

# South Coast Register

## **ABOUT FACE - Community concerns prompt planning reversal**

BY GLENN ELLARD

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DESPITE being universally praised, a development proposed for Huskisson has been put on hold while Shoalhaven City Council tries to update a development control plan.

The three-storey residential and tourist development proposed for 19 Fegen Street was actually approved by council two weeks earlier, but was brought back for reconsideration on Tuesday evening following a recision motion instigated by Cr John Fergusson.

That reconsideration resulted in councillors bowing to community concerns that the organisation was turning its back on its own processes and policies by approving a project that did not comply with the relevant development control plan.

But the change of direction did not come without pain, with several councillors arguing the development equated to jobs and growth.

However the mood of the meeting changed when Crs Nigel Soames and Andrew Guile, who both supported the development proceeding at the previous meeting, indicated they had changed their minds.

Cr Guile said his change of tack was based on the belief the DCP could be quickly overhauled, resulting in only a minor delay for the developer.

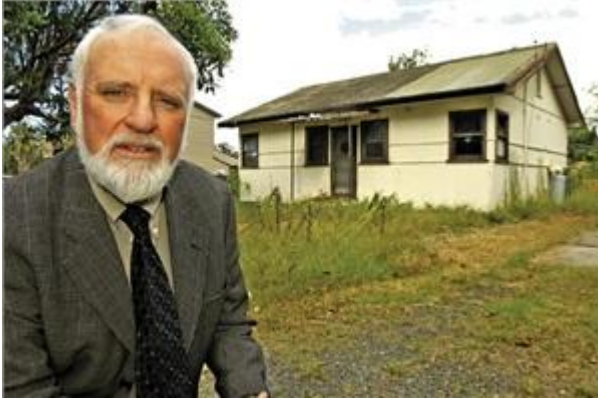
Discussions with council staff at the meeting indicated a draft DCP could be prepared within three months, with many councillors believing the draft document, even before public comment and feedback had been taken into consideration, could be used to help guide decisions on the proposal.

Cr Fergusson opened the debate by stating he was not arguing the merits of the proposed development, but rather the “maintenance of our planning hierarchy”.

With more than 100 planning policies and 55 development control plans covering the region’s most strategic areas, council was “obliged to support our principal planning documents”, Cr Fergusson claimed.

If the DCP did not fit with what council wanted to do in Huskisson, then it needed to be changed rather than over-ruled or ignored, he said.

“We need to be policy makers, not policy breakers,” Cr Fergusson argued.



CHANGE PLANNED: Shoalhaven City Councillor John Fergusson pictured in front of a block in Fegen Street, Huskisson, which was planned to be redeveloped in a proposal that almost had council breaking its own policies, prompting concerns within the local community including claims Huskisson was becoming a "developer's paradise" (Below).



However there were those on council who argued the proposal was of such high quality it warranted council approval ahead of any review of the DCP.

"It's an extremely good development," Cr Greg Watson claimed.

He claimed the region had "lost too much development already", and council would regret the development being knocked back as "we're going to strike a bit of an abyss in terms of development".

Cr Bohdan Brumerskyj was more concerned about jobs, income, training and apprenticeships being lost to the region.

He said that sort of economic impetus should not be held back by a DCP that "simply does not fit the area".

The jobs issue was dismissed by Cr Amanda Findley as "an argument that doesn't fit this equations, because it's about policy".

But a planning policy would never suit all needs, according to Cr Kearney, who said DCPs needed to focus on guidelines rather than specific details of heights and distances from boundaries.

Cr Josi Young said the development was about more than jobs - it was about growth, vibrancy and economic stability.

"If we continue to put up the barriers all the time, we will never get anything done," she said.

“We have to be progressive enough to make these decisions.”

However as the debate progressed all except Cr Watson agreed to defer a decision on the proposal pending an urgent review of the development control plan, which would also include similar areas with the same zone in Huskisson.

Additional resources are to be directed to ensure the draft document is finalised by June 30.