

August 2009

WERA Newsletter

West of Elgar Residents' Association Inc.

Also in this edition-

New Residential Zones

Coalition of Concerned Councillors

Churchill's Deli parking waiver

Ormiston sub-division

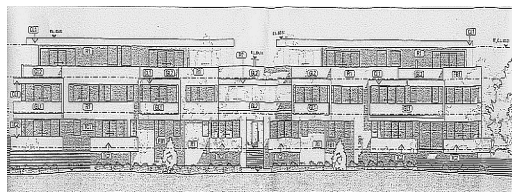
Deakin University Community Consultation

AGM 2009: President's Report

Wattle Day

WERA website

Boisdale Street, Surrey Hills 3-storey block to front a public park!



More than 50 neighbours turned out to a street meeting recently to discuss a proposed development of 28 dwellings across 4 existing houses. The south facing section of the development is a 3 storey residential development of 21 apartments across 4 blocks. Central to the site there is parking for 47 spaces some of which are tandem bays – nose to tail parking for 2 car owners.

The proposed development:

- conflicts with existing neighbourhood character;
- exceeds the 9 metre height limit in a Residential 1 Zone by 2 metres;
- designed as a solid building block, eliminating through sightlines;
- eliminates all vegetation apart from 2 gums on a boundary fence;
- overshadows neighbouring townhouses on the east side;
- overlooks a public park without any compensating addition of open space for the increased population;
- compromises traffic safety at entry/exit points; generates potential parking demand that will spill onto local streets;
- has flooding and other services infrastructure requirements that are under capacity for this development.

More than 80 objections have been lodged with Council by the residents. WERA is supporting residents to oppose this planning application.

Residential Re-zonings - Panel Hearing Submission

WERA has made written submission on the New Residential Zones for Victoria Consultation Draft; February 2009 and subsequently was invited to make an oral submission to the panel appointed by the Minister of Planning. Many residents from across Melbourne as well as Councils and planning consultants made oral submissions.

WERA in the submission on 2 June 2009 emphasized that whilst the proposal for each zone states that the responsible authority MUST consider neighbourhood character and design objectives, the community is experiencing unprecedented loss of neighbourhood character in ALL residential zones. In existing residential zones we invariably observe: removal of all, existing, mature vegetation with token replacement planting; maximizing of building footprints; appalling waste of energy in design (e.g. gas heaters in open sided outdoor areas); new homes still occupied by families of 2, 3 or 4 persons. Hence claims that we need to be more sustainable with increased density are hollow and untrue in most, established residential areas.

WERA also expressed concern that the draft design requirements all include “... *may specify ... greater site coverage ... reduced side and rear set backs greater length of wall on boundary ... reduced area or dimension of private open space*” ...compared to the relevant standard. We are surprised that any certainty can be claimed for this proposed planning process when such flexibility in wording is used.

Equally concerning is that the draft allows for ... “*Exemption from notice and review*” ...without then providing any guidance on how such decisions will be made. To claim that resident and community groups’ democratic rights to comment on planning applications have been preserved, while at the same time allowing for the possibility of widespread exemptions from these rights, is a major failure of this proposal.

The drafts statement that existing overlays ... “*may be removed if they include development requirements that can be included in one of the new zones*” ... needs further explanation and examples of what is intended. Neighbourhood character should be regarded as an *overlay*, be a primary planning control and not be considered as dispensable.

When varied significantly, neighbourhood character will be noticeably different but then it is too late,

As the entire inner region of Melbourne is close to services, WERA is also concerned **that the whole of the inner residential areas of Melbourne are qualified to be re-zoned as a Substantial Change Zone**

Zone transition is not addressed in the draft but obviously loss of privacy and overshadowing aspects are critical when residential zone boundaries change from 4 or 3 to 2 or 1 storey. This is when minimum set backs between properties with appropriate vegetation screening must be rigidly enforced.

