



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER NO. 7

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A NEW SHOPPING CENTRE FOR BLACKBURN?

What Has Been Happening?

The Blackburn Village Residents Group is now engaged in discussions which may lead to a new shopping centre proposal acceptable to residents. You will remember that the Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr Tom Roper, rejected the previous proposal in November after considering the report of the Panel set up to investigate it. In rejecting that proposal, however, the Minister has this to say:

I accept the view that there is need for additional development to re-inforce the viability of the Blackburn Shopping Centre, but the issues raised by the Panel must be addressed and resolved.

Mr Roper then went on to direct the setting up of a forum in which the various parties involved, including the resident groups, could discuss the issues; and he asked Nunawading Council to be responsible for this. These discussions have been taking place since just before Christmas.

What is BVRG Policy?

In our submission to the Panel hearing last year we stated our policy on the development of new retail facilities thus:

The BVRG wishes to make it clear that it does not oppose an appropriate development which reasonably satisfies the Government and Ministerial criteria . . . this Group seeks the revitalising of the present centre in a manner appropriate to the needs and character of the area.

Our submission concluded by suggesting an alternative approach: a flexible cluster of smaller buildings with open space between them which creates a 'village' atmosphere and which is compatible with Blackburn's architecture and environment — all on a single level and with ground level customer parking.

In addition to this approach to design, we have all along argued that any proposal must be worked out as part of a strategic plan for central Blackburn. Such a plan would address important matters such as traffic, long-term retail viability of Blackburn's shopping centre and the effect of new development in Blackburn on surrounding centres. Independently of the discussions mentioned above, we have been pressing Nunawading Council to engage consultants to work on such a plan.

What Has Been Accomplished?

The results so far of the discussions at Council between the parties involved have been summarised in a joint 'Community Update' newsletter now being circulated in Blackburn. That there has been what the 'Community Update' calls "an exemplary level of community participation", and that the talks have proceeded constructively is due in good part to the Chair of these meetings: the Mayor, Councillor Jan Plummer. (These are the kinds of talks we advocated nearly two years ago; it took a Ministerial directive to achieve them.)

A checklist of development objectives has been produced. As the name implies, these are "objectives", and for the most part are couched in general terms. But while they are critical for the evaluation of a development proposal, they do not replace the more detailed and independent strategic studies which the BVRG has asked Council to initiate. This is because the community needs a lot of information about such things as projected traffic flows, the market potential of a proposed development, and land uses in Blackburn **before** we can decide with confidence on a proposal.

Finally, the developer has presented a number of very broad architectural concepts for a new shopping centre. We are able to say at this early stage that these new concepts recognise many of the concerns raised in the Panel report, and come much closer to our description of what we would like to see, as set out earlier in this Newsletter. Whether it all works from the points of view of design, traffic management, retail success and so on cannot yet be assessed.

PUBLIC MEETING

What Can You Do?

You will have the opportunity to discuss all these issues and, we expect, the architects' final concept plan at a public meeting to be called by the BVRG.

**THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT 'THE PINES' SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE IN
CENTRAL ROAD, BLACKBURN, AT 8 p.m. ON WEDNESDAY, 15th MARCH.**

'The Pines' is near the tennis courts, just along Central Road from the Blackburn Library. So that your representatives can properly reflect community views, it is vital that we know what **YOU** think.

Come along and have your say about the future of your shopping centre.