

BULLETIN No 48

February 2004

BLACKBURN SHOPPING CENTRE AND PRECINCT PARKING

A planning scheme amendment (C40) proposed by Council would have 3 story developments in the commercial area south of the station at Blackburn and allow developers to provide less on site parking, adding to the congestion on local streets. To emphasise the issue an application for a 4 story residential development is being considered by council north of the railway line behind the Karinya Reception Centre.

Amendment C40 brings together two locally developed plans - the Blackburn Shopping Centre Business Study Plan and the Blackburn Parking Precinct Plan. Neither plan has been developed with resident input and both plans have significant flaws that will impact on residents.

Three storey buildings on and around South Parade are hardly in keeping with the local shopping centre. The relatively modest scale of which is one of the main reasons many of us choose to live in Blackburn. This is one of the proposals in the Blackburn Shopping Centre Business Study Plan which was adopted by Council in July 2002. It came as a complete surprise to residents who were not consulted in the preparation of the Plan. It is also inconceivable that strategies could be adopted which allowed for buildings so completely at variance with those envisaged in the 1990 Structure Plan, itself the result of a Planning Scheme Amendment so vigorously opposed by the overwhelming majority of local residents.

The Blackburn Parking Precinct Plan was exhibited in June last year and provides dispensation for parking provision on new developments which will result in overflow parking in nearby residential streets.

The whole exercise with amendment C40 has been an example of inadequate planning. By contrast the Blackburn Lake Surrounds Amendment (C46 see below) during the long Study period kept the affected community informed by means of public meetings and by letters and information brochures sent to individual households.

An independent Panel will conduct a Hearing on the proposed amendment on 9 and 10 March in the Willis Room at the Civic Centre. BVRG is making its submission at 10.30 Wednesday 10th March, with building height and the Precinct Parking Plan the two of the main concerns.

The Hearing is open to the public and any one wishing to support the BVRG or individual submitters may attend. The timetable is always subject to change and you should contact Council's Senior Urban Planner, Helen Woodside 9262 6349 a few days beforehand if you wish to check on that or other information related to the Hearing.

PANEL HEARING BLACKBURN LAKE SURROUNDS:

Planning Scheme Amendment C46 was the subject of a Panel Hearing on 9 and 10 February, it followed the Character Study and proposals for Planning Overlays to apply to areas around central Blackburn.

The BVRG, the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society and several residents made submissions to an independent Panel which consisted of Helen Gibson (Chairman) and Elizabeth Jacka (Member). Their report and recommendations are expected to be available during April.

BETTER DECISIONS FASTER

Speeding up the planning application process sounds good - except that much of what was proposed in the document of that name is at the expense of the resident affected by a planning permit application, and based on the presumption that they cause most of the delays. The BVRG submission supported a more thorough preparation of permit applications. It pointed out that the ordinary resident is disadvantaged in terms of interpreting and negotiating changes in applications, and if plans are to be varied or substituted it should be as part of the Planning Authority process, not something to be accepted at a VCAT hearing.

MELBOURNE 2030 : A VISION SPLENDID?

Do not let Blackburn slide by default from its status as a local centre. If you do it will be harder to stop even larger developments in the future. If this sounds familiar it might be because you read it in our July 1987 Newsletter, when a hierarchy of activity centres, including Box Hill as a Major Centre and Blackburn as a Local Centre, were recognised by the Metropolitan Planning Scheme. Subject to a few variations in terminology that identification of retail and business centres remains a feature of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. On the assumption that if you repeat something often enough it is accepted as a fact you could be excused for thinking that Blackburn was now part of the Nunawading /Mega Mile Major Activity Centre.

Blackburn did not become a Major Centre in 1987, nor has it done so seventeen years later. Nor is there yet a Nunawading /Mega Mile Major Activity Centre. That proposed entity is the subject of a strategic study yet to be undertaken which will only be the first step towards deciding what might be contained within boundaries yet to be determined. Until such time as those boundaries, and the conditions which apply within them, are defined in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme, only the present provisions are legally enforceable.

The premature acceptance of proposed Centres was one of the concerns aired at the Melbourne 2030 Forum held on Saturday 15 November. BVRG representatives were among some 250 participants who, although recognising that nothing is less certain than the future, supported the concept of forward planning and the principles enunciated in the document. However, the Melbourne 2030 exercise was seen as another example of 'top-down' planning, the imposition of proposals which in many cases had not been properly thought through or debated and which were often not backed by any guarantees of adequate funding, scrutiny, accountability or review. In other words, an approach to town planning more familiar in totalitarian regimes.

While it might be an excellent idea to establish the conditions which would apply to higher density residential development within the boundaries of an Activity Centre a particular concern for residents is that this should be balanced by ensuring that there are enforceable limitations on such developments outside those boundaries. As things stand the Ministerial direction only helps developers justify such development within what are, as yet, imaginary boundaries. The BVRG has recently informed local Member Tony Robinson that while we have no objection to strategic reviews aimed at setting the directions for future planning under the aegis of Melbourne 2030 we do object to its premature intrusion into planning issues affecting Blackburn.

Take time out to familiarise yourself with the issues raised by Melbourne 2030 and take any opportunity to record your views. This is an important matter which affects all residents; those who are concerned about it should not hesitate to discuss it with councillors or members of parliament.

NEIGHBOURS INTERESTED?

SHARE THIS BULLETIN WITH THEM

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