

Fallout over market plan

By Casey Neill

A proposed Bangholme produce market cleared another hurdle but is a long way from the finishing line.

Greater Dandenong councillors approved the DandyFresh development for green wedge-zoned land in Harwood Road at their Monday 26 June council meeting, six votes to two.

But Cr Matthew Kirwan, who voted against the proposal with Cr Loi Truong, lodged a rescission motion that brought the matter back to the Monday 10 July meeting.

He asked councillors to take back their decision and was adamant that the council's own policy said the market was not appropriate in the green wedge.

The proposal included a 5000 square metre sterilisation facility and 8700 square metres of warehousing.

"This is completely disregarding the zoning we've all agreed to," he said.

"This is not rural industry.

"It is a large-scale commercial industrial food enterprise.

"It belongs in an industrial zone."

Only Cr Maria Sampey sided with Cr Kirwan.

Cr's Youhorn Chea, Sean O'Reilly, Jim Memeti, Heang Tak and Tim Dark voted to stick with the decision to approve the market.

But Defenders of the South East Green Wedge secretary Barry Ross said the group would take the matter to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) in a last-ditch bid to have it blocked.

Dandenong resident Sylvia Mastrogiovanni said shutting down the project would not cost the community the 200 jobs slated.

"It could still be built in the industrial area where it belongs, and the jobs would still be there," she said.

Her husband Charlie told the Journal there was "plenty of land to build this on in Dandenong that's not in the green wedge".

"When the green wedge land is gone it's gone forever," he said.

Cr Sampey's opposition was based on her concerns about the sterilisation process.



DandyFresh CEO Rod Kerley at the Bangholme site in March last year.

"It's dealing with radiation equipment and gamma rays," she said.

She said things could go wrong and it was dangerous.

"I support the facility but it's in the wrong area.

"Don't laugh, Cr Dark, it's not a joke," she said in response to Cr Dark's struggles to contain his laughter as Cr Sampey spoke about nuclear waste.

He responded: "There is absolutely no chance DandyFresh will be manufacturing nuclear weapons."

He supported the market.

"By bringing produce closer, we bring down the food miles," he said.

"The food gets from the farm to people's home quicker.

"It's much fresher.

"The area is prime already for development.

"The industrial areas are moving towards the buffer zone."

Cr Sean O'Reilly said "hopefully the decision won't rest on whether modern day food processing is safe or not" in reference to Cr Sampey's objection.

"The primary purpose of this facility is as a market," he said.

"In any market you've got to have storage.

"You can call it warehousing and say this application automatically hits the fence.

"We don't want to lose this opportunity to improve the supply chain of fresh local produce in the south-east when we know there's ongoing population growth."

DandyFresh CEO Rod Kerley said the development was appropriate in the green wedge and he was "happy to go to VCAT".

Intrapac Property managing director David Payes said Intrapac was a joint venture partner with some investors on the land and also an investor in DandyFresh.



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■ Produce market on hold over push to move it out of green wedge...

Jobs up in the air

By Casey Neill

A Bangholme produce market that could generate 200 jobs got the green light from Greater Dandenong councillors - but immediately arrived at a stop sign.

Councillors approved the DandyFresh development for green wedge-zoned land in Harwood Road at their Monday 26 June council meeting, six votes to two.

But Cr Matthew Kirwan, who voted against the proposal with Cr Loi Truong, lodged a rescission motion that will bring the matter back to the Monday 10 July meeting.

He'll ask councillors to take back their decision and re-debate the application in the hope they will reject it this time around.

"The officer's report provided flimsy justification and special treatment for a large-scale commercial food enterprise that should be in an industrial zone, not a green wedge zone," Cr Kirwan said.

"Does a 5000 square metre sterilisation facility sound like rural industry to anyone in this chamber?"

"Does 8700 square metres of warehousing?"

He said the applicant was taking advantage of cheap land.

Even if the council's decision stands, DandyFresh will have another battle on its hands.

Defenders of the South East Green Wedge vowed to take the matter to VCAT.

Secretary Barry Ross said the council's own policy said the green wedge should "provide a green, spacious relief from surrounding urban development".

"Its buildings, roads, and internal car parks would cover 16.5 hectares, which is more than eight times the area of the playing surface of the MCG," he said.

"If this application is approved it would set a precedent for more such large scale development

that would transform the green wedge into an urban commercial precinct."

Bangholme resident Alan Hood wrote to the Journal with his objections to the application.

"A market is a permissible use in the green wedge zone, but is limited to 50 square metres," he said.

"The intent is that a farmer can use this area to sell his produce."

DandyFresh CEO Rod Kerley said the development was appropriate in the green wedge and he was "happy to go to VCAT".

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