



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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BULLETIN No 17

MARCH 1995

THE BVRG - HOW RELEVANT ?

As Chairman, I would like to let all members know that we are still active and this year intend to again keep you informed about the many local planning issues.

There is certainly plenty still going on and it might be natural to ask just how relevant the BVRG is and what influence we can have on planning policy and on decisions affecting the community.

No, I don't think we should be renamed the BVRWG - with the 'W' for whingers. We have instead attempted to voice your concerns about proposals for shops in Blackburn Road; the impact of Vic. Code 2 and the thorny question of higher density; revitalising the Shopping Centre; The Urban Village Project etc. all issues of vital importance when the political climate is such that decisions tend to be rammed through.

On the local scene we have asked the Commissioners of the new Council to continue and improve community consultation on the many items on their planning agenda. Proof of the pudding will be in the eating!

And at State level it was encouraging to see the Panel Review of Vic Code 2 state, "...concern about urban character is a deeply felt, not always well articulated feeling in the community". When Blackburn's concerns about matters of principle are recorded alongside those of Monomeath Avenue and many other communities, then we do have an impact.

None of our efforts would be meaningful if we didn't have you and some one hundred other households on our mailing list. We are proud to represent that number of concerned residents. Stick with us. And please read on...

Neil Barter

DINNER A SUCCESS

An enjoyable and relaxed function was held at the Jumbo Restaurant last November; we hope to arrange another dinner about the same time this year.

Before then we plan to hold an informal meeting at which we can bring you up to date on some of the items raised in this Bulletin. Watch for a notice around mid-year.

THE WHEEL TURNS ?

The BVRG and others interested in the future of the vacant site at the rear of the South Parade shops attended a meeting convened by Council last December.

It was generally agreed, as no proposals had emerged for substantial retail development of the site, that the land should revert to residential use. And at one of the last meetings of Nunawading Council this decision was formally endorsed and a decision made to seek rezoning (Amendment L77) of the site as Residential C (except for 1 Gardenia Street - the old Manchester Unity Hall).

[At the time of writing there is an application by The Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria for a change of use for the Hall, as office and meeting venue. The F.N.C.V. has links with Blackburn going back to the 1880's]

At the December Council meeting an application to construct shops on 28 and 30 Blackburn Road was rejected. More recently an application was lodged to construct a publishing office on 7 Main Street. The BVRG objected to both on the grounds that there would be loss of amenity for nearby residents and increased traffic hazards.

Other proposals are in the pipeline and residents need to remain alert to any which are not consistent with the policy of residential rezoning.

THE FUTURE OF THE CENTRE

Along with the formal planning processes referred to above, other moves relating specifically to Blackburn are now in train. As well, possible changes to legislation can affect the centre and surrounding areas.

The Action Plan:

The BVRG has acknowledged for many years the desirability of revitalising the shopping centre, but only if the distinctive 'village' character is maintained.

As no one has been prepared to finance new development sympathetic to the area it is hoped that redevelopment of existing properties and works to be undertaken as part of the retail action plan will help foster patronage.

Improved access from the rear of refurbished shops and a more attractive car park planted with shade trees are the sort of things which would help.

Blackburn Urban Village Project:

Consultants Loder & Bayly are preparing a preliminary report on central Blackburn as part of the Urban Villages project, funded by the federal and State governments.

The aim of the project is to develop higher density living and working areas, preferably around a central public transport 'node', which are designed to be safer and less wasteful of resources.

One of the reasons given for selecting Blackburn, and approving initial funding, was the commitment of the local community to improving the quality and character of the centre.

At a recent meeting the BVRG and individual residents described what they valued most about Blackburn's unique character. They also voiced doubts about it's ability to successfully withstand current development trends.

The trick will be to produce practical concepts for a revitalised centre which retains the features we most value.

Vic Code 2:

Late last year the Panel's recommendations were released.

They particularly noted the pride in diversity which the character of Melbourne exhibits; it's liveability; and the fear people held that Vic Code 2 by universal application might "transform the different suburbs into an amorphous whole".

And they concluded, as this and other groups had represented, that "large sites offer better opportunities" (for medium density housing) "than standard infill sites where mediocre, bottom line development has caused most public outcry".

While accepting the potential of Vic Code 2 as a guide to better design the Panel recommended it's redrafting and application to all situations where two or more dwellings are proposed for a single site or where single dwellings are proposed on a lot of 300m² or less. And that Councils may introduce local variations.

We hope legislation will embrace this sound advice and that Whitehorse Council will take appropriate and positive action.

COMMITTEE

We regret the retirement of Colin Jacobson last year but welcome new member, Byron Troy (894 1156).

If you are interested in contributing to a worthwhile cause by serving a term on the Committee (without too many onerous demands on your time) please discuss with Angela Taylor (8774074) or Neil Barter (878 0783).

SPECIAL ZONE AMENDMENT

Residents will have noted with interest the report that the Minister had approved Amendment L63 which changes permit requirements for tree removal, but exempts certain exotic species; reduces building and hard surface site coverage while increasing garden area requirements.

THE WHITEHORSE HANDICAP ?

There were disturbing reports that the new Council might cut funds already allocated for projects such as the Action Plan, the next stage of which, parking and pavement realignment on the South side of South Parade, is due to be implemented. We now understand that no cuts have been made in this particular programme although the timetable is uncertain.

While we don't all agree with every aspect of the Plan already implemented (see last Bulletin), the principle

of introducing staged developments in an attempt to enhance the centre has been endorsed by all sections of the community. To cut funding for this second stage, as approved by the former Council, would have set a dangerous precedent. It would also put in jeopardy future improvements to areas such as the off street car park.

We expect future economies in administrative costs and service delivery but hope spending on legitimate and properly costed public works will not be cut in order to produce artificial savings.

SHE'S APPLES

We pass on a notice received from Melbourne Parks and Waterways that if groups of 15 - 40 are organised they can arrange for a conducted tour of Pettys Antique Apple Orchard in Templestowe during March and April. The orchard contains varieties of fruit no longer available in the shops. For further details ring 846 4499.

VALE: JAN PLUMMER

Jan Plummer, whose death was announced recently, was one of the many Councillors with whom we joined battle over the years. But in the interminable meetings which followed the rejection of the original shopping centre proposal, she came to acknowledge the sincerity of our views and we to respect her impartial Chairmanship.