



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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RESCODE : A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES...

...in this case began with a single step and then a lot more. The long awaited changes to residential planning announced by Planning Minister John Thwaites on Thursday 24 May foreshadowed the end of Vic Code 1 and the Good Design Guide that replaced Vic Code 2. New planning provisions for housing development will be incorporated in State Building Regulations and Municipal Planning Schemes following legislation in August. Uniform standards such as height, coverage, setback, overlooking, permeability etc. will apply to all developments. Proposals for single dwellings that meet fourteen specified standards won't require a planning permit. All other housing developments will require a planning permit and additional standards will apply. Neighbourhood character will be the starting point for these development proposals, whether for single or multi-unit dwellings.

We remain concerned that the proposed Neighbourhood Character Overlay will not prove as effective a planning tool as is envisaged. The long sought objective of the City of Whitehorse - to increase the threshold size for lots requiring a planning permit - will soon be achievable. As also will amendment of Residential Zone schedules for other siting standards (setbacks, site coverage, private open space etc.). While few standards are mandatory, decision guidelines should bring some uniformity of interpretation at council and VCAT (planning tribunal) level. We retain reservations about private surveyors having authority to approve single dwellings, but are pleased to see that any dispensation must first be approved by the local council.

Until we have had an opportunity to further analyse the proposed changes we must reserve our judgement on those or other concerns. Overall ResCode is taking planning in the right direction and hopefully further improvements will result from more training and education of council officers, councillors, developers and other stakeholders.

You have an opportunity to learn more about ResCode by attending one of the information sessions to be held around Melbourne in June and July - contact the Department for a list of these and for material outlining the new planning provisions - on 1800 012 346 or through www.doi.vic.gov.au/rescode.

PROTECTING THE BLACKBURN AREA:

Council is seeking your comment on proposed signage alerting residents and others of the controls that apply within the area. Signs are no substitute for the long promised special brochure or new residents kit but in their absence signs are probably more desirable than ever. Although ostensibly aware of conditions that apply, new residents are not likely to have had the importance of these emphasised to them by selling agents. Signs will serve to remind everyone concerned where special conditions apply. Samples of possible signs are available at Council offices and in the local library. Your written comments on them should be with Gerard Gilfedder as soon as possible.

REVIEW OF SPECIAL CHARACTER AREA - BLACKBURN:

As foreshadowed in the last *Bulletin*, council has advertised for local residents to nominate for the Significant Landscape Steering Committee. We encourage anyone interested in nominating to do so now. (For further information contact Mr Gerard Gilfedder on 9262 6315).

Don't however be misled by the task implied in the advertisement published in the local Press - that of reviewing the existing Significant Landscape (SLO) boundary. The task, clearly defined in the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and in the operative decision of council, is to study the Special Character Area identified in the MSS which surrounds the existing SLO area. Subsequent recommendations might lead to adoption of various planning controls to preserve and/or enhance areas adjacent to the existing SLO - and in some cases the existing boundary might change - but that would be purely coincidental.

We have recommended to council that the title and task description more clearly reflect that situation.

DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2001-2:

BVRG made a submission resulting in the inclusion in this Draft of specific target dates for progressing several planning projects. Our remaining concern is whether the timetable will allow these projects to be exhibited as part of the general revision of the Planning Scheme, originally intended for the second half of this year.

WAITING, WAITING...

In case you think we exaggerate the time it takes to amend a planning scheme, we offer the example of the Amendment labelled C11. That merely involved the correction of inadvertent drafting errors discovered within a few days of the New Format Planning Scheme gazetted on 5 August 1999. Some of those drafting errors related directly to the Blackburn area. BVRG met with council officers on 14 September 1999, when it was agreed that changes were required. Despite the fact that it only involved corrections and did not require extensive redrafting, exhibition, public consultation, or a panel hearing, changes were only approved and gazetted on 8 March 2001, eighteen months after being formally acknowledged.

We hasten to add that we are not apportioning blame - it was only one of many planning changes always in the pipeline, all of which must conform to statutory process by organisations with finite resources. But it serves to justify our concern that unless planning projects are specifically included in a corporate plan timeline they are likely to remain on the back burner indefinitely. And in the long term we are all dead...

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY: Please note that the provisional date for the AGM is Thursday, 1 November and for the Dinner, Thursday 16 November. More details in the next issue.

VALE: Many foundation members will have been sad to learn of the death, late last year, of Jean Drummond, one of our early and active members. As body corporate secretary of a block of units she was particularly concerned to see that their amenity did not suffer through close proximity to the major shopping centre once proposed. Despite indifferent health she was an enthusiastic supporter of the BVRG and much enjoyed the company of fellow members on social occasions.

NEW NEIGHBOURS INTERESTED?

SHARE THIS BULLETIN WITH THEM

ARRANGE FOR US TO CONTACT