Coalition of Concerned Councillors

Whitehorse Council, together with many other Victorian Councils, was very concerned with the contents of a Bill to amend planning legislation that had been “slipped into Parliament”. Development Assessment Committees (DACs) were to be set up by the State Government, yet their roles and decision making capacities were ill-defined. Despite this, Councils were expected to meet all the costs associated with decisions and any appeals. WERA was also concerned as there was no requirement in the Bill for community access to consultation on matters that affected them. On the day before the Bill was to go before the Legislative Council, Municipal Councillors and Resident Groups from many areas gathered on the steps of Parliament House to register their protest. The following day the Opposition Parties combined to vote down the Bill.

*On the steps of Parliament House –
Whitehorse Councillors protest Government Bill*



Cr. Munroe, Cr. Daw, Cr. Carr, E. Meredith, Cr. Harris [Mayor], W. Orange

17 St Johns Avenue, Mont Albert (former Ormiston site)

Subdivision fencing has now been erected on this property around the 6 lots applied for by the developer. Three (3) lots have been sold or taken up by the developers and a further 2 are for sale.

The 5 percent (of whole of site) open space allocation for a public park has been located on St Johns Avenue; north side of Nyora house. The decision in VCAT (Reference P2939/2006) stated Reasons #31 (p10 of 13) “...If the aim of such a space is to protect a sense of openness then the configuration of such an area is important to consider as is its siting relative to any views of Nyora that are sought to be retained or enhanced.”

The uniform height of the timber fencing erected between the open space and Nyora to the street frontage does not meet this aim. At least the last and second last panels of this fencing nearest to St Johns Avenue should have been either tapered, or reduced in height, to retain and enhance views of Nyora.

13-15 Hamilton Street

This is the site of “Churchill’s “Café/Deli. Currently there is an application to amend a permit at this heritage site. WERA has inspected the proposal that would involve an expansion in seating numbers, and, in a submission to Council we expressed concern at the request for a waiver to the provision of parking spaces. WERA constantly receives complaints from our members about the existing lack of parking. Also now there are several cafes where patrons linger longer over coffees and food, further restricting parking for retail customers of the bakery, grocery etc. Adequacy of toilet facilities was another problem that we perceived, there being only one toilet for 50 patrons and 6 or more staff.

As “Churchill’s” is in a heritage precinct and only open during the day, we did not support advertising lighting on the heritage façade.

Deakin University

Deakin University is updating its Master Plan for the Burwood Campus. WERA was invited to attend a community consultation, which was attended by the consulting architects together with government and transport consultants, and several community representatives. As a result of the matters brought forward, the University held a poorly advertised, short, open day (11am-1pm on Sunday, June 21). As a result of these meetings, WERA has put in a submission about proposals associated with the new Master Plan.

WERA supports the University’s quest to have the public transport Zone 1 extended to Station Street. This would simplify and reduce costs for all residents and students in the area. In addition, WERA tentatively supported the concept of extending the Riversdale Road tram along Elgar Road to link into Burwood Highway. We also made some suggestions about future car parking on the east campus.

While writing about transport, we also advocated buses coming into the campus to collect students, especially at night, for safety reasons. In addition, we suggested an intra-campus shuttle bus where there might be people who needed assistance.

WERA then expressed our serious concern about the heights (up to 20 metres) of proposed buildings in areas adjacent to local homes. We strongly advocated a buffer area between the University and these dwellings.

The Master Plan also showed sporting facilities on the Gardiner’s Creek Parkland area. While WERA has always supported the concept of sharing the main oval (the more northern oval of which Deakin owns some 60%) between the University and the Community, provided the area is retained as green open space, we oppose what appear to be tennis courts or basketball courts (both of which have the potential to be fenced, hard-surface facilities) that extended from University land into parkland.

Similarly, WERA indicated that, together with many other residents, we remained opposed to the concept of a large, high bridge being erected across the entire Gardiner's Creek Reserve, to link the Burwood Road and Elgar Road campuses and to any potential additional bridges the University might include in its Master Plan. The University is already served by three bridges across Gardiner's Creek.

