



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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MEMBERS' BULLETIN NO. 2

Since our last Bulletin we have been busy undertaking research and preparing evidence to support the Blackburn Village Residents' Group point of view: that any proposed retail development should be of a scale and design that is compatible with and enhances the "village" character of Blackburn.

Early in August, Mrs. Margaret Ray, M.L.A. for Box Hill, led a deputation of BVRG Representatives to meet Mr. Jim Kennan, the Minister for Planning and Environment. At this meeting (as well as in a letter previously sent to the Minister) we voiced residents' concerns about the proposed amendment to the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme which would enable a 'major shopping complex' to be built at Blackburn.

The deputation was heartened by Mr. Kennan's sympathetic response; namely, that the proposed development should be of a size and scale appropriate to Blackburn, that it should be redesigned to make it as aesthetically pleasing as possible and that it should demonstrate real integration with the existing shops. Further, while no decision had yet been made on whether to proceed with such an amendment, it should, if exhibited, be for a two month period.

One outcome of this meeting with Mr. Kennan was the convening by the Eastern Regional Office of the Ministry for Planning and Environment of 'round table' talks, involving all interested parties in the proposed development. We were shown Stock Constructions' latest plans. BVRG Representatives were dismayed that the main features of most concern to Blackburn Village residents were still incorporated in the plans.

The complex is still a large enclosed structure which would cover over 9,750 m² (containing 7,880 m² of leasable floor area); the height of the proposed building (still with its underground carpark and roof top parking and Medical Centre) is quite out of character with the village atmosphere of Blackburn Shopping Centre. While some concessions have been made towards improved integration with existing shops, they have been at the expense of the amenity of nearby residents. For example, the Refuse Collection Bay has been resited (away from the commercial area) alongside a loading bay, and closer to the elderly residents in the units.

Consequently, we have recently submitted a written summary of the BVRG case for a smaller, more appropriate retail development to the Ministry's Eastern Regional Manager, Mr. Malcolm Jack.

We have also written again to the Minister, expressing our concern that the present proposal would have a significant and adverse impact on the social, economic and physical environment and that more time is needed if these factors are to be adequately measured.

As many of you are aware, we have been undertaking research to substantiate our claims.

Our Retail Sub-Committee's pilot survey indicates that while some increase in retail facilities would be appropriate, the generally accepted catchment area would not support a venture of the size proposed. The fact that it would also depend upon drawing customers away from Blackburn South, Laburnum and other nearby centres has been overlooked (or ignored) by proponents of the scheme. A Retail Questionnaire is attached to some of these Bulletins - we would appreciate your co-operation in completing and returning the form.

Our Traffic Sub-Committee recently conducted a survey which clearly demonstrated that the traffic generated by the proposed shopping complex would have an adverse impact on an already inadequate road system, especially at the Blackburn Road railway crossing. It is worth visiting the Blackburn Branch Library or Nunawading Municipal Offices to read what the Environmental Effects Statement has to say about the cost of delays in Blackburn Road, even with projected growth under existing conditions. (Proposed Railway Depot at Nunawading: Sections 8.4 and 8.6 (p69) and Appendices).

We are also looking at ways of improving communication with members and in extending our support. You can help by ensuring we have the names of friends, neighbours and family who share your views. If any of them doubt the size of the proposed building, we suggest they visit Gardenia Street and stand facing North on a line extending from the boundary between No.'s 15 & 17.

The houses to the north of this boundary line are to be sold for removal (two have already been removed). About five metres to the north of this line the building would commence and continue down to within 6 metres of the rear of the existing shops. On the left it would extend to about three metres from the lane on the west side, and on the right half way to the lane on the east.

Nunawading Council plans to distribute a leaflet to residents when the Minister makes a decision about exhibiting the proposed amendment to the MMPS. We will be commenting on that leaflet and advising you on how to bring your personal views to the attention of the Minister for Planning, Local Councillors, Parliamentarians and the Press. We urge you to let none of them be in doubt of your attitude to the proposal.

Thank you for your continued support.