
Foodies go to war on bad taste

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Community concerns: Bill Granger and Igor Ivanovic outside the Bronte RSL Club.

Photo: Steven Siewert

Chef Bill Granger has joined a throng of prominent foodies to oppose the construction of a "monolithic" building on the Bronte RSL site, bolstering residents' effort to stymie the project.

Granger, a Bronte local of 10 years, said the construction of 28 residential units with a supermarket could halt the "growing vibrant little community" on Macpherson Street.

"The street has a florist, a clothes shop, a chemist plus great places to eat. It's doing well. I'm happy it's re-energised," he said. "It's got everything we need and I fear the development will turn things around."

Last year the developer Winston Langley Burlington proposed a 20.5-metre tall block, provided height and density restrictions were lifted by the council.

WLB director David Hynes said it would benefit the 18,000 people who live within a kilometre. The 1000-square-metre space for a fresh fruit market - a possible home for Harris Farm Markets - was a fraction of the 4200 square metres required by large supermarkets.

"This allows people to pop into a shop while going home rather than having to drive to Bondi Junction," Mr Hynes said. He said the project would provide parking for patrons of local restaurants such as Three Blue Ducks.

Waverley Council found the proposed building was of "excessive bulk" with a "monolithic form" and recommended that the Joint Regional Planning Panel refuse the application. The council proposed a scaled-back design: a block 13 metres high with a lower tiered back and a 400-square-metre retail site.

The development application by WLB should be decided on Thursday by the regional panel.

Waverley mayor Sally Betts said the main concern revolved around increased traffic. "The roads can't sustain that kind of traffic and there's a school nearby and a childcare centre," she said.

The Save Bronte residents' group wants the site to be rezoned so only neighbourhood shops can be built.

The five owners of Three Blue Ducks restaurant on the street, led by chefs Darren Robertson and Mark LaBrooy, have voiced their protest.

"So many places have been wiped out by big development on Oxford Street and parts of Paddington are dead. We're very protective of this place," part-owner Jeff Bennett said.

Pasta Emilia chef Anna Maria Eocliidi, based in Surry Hills, plans to return to the Bronte strip as soon as a building renovation, 25 metres away, is complete.

"I'm trying to bring back old traditions and do things slow. This development is big, fast and about money," the Bronte local said.

Igor Ivanovic, owner of sourdough purveyor Iggy's Bread, said he did not oppose the proposal, calling it "inevitable". He wants to work with the developers to ensure the building keeps in line with community needs. "I wish we got people together to buy the building and turn it into a community garden," Mr Ivanovic said.

"I want the development to be green and sustainable."

His wife, Ludmilla Ivanovic, has run a community garden project near the shop for two years. "It creates a village feel and encourages interaction," she said.

"Any huge supermarket is worrying because it will bring traffic, congestion and impersonal service."

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