



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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THE NEW COUNCIL AND PLANNING REFORM

One of the first tasks for our new Council will be to approve a Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS). This is the planning policy document which will be used to justify the statutory provisions eventually to be incorporated in the new Whitehorse Planning Scheme.

That Scheme will probably go on public exhibition in June, for a period of two months. We anticipate that it will include proposals for rezoning the Blackburn Office Zone in order to accommodate some mix of higher density residential with office/commercial use. Other variations in the present planning status of central Blackburn may be proposed.

While some change is inevitable, we should be alert to any proposals likely to produce uncertainty for residents or which are merely introduced to satisfy demands for uniformity.

Over the last six months the Planning Reform sub-committee has met a number of times with Council's senior planners to emphasise our concern that Blackburn's distinctive character be adequately recognised by the new Scheme. The BVRG will be examining both documents as they become available and making any necessary submissions.

You should likewise take every opportunity to scrutinise them and let Council know your views. The exhibition of the Scheme should be accompanied by a programme of public consultation about which all residents will be advised. During that period we plan to produce a special issue of the Bulletin with our comments on the Scheme.

HAIL...

We are delighted to welcome David Morrison to the Committee. As convenor of the Glen Ebor Action Group he has had recent and direct experience of dealing with planning issues.

...AND FAREWELL

In the last Bulletin we expressed the hope that we had seen the end of disruptive staff changes. Unfortunately the Statutory Planner, closely involved with the introduction of the reform programme, left in December after only one year's service with Council. So far a replacement has not been appointed.

URBAN CHARACTER STUDY

Council's December '96 Report on the Urban Character Study noted that medium density developers still don't appreciate the need to submit a site analysis (which takes neighbourhood character into account).

It was reported that developers and designers still need to be educated on the new requirements - and doubted whether Council had the resources to provide that education.

Surely, now well over a year after the Good Design Guide replaced Vic Code 2, a quicker way of solving the problem might be to start refusing to accept deficient permit applications.

BICYCLE STRATEGY & BLACKBURN DEMONSTRATION PRECINCT

You could be excused for missing it but two days before Christmas this Draft Strategy, together with proposals for a Bicycle Demonstration Precinct in Blackburn, was submitted to Council. A last minute appeal saw the time for public comment extended to 12 February although, despite the relevance to this area, no display copies were placed in the local library.

While the BVRG indicated support in principle of proposed traffic calming measures we suggested that the documents did not give sufficient detail on associated works. We requested these be 'letterboxed' to householders and their comments invited before Council adopted the recommended works programme.

At the Commissioners last Council meeting on 11 March it was announced that details of any works programme would be referred to the affected community before any capital works were approved.

Changes agreed at that meeting were that roads would be designated bike routes as alternatives to Blackburn Creeklands footpaths and that the Blackburn Demonstration Precinct would no longer be a priority project.

GRIST FOR THE MILL

However one might wish to avoid the topic we do rely on your financial support in order to meet operating expenses - kept at a reasonable level because of the services and assistance freely given.

The Committee decided at the last meeting to make our annual appeal for funds at the end of June and to send you a reminder note about that time. While all of us have many other demands on our purse we do ask you to respond when you receive the note.