AGM 2009, President's Report

State Government planning for Melbourne is for a 35% increase in population by 2026. The obvious challenges with this rate of population change are containment of the boundary of the Greater Melbourne urban area (which has again been expanded since the WERA AGM), maintenance of existing urban character, managing traffic congestion and providing enough water and other social infrastructure. The Government is obviously convinced that this rate of population growth is sustainable and that a majority of citizens will accept increasing density of housing.

At the local neighbourhood level we see some developments for provision of increased residential density along transport routes which are appropriate. However within the City of Whitehorse there are not a great number of these sites, but we will continue to see an increase in the number of applications for 3 or 4 storey (and higher) residential developments. The State Government is facilitating these developments with current changes to planning legislation such as:

- Residential zonings specifying minimum height requirements;
- Declaring some major activity centres including Box Hill.

WERA believes that maintaining neighbourhood character will be significantly challenged by these changes. It is at least encouraging that the State Government recently acknowledged that residential neighbourhood will still be needed as "the lungs of the urban area".

Given the diminishing ratio of open space per resident that arises from increasing population density, it is essential that we preserve as much area of minimal change within the existing residential areas

WERA continued its representation of residents at VCAT for both the proposed sub-division of the Erasmus Street site, submitting that the proposed sub-division of this site would adversely impact upon heritage overlay, and the Carrington Road student apartment application. VCAT upheld the 5% open space contribution in the St John's Avenue subdivision at Ormiston, despite the developer wishing to subvert the condition with alternative offers to Council.

WERA convened a "Meet the Candidates" meeting in November 08 for candidates standing in the Elgar and Riversdale Wards of the Whitehorse Council elections. Also WERA has attended a number of planning and community consultations relating to the current revision of the Deakin University Master Plan, the proposed 39-storey tower in Carrington Street and Council strategic planning initiatives, including the draft open space strategy and student accommodation policy.

As always I am indebted to the enormous contribution of the longstanding committee members to these submissions.

Wattle Day

This year Wattle Day is being held earlier, on Sunday August 30th. In addition, the format will be altered. You are invited to come at 10 am and help re-plant trees and shrubs to ensure the future of the park. Wattle Park Primary School will be providing a sausage sizzle, and the Tramways Band will be playing from 1 p.m. A junior colouring competition is being organised by Holmesglen TAFE, supported by WERA who will be donating prizes for the children

Wattle Park Junior Nature and Heritage Trail

Some years ago this trail was created by WERA in conjunction with the Rangers of Parks Victoria. The purpose of the trail was to encourage young people to look at the surrounds and to appreciate not only the plants and animals of the park, but also its history. Aspects of the trail have fallen into disrepair, and Parks Victoria is currently bringing it back into working order.

Ed Cohen Retires

Since WERA was inaugurated back in the early 90s, Ed has been a steadfast member of the Committee across all that time. For many years he acted as Vice-President, and until recently, Committee Meetings were held at his home. In earlier days, before we mailed our Newsletters, Ed (and sometimes his family) organised and took part in, the foot patrols that distributed them to the surrounding homes. For some years he has had the task of checking through the Minutes of Council meetings to look for matters which may affect WERA members. Thank you Ed!

WERA Website

The website www.wera.org.au is now accessible and the initial flaws have been removed. Please let us know of any suggestions, comments or information that you have or would like to see on the site. You can elect to receive your newsletter by email and save paper! Please email us at info@wera.org.au to arrange this.

Calling all budding writers and editors! We need your help

We would welcome any assistance in editing and publishing our newsletter. WE would welcome your suggestions for stories for forthcoming editions. If you would like to help edit and print the newsletter or have an idea for a story, please email us at info@wera.org.

WERA Committee 2009: **Geoff White: 9898 8205 Judy Sharples: 9890 8038**
 Elizabeth Meredith 9898 2607 Terry Randle 9808 8638 June Kavanagh 9898 7594