



BULLETIN No. 8

BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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July 1991

OFFICE DEVELOPMENT IN BLACKBURN - COUNCIL PROPOSALS

Nunawading Council is now pushing ahead rapidly with its proposals for an office zone in Blackburn between the railway line and Whitehorse Road. The community needs to be assured that, instead of dominating central Blackburn, any office development is compatible with it. Moreover, the community wants no repetition of the planning blight south of the line, and we do not want to be left with half completed skeletons of office buildings like those on Doncaster Road.

COUNCIL'S PROGRAMME

If you live within 1 kilometre of the station you should have received a brochure from Council outlining these proposals. The brochure also advises you of two public information meetings to be held on 30th July and 13th August.

All residents concerned about the future of central Blackburn should read the brochure carefully and attend the public meetings.

If you have not received a brochure, phone the Council's Strategic Planning Department (262 6352) and request one.

You will have the opportunity to make written submissions to Council when the Amendment containing these proposals goes on formal exhibition in August. The procedure will be similar to that followed by the shopping centre proposal a few years ago.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The BVRG Executive has accepted with many reservations the principle that this part of Blackburn is appropriate for office use. Contrary to the suggestion of the Council brochure, the BVRG was not a voting member of the sub-committee of Councillors which has worked on the proposal. Nonetheless we have

had considerable input into its deliberations. For example, though we advocated more community consultation than has been given, we have helped to secure the public information meetings. We have also achieved many modifications to the proposal in order to preserve the essential character of Blackburn.

But there are still many things you need to think about carefully. Don't imagine that, because the office zone is located north of the railway line, it will be "out of sight, out of mind" for those living south of the line.

For one thing, because the land rises from Railway Road to Whitehorse Road, two and three story office blocks may well be very visible from some parts of Blackburn. For another, 45000 square metres of office space additional to the 11000 of existing or separately proposed development north of the line will generate more traffic in Blackburn Road and some other streets. Thirdly, it is anticipated that the zone will take anything up to ten years of piecemeal construction to complete.

We take up some of these matters below. YOU need to determine your own response and make sure that Council is aware of your views.

SOME FEATURES OF THE PROPOSALS

THE NEED

Many people find it difficult to see the need for more office space in a city which is oversupplied with it. The Melbourne CBD has 20% more office space than it needs, and this is expected to remain so for years. John Stevens in 'The Age' (20/7/91, p.2) suggests that recent government policy, which has encouraged suburban development at the expense of the CBD, is in for a shake-up. Nunawading already has the highest office vacancy rate of any municipality in Melbourne.

Council's brochure admits that "speculative purchase of properties in anticipation of a commercial rezoning" (rather than need) is a major reason behind the office zone proposal.

SCALE

For a time it seemed as though the 45000 square metre upper limit for the development as a whole would not be enforceable. Can the present proposals firmly limit the development to this scale?

Bear in mind that existing and separately proposed office developments north of the line already approximate 11000 square metres.

AMENITY

While the planning controls for the zone aim to ensure high standards in the design of buildings, there is no commitment to reserve any part of this large site for public open space, recreational and service facilities for workers, users and residents. Such space distinguishes better quality developments from the norm.

The likely long construction period will continually present problems from noise, dust, mud and heavy construction vehicles which will be evident throughout central Blackburn.

TRAFFIC

Significant increases in traffic will be generated by the development, especially in peak hours when the congestion at the railway crossing is worst.

It is proposed that a development levy be used to finance new traffic management works. What the brochure does not say is that none of these works would be undertaken until after 18000 square metres of office space have been constructed. Nor can we be assured that any such work would satisfactorily resolve the traffic problems in Blackburn. Can the present traffic management system cope?

**BE AT THE MEETINGS IN ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH HALL, QUEEN STREET
ON 30TH JULY AND 13TH AUGUST.**

ASK YOUR QUESTIONS.

SCRUTINISE THE ANSWERS.

**THE SECOND MEETING IS TO GIVE YOU TIME TO THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU
HEAR AT THE FIRST MEETING AND TO PROBE COUNCIL OFFICERS.**

REMEMBER THESE THINGS:

- * Don't assume that all matters that may turn out to be important to you will be aired at the meetings - if you are not there.
- * Don't assume that anything you say will be formally considered by Council.
- * The Council's brochure is not the "authorised version" of what will ultimately be proposed. That will be the Amendment to the Nunawading Planning Scheme (Am. L26) placed on formal exhibition for one month. When it is exhibited in August you should examine it, and use it as the basis for any views or concerns you have. These should be the subject of your written submission to Council. It is only a written submission in response to the exhibition which will formally be taken into account by a Panel Hearing.