



Malvern East Group

MEG Supports *PLANNING BACKLASH*

C/- 14 Chanak Street,
Malvern East Vic 3145
Phone/Fax 9572 3205
Email meg@chezsamuel.com
Web www.chezsamuel.com

MEG Submission re Draft Heritage and Action Plan....2018

MEG supports Stonnington Council's sustained efforts regarding heritage protection through the imposition of Heritage Overlays in our municipality and it is heartening to note that **"overlays protect approximately 30 per cent of the municipality."**

We support Council's focus on protection of whole streetscapes rather than individual places. Protection of single houses is fraught with difficulty though we note that Council has had some success in this area. We ask Council to consider taking a further step in protection and consider the possibility of protection of **sections of streets**. For example, although Chanak St. is a mish-mash of architecture parts of it have not been destroyed to make way for 60's brick veneers and now 21st century aberrations.

We applaud the statement on P.11 of the Draft...

."The unique character of the municipality will be protected from detrimental change and enhanced over time."

Having large areas such as the Gascoigne Estate designated for protection contributes strongly in retaining the **'unique character of Stonnington'** and forms a protection against the change that is promoted and enabled by the destructive planning policies of successive Victorian Governments.

Page 12 of the Draft refers to **"protecting historic trees."** It seems to us impossible to protect 'significant' trees and we would submit that to protect 'historic' ones would be in the same category.

We cite the case of 11 Chanak St. Council's arborist identified 2 'significant' trees on this large, heavily vegetated lot. The owner was notified that these 2 trees were to be protected. Subsequently the owner applied for a 'permit to destroy.' This was granted by Council with the proviso that 2 Chinese Elms be planted as substitutes.

The 880sq.m site has since been almost entirely covered by a McMansion and swimming pool. From the street the backyard cannot be seen. We have asked about the 'policing' of Council's condition re the 2 replacement trees and received no reply. WHO checks on the replacements? **WHY are 'permits to destroy' issued?**

If Council cannot (or will not) stop the destruction of 'significant' trees what strategy can be used to protect 'historic' trees? It is painfully obvious that greater effort is required to

ensure that the green canopy in both the public and private realms with regard to the 'significant' and 'historic' trees is retained and enhanced. If Council issues 'permits to destroy' rather than expecting applicants to design AROUND 'significant' and/or 'historic' trees then the statement on p.12 of the Draft is only words.

An education campaign for developers and their architects in **"Design around Trees"** MIGHT have some effect.

"The community has high expectations and expects best practice heritage management."

We are acutely aware that Council cannot provide 24 hour surveillance in order to protect the significant and historic elements of our green canopy but perhaps it could initiate a "community-education" program which would install the community as the 'protectors.'

Facadism

It is with a degree of sadness we note that some elements of the community are hell-bent on capitalising on land at great expense to the overall wellbeing of the entire community and often at the expense any heritage factors.

Hiding such money-making efforts behind a **façade** is, in our opinion, mere tokenism. The proposal by the owners of the Jam Factory site in Chapel St. to restore the original façade is an example of extreme 'facadism.' Why bother?

Surely 'facadism' is not considered **'best practice heritage management.'**

Managing Heritage and Neighbourhood Character

We note that Council lists the protection of "heritage buildings and neighbourhood character" as a key strategic priority and Council is aware of the need to protect our tree-lined streets. The strategies needed to do this in the face of mounting pressure for **"urban consolidation"**(i.e. the 'ram jam and cram' crowd)....seem to be an almost impossible objective.

Council needs to support the reform of VCAT so that Victoria follows the example set by the last Government of Ontario which dismissed its equivalent of VCAT and installed a Municipal Board that is required to have Local Policy as a priority in its decision-making.

MEG has compiled a list of VCAT decisions in which Neighbourhood Character was the overriding factor in refusal of planning applications, the most recent one being 22 & 22A Winter St. Malvern.

Finally, we believe that there is sound economic and social justification for protecting the character of Stonnington and we would support a program that encourages residents to maintain and improve existing properties. We believe that to encourage residents to care about the neighbourhood promotes social interaction and a sense of belonging.

Ann Reid (MEG Convenor)

