

Who will shop?

Growth numbers fall well below predictions

By ALAN LANDER

Noosa's population growth is falling well short of forecasts, leading to doubts any further retail development at Noosa Business Centre will be approved.

An Urban Economics report compiled in February 2008 predicted the local population would be 60,500 by 2026, but a more recent council-sponsored report reduced that figure by 2000 to 58,600 – and both figures are well below consultant Paul Summers' 2004 projection of more than 62,000.

On Wednesday, the Noosa Business Centre Review recommended minor changes to the Noosa locality code as it relates to the centre, detailing 100 submissions from the community – mainly objections to any further retail growth at the controversial shopping centre – and which mainly came from business owners at Noosa Junction.

Mixed business and enterprise areas were still to be developed and a residential component was to be made more population-dense.

A development application for stage 3 of Noosa Civic is expected to be before council in June, seeking a huge increase in retail floor space in precincts previously set aside for offices and general enterprise businesses – which could rival

A petition led by Noosa Junction traders is doing the rounds of businesses in Noosaville and Tewantin in a bid to convince the Sunshine Coast council of the need to make a firm stand against the Stockwell Noosa Civic stage 3 application.

The wording of the petition, which they will seek to present to council on Monday, is: "We the undersigned request the Sunshine Coast council rejects

the Sunshine Plaza in its total floor space.

Submissions included one from Stockwells and one from Scott Juniper's S&L Developments, the two owners of the NBC site, seeking greater flexibility in impact assessments. Mayor Bob Abbot said the original town plan had been based on Summers' numbers and ensuring capacity.

"But these figures haven't been realised," he said.

Mr Abbot noted many submissions to the review came from business people saying more shopping areas were needed.

"There seems to be an argument about where this should be. We need to be wary of that advice; consultants' (opinions) are better," he said.

The mayor said the long-term view was that Maroochydhore

the Noosa Civic 3 development proposed by Stockwell and any changes to the Noosa Business Centre master plan that could allow this to occur.

"Noosa Civic 3 would have a devastating impact on retailers and small business.

"It is too big, too soon and will stifle Noosa's long-term economic development by using valuable business zoned land for a vast shopping centre that is not suited to the region."

would be the Coast's regional centre for major shopping.

Mr Abbot said conceptually the council, as far as the Noosa Business Centre went, was "heading in the right direction".

Local councillor and regional planning portfolio chair Russell Green said the important point about the report was it showed population growth was not as strong.

"We won't reach our population cap until a much later stage," he said.

"There are a whole range of services including retail which no longer make sense (at this time)."

Planning chair Vivien Griffin said Maroochydhore had a clear mandate to be the premier activity centre, with Nambour, Kawana and Sippy Downs transport hubs next in the hierarchy.