vale Road and Somerton Road) are stated as:

- To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.
- To encourage the development of offices and associated commercial uses.

Within the zone, office is a permitted use, retail premises and a shop are discretionary uses and inanimate discretionary uses potentially cover a range of other commercial activities.

The purpose of the Business 4 zone is:

To encourage the development of a mix of bulky goods retailing and manufacturing industry and their associated commercial services.

Within this zone the following uses are permitted:

- industry
- restricted retail premises
- other nominated peripheral sales style uses
- a service station
- warehouse.
Leisure and recreation uses, office, place of assembly, retail premises are discretionary uses and a shop is prohibited, in the zone.

Concern has been expressed by a submitter to the amendment that:

- there is no strategic basis in the planning scheme for the proposed zone given the size of the site
- conventional retail should be restricted or precluded on the site due to the proximity and role of the Roxburgh Park Shopping Centre.

4.2 The strategic basis of the amendment

The first part of this report has identified a strategic basis for the amendment. I have reviewed an economic appraisal of the amendment prepared by Macropian on behalf of the proponent and concur with the broad conclusions drawn in that report.

The site is substantial and as I have noted above some doubt must be held for the prospect of establishing a substantial office component on the site.

Despite this I am not troubled by the extent of land to be rezoned. The site and location are in a strong and strategic location and should be perceived as a major regional resource and focus for bulky goods and commercial activity.

I would anticipate that the land might be developed in a series of stages and over an extended time period as the residential catchment grows.

The proposed uses tend to be land extensive with substantial areas of at grade car park and landscaping accounting for large tracts of the space.

Given the exposure of the site it might also attract uses such as:

- car and boat sales
- plant nurseries and garden centres
- light industrial uses, perhaps with a retail or manufacturing sales component.

There would be no material community disadvantage if the market could not sustain the development of the whole site in the immediate future. As previously noted the site is on one view an island site on which other uses such as residential are inappropriate. It is appropriate to ‘land bank’ for the longer term rather than have to create additional dispersed sites later.
The retail and bulky goods market has shown considerable growth and dynamism over the last decade. There is no reason to conclude that this trend will stagnate and therefore it is appropriate to maintain land and a degree of flexibility to allow the market to adapt and change within an agreed planning framework. Too much prescription in the past has culminated in retail planning being more an exercise in 'catch up' rather than leadership.

4.3 Conventional retailing

The concern that the site may be used for the establishment of conventional smaller scale retail activities that duplicate and compete with the Roxburgh Park Shopping Centre is in my opinion more of a theoretical rather real threat.

In the event that the amendment is approved as gazetted the Roxburgh Park activity centre would comprise and be structured into three distinct entities differentiated by zone types and purposes.

The Business 1 zone that applies to the shopping centre would have the purpose of:

To encourage the intensive development of business centres for retailing and other complementary, commercial, entertainment and community uses.

Within the zone, shop is a permitted use. This is to be contrasted with the Business 2 and 4 zones where the use is respectively discretionary and prohibited.

This provides a clear statutory and strategic distinction between locational preferences and priorities. Within the spirit of the above commentary on dynamism and flexibility, it is sound planning within an activity centre to retain some discretion over retail uses that may require smaller floor space but which have a greater synergy with uses established in the Business 2 or 4 zone than in the Business 1 zone.

While I do not consider it warranted, if greater strategic direction was required rather than impose arbitrary and prescriptive controls in the schedule to the zones a preferable approach would be to insert a short paragraph into the Municipal Strategic Statement at Clause 21.03-1 and/or 21.03-2 to the following effect:

"The Roxburgh Park sub-regional activity centre shall be developed as a focus of retail and community facilities, with a priority upon
5.0 Conclusions

Based on my analysis and commentary above I draw the following conclusions about the proposed amendment:

The proposal offers the prospect of significant community benefits in terms of:

- excellent access to a greater choice of retail and commercial services
- a diversified and consolidated activity centre at Roxburgh Park
- no significant environmental implications
- efficient use of existing infrastructure
- significant local economic opportunities measured in job creation and retention of spending within the community
- short and long term commercial development opportunities
- no detrimental amenity impacts
- effective use of vacant urban land.

For the above reasons I consider the amendment should be supported as exhibited.

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ATTACHMENT 5
MAP 4 – LOCATION OF OTHER
RESTRICTED RETAIL CENTRES
ATTACHMENT 6
MAP 5 – CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PATTERN