



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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BLACKBURN LAKE ENVIRONS STUDY

Although a few residents in one part of the Study area have expressed the wish not to be included in the proposed extension of the present Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) the amendments recommended to Council on 23 February have received support from the overwhelming majority of affected residents. Residents in areas recommended for overlay protection (Neighbourhood Character (NCO) and SLO) have been notified that they have until 10 June to make a submission on the proposed amendment.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER ACROSS WHITEHORSE:

Overlapping the Blackburn Lake surrounds Study has been the municipal wide Study of Neighbourhood Character [**Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study 2002**] which aims to identify distinct neighbourhood character areas as they exist across the entire city. Somewhat to our surprise, but purportedly on the grounds of consistency, this also took in the Significant Landscape Overlay areas of Blackburn (the old Special Residential Zone) which we would have thought had been well and truly defined by now. Our main concern on this score - apart from the initial failure to correctly delineate the SLO boundaries - was that any definitions arising from this Study must in no way supersede or dilute the existing overlay schedules.

The Study excludes the existing Heritage precincts and that area of central Blackburn covered by the Blackburn Lake Environs Study (see above) the pilot for this study.

Since completing a round of community forums last December the Consultant (Planisphere) has been busy sorting and analysing this data. A Community Steering Committee was appointed which included representatives from city wide community groups, one of which was the BVRG, and some Councillors. There is also a separate Council Steering Committee consisting of Ward Councillors and Council Officers whose meetings precede each of the Community Steering Committee meetings!

In the course of the Study the Consultant has visited and assessed every street in the city and reviewed aerial photographs and relevant Council policy documents. One of the outcomes of this work will be the Consultants recommendation on character areas across the municipality and maps delineating these. Each "Character Area" will be supported with a brochure defining the relevant characteristics and recommended guidelines for future development. Over the last six months the Consultants and Steering Committee's have met to review the evolving process and documentation. The final Community Steering Committee meeting will be held this month when the Consultants formal recommendations on areas worthy of Planning Scheme protection will be advised. Council Officers will then prepare a report for Council and, subject to Councillor approval, this will be released for public comment as has been done in previous studies.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND PLANNING

Most BVRG members live in Central Ward and will be aware that as a result of the recent elections Cr. Peter Allan and Cr. Jessie McCallum were re-elected to represent that Ward and that the last named has been elected as Mayor (an office previously held by her in 2000/2001). While our Ward representatives are well aware how strongly Blackburn residents value their environment and all councillors have endorsed the preservation of local character as a matter of principle, this does not mean that we can sit back and relax. Many developers still fail to acknowledge the aspirations of neighbours, whose objections they perversely label as 'selfish', while diligently exploring every means of achieving their own aims. So if we happen to be the neighbours in question we need to be equally as diligent in defending those elements which characterise our locality.

SIGNIFICANT TREE STUDY

The first 900 owners of nominated trees have been notified and provided with an opportunity to discuss the implications of the study and it is expected that the remaining owners will be contacted soon. Surprisingly, the Consultant (Peter Harrison) made no recommendations on the basis of historic/heritage significance. This is difficult to accept as there must have been many nominations made on that basis. A number in Blackburn were certainly in this category, including one in Central Road bearing a plaque acknowledging its historical status under the former City of Nunawading! If you are aware of any such nominations we recommend that you advise Mr Gerard Gilfedder at the City of Whitehorse with a copy to your Committee so that we may monitor the situation.

CONCENTRATION

Save Our Suburbs (SOS) has expressed concern over some of the possible effects of concentrating development in the Activity Centres as nominated in the State government planning study *Melbourne 2030*. They are particularly concerned with indications that government planners are regarding them as a fait accompli, rather than as proposed strategies yet to be debated. While Box Hill is the nearest such centre many other areas, such as those north of Laburnum and Blackburn railway stations, feature in the Council's Housing Study as localities identified as having the potential for higher density residential development. As we pointed out in the October 2002 *Bulletin*, such higher density environments do not automatically produce all the benefits claimed by their proponents - and certainly need, but will rarely be accompanied by, a major investment of public money, especially on improving infrastructure.

One major concern associated with areas of more closely concentrated development is the generation of increased traffic and need for car park space. This can of course occur around any centre of activity and in Blackburn is compounded by a lack of commuter parking. As we explained in the August 2002 *Bulletin* your Committee has spent an inordinate amount of time attempting to convince Council that every reduction in off street parking ratios, coupled with increased restrictions on adjacent street parking, means more pressure being applied to surrounding residential streets.

The City of Whitehorse has now announced that off street parking ratios in Blackburn are to be relaxed (to an extent exceeding that allowed in similar centres in the municipality) and that on street parking in Blackburn Road has been further restricted. The BVRG is seeking an explanation from the CEO of the City Council as to why no community consultation has occurred despite the undertakings given by Council last year that the BVRG could participate in the development of solutions to traffic management problems in central Blackburn.

NEIGHBOURS INTERESTED ?

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