



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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REDEVELOPMENT OF THE OLD CALTEX SITE

Along with most residents the BVRG was initially pleased to learn of moves to eliminate this long standing eyesore in the centre of Blackburn. However, on studying the plans for redevelopment of the site it was disappointing to find that a rare opportunity to integrate with and enhance the existing centre had been given a very low priority. The scale of the proposed commercial buildings not only places inequitable demands on public car park space but limits design alternatives to the extent that the whole would impact adversely on the surrounding area. It also involves sale of council land.

The BVRG made a detailed submission on the application and registered concerns with the proposed development, primarily on the grounds of Traffic & Parking, Design & Integration, and Amenity. Some twenty-two submissions, all but two being objections, had been received by the time a planning consultation forum was held on 15 August, at which the views of residents and traders were presented. It is hoped that that forum will lead towards adoption of an improved design of real community benefit and one which is acceptable to all parties.

RESCODE INTRODUCED

ResCode, covering all residential planning permits now assessed under the Good Design Guide and Vic Code 1, and introducing associated changes to building permits, is to be implemented on 24 August. [Note that there will be some minor changes to provisions announced on 24 May]. Public Information sessions held around the metropolitan area have been followed with training sessions for councillors and planners. That training process will continue and one day courses are available to anyone wishing to supplement information obtainable from council planning (Ph. 9262 6303) or the Department of Infrastructure. (Ph. 1800 012 346; Website: www.doi.vic.gov.au/rescode).

COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO STUDY SPECIAL CHARACTER AREAS

Council is in the process of appointing a steering committee to oversee the review of those areas identified in the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) which surround the existing Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) area. The committee will include local residents, some being nominees of the BVRG and other community groups. Their deliberations will be confidential so we shall not be able report on progress but there will be provision for community consultation and residents who regard local character as an integral part of their lifestyle should make sure their views are heard.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We welcome those residents who have joined the Group in recent months and look forward to meeting them at one of our activities. Another special mailing will soon be made to those we know to have recently moved into a Blackburn home but who may be unaware of the BVRG. There are others we don't know about - so please let us know if you think any of your new neighbours should be sent an introductory letter and we will ensure that they are included.

MEETING WITH CEO

Your representatives met with Whitehorse Council CEO Noelene Duff in June, mainly to introduce the Group and to discuss various concerns, some of which are mentioned elsewhere. One of these was recent press comment which suggested that Blackburn somehow receives special treatment in the planning arena. We took the opportunity to emphasise that any planning protection gained or proposed in Blackburn has been the result of long and dedicated voluntary effort by the local community, including the BVRG, over many years. It was also pointed out that it had always been intended that any protective measures introduced should help serve as a model for other communities to follow. That certainly remains the view of the BVRG; more residents in the City who identify with their neighbourhood should similarly work towards its protection.

SUBSCRIPTION TIME

Again we are pleased to advise that there has been no increase on our rates since 1987. This is largely the result of the continuing support of members so please keep up your good record of payment - or improve on it if you have been lagging ! The enclosed reply slip includes a request for email addresses which we can use to convey urgent advice to members, e.g. on planning applications close to your home which might affect you.

THE PLANNING SCHEME - A BETTER VIEW ?

We recently asked council if they could have the 1999 Planning Scheme on their web site incorporate all subsequent amendments. The BVRG now understands that the Department of Infrastructure intends to incorporate internet access to updated Schemes in the near future. This should mean that the current version of the Whitehorse Scheme will be available either through the council's site (www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au) or through the Department's site (www.doi.vic.gov.au).

VEGETATION PROTECTION, OPEN SPACE AND LANES

The brochure on enhancing streetscapes and properties with vegetation has still to appear. It is however timely that, following extensive consultation, council has decided to install signs around the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) area in Blackburn. It is also pleasing to learn that the delay in completing a City wide study into vegetation protection was due to the overwhelming numbers of residents of Blackburn and other suburbs who nominated significant trees. Their value is often only realised when they are gone - imagine how barren Chapel Street would look without the small oasis of greenery and large trees just north of the post office. Owners of such properties should be commended and perhaps rewarded for retaining sites which soften the hard edge of the surrounding built environment.

Though not a planning initiative, it was interesting to learn that council is reviewing alternatives to their present policy on discontinuing Rights of Way, or laneways. BVRG reminded council that it is one of their MSS commitments to investigate lanes as possible open space and vegetation corridors. That is apart from our recommendations to the Heritage Review that consideration be given to retaining individual lanes which typify the historical subdivision of the older areas of Whitehorse.

FINALLY : AGM AND ANNUAL DINNER: Those who didn't record the evenings of **Thursday 1 November** and **Friday 16 November** in their diaries should do so now. The dinner will this year be held at the Jacaranda - more on both in the next *Bulletin*.

NEIGHBOURS INTERESTED ?

SHARE THIS BULLETIN WITH THEM

ARRANGE FOR US TO CONTACT