The Development Application (DA) lodged with Council is for the ‘Mega Worship Centre’ being funded and built by Mega Worship, a private religious group who follow the ‘Mega Worship’ religion (a fictitious internationally recognized religion). The proposed Centre will feature a:

- 5,000 seat auditorium;
- administrative offices;
- shopping centre (including a 24 hour bottle shop);
- fast food outlets;
- safe injecting room;
- cinemas;
- bulk billing medical services;
- a small homeless hostel (up to 30 people);
- 7,500 car space multi-level car park;
- public transport hub; and,
- other amenities and facilities including limited parklands

The facility is planned for the Western suburbs of your city on a site that previously had a factory and warehouse and is currently zoned industrial (although the current zoning is conducive with the ‘Mega Worship Centre’ and doesn’t need to be changed). The former site also had a small portion of open grassland nature reserve. The area once occupied by light industry is gradually moving back to residential housing.

The application complies with all Council ordinances for new developments.

Section 27 of the Imaginary Council Development Control Plan (DCP) states:

“A resident of Imaginary Shire Council or other interested person may make a request to address Imaginary Shire Council regarding a development application for any of the following issues that the resident or interested person believes the Council has not properly considered whether:

(1) the scale and design of the proposed development is compatible with surrounding development;
(2) the development fits with the objective to protect and enhance the natural environment;
(3) the development contributes to the common good of the community; and,
(4) the development breaches any freedoms enjoyed by the community.”

Imaginary Shire Council has a highly factionalised set of five councillors. The Mayor (your tutor) is the Chair of Council meetings and does not have a vote on resolutions before the Council. Your councillors are evenly aligned over this development application with the following five lobby groups (ie, one councillor supports each of the following five lobby groups):

- “Supporters of Mega Worship” who are supporters of the DA.
- “Residents Against Mega Worship” who are against the DA.
- “Imaginary Chamber of Commerce” who are supporters of the DA.
- “Sustainable Development Action Group” who are against the DA.
- “Imaginary Residents Action Group” who have some members for and some members against the DA.

Mega Worship is a religious group who are pacifists and have a world-wide following of over three million people in 56 different countries. In Australia, they boast membership of about 100,000 with Imaginary Shire having about 30,000 of those. Their current premises is grossly inadequate and they outgrew it a couple of years ago hence the purchase of this site and the DA to build new premises as quickly as possible.

They are keen to provide a modern and safe home for their members and respect the community residents and their desire to not be disturbed, particularly during peak worship days and times (which is mostly the weekends but also weeknights when they host various events). In showing their
commitment to the local community they are planning parklands, a shopping centre, cinemas, car parking and other community amenities all open to be used by the local community.

- They are keen to build and open this new site knowing that Australia is a place where freedom of religion thrives and everyone is given a ‘fair go’. Their congregation is not fanatical but they just want the chance to peacefully pursue their religious beliefs. They believe that they have done nothing wrong and have complied with the letter of the law in preparing their development application.

- The following picture is an artist’s impression of the development based upon the plans annexed to the development application lodged with Imaginary Shire Council.


**Information about “Residents Against Mega Worship” who are against the DA**

(not for general distribution)

- “Residents against Mega Worship” (RaMW) are a group who are generally suspicious of all religions – not just Mega Worship. They think the development is too big and places religion ahead of other bigger needs in the community. For example, Imaginary Shire is in desperate need of a new primary school given the influx of young families in the area and this site would be perfectly located for such an important piece of infrastructure.

- RaMW have also uncovered some information from Mega Worship’s USA operations that show they brainwash their followers and steal their money. The investigative journalist TV show ‘60 seconds’ recently aired a damaging documentary that featured a couple of disgruntled former members complaining about Mega Worship. No charges have ever been laid against the Church or any of its Directors by any police or government authority anywhere in the world. All of this makes RaMW very suspicious of Mega Worship and as far as they are concerned, they are exercising their right to free speech in a country that cherishes such a freedom.

**Important Note for Students:**

- This role play is about bringing together the issues discussed throughout this subject. Therefore do not get bogged down in technical issues when presenting your case rather primarily engage in the issues raised in the subject about freedoms, notions of self & community and the common good.

- Further, this is a role play. You are playing a role or a character with a certain point of view. The character that you play is no reflection on your own beliefs and nobody is to judge anybody personally based on the character you are playing.