

MINUTES

Meeting of the Doncaster Hill Issues Forum No 2.

Meeting Details

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 23 July 2008

Time: 7.30pm

Venue: Function Room 2

Chairperson: Councillor Bill Larkin



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

1. Present

The following Councillors and Council Officers were in attendance:

Cr Geoff Gough - Mayor; Cr Bill Larkin - Chair; Cr Grace La Vella; Cr Ron Kitchingman; Cr Warren Welsh; Cr Charles Pick; Lydia Wilson - Chief Executive; Paul Molan - Director Planning and Environment; Claude Cullino - Director Assets and Engineering; John Stamp - Manager Major Projects; Teresa Dominik - Manager Economic and Environmental Planning; Beige Pureau – Manager Communications and Marketing; Subash Nanoo - Strategic Planning Engineer; Jane Waldock - Customer Service Engineer; Nic Simmons - Doncaster Hill Marketing and Communications Project Manager.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Jillian Smith; Ian Golding; Paul Steele; Cliff Wood; Miralde Bartlett; Kewal Dhillon; Bryan Roberts; Joyce Berdy; Peter and Denise Lynch; Mervyn Hayman-Danker; Cecilia Henderson.

3. Welcome by Mayor, Cr Geoff Gough

Cr Gough welcomed attendees to the second Doncaster Hill Issues Forum meeting and advised that since the Forum last met in April, there has been much work undertaken in and around Doncaster Hill. A comprehensive Annual Report on Doncaster Hill activities for 2007/08 has been prepared and will be tabled at Council meeting on Tuesday 29 July. The Annual Report will be published to the Doncaster Hill website, www.doncasterhill.com.

The Mayor advised that at its meeting on 24 June, Council formally endorsed the exciting Civic Precinct project. The Civic Precinct will be located on land adjacent to the Council office and will include:

- A new library and cultural centre
- Community arts and café facilities
- Family services, childcare, maternal and child health and preschool facilities
- A community and youth activity space
- And many other exciting features such as a civic forecourt, shared pedestrian and bicycle facilities and underground car parking.

Doncare will also be relocating their services to become an integral part of the Civic Precinct. The initial stage of the \$28.35 million project is expected to be completed within the next three years. Extensive consultation and communications with all stakeholders on the Civic Precinct project will be undertaken throughout all stages of the project.

The Mayor also referred to a fact sheet sent to Forum members which outlines the role of the State Government's new Development Assessment Committees. Doncaster Hill is one of five Principal Activity Centres initially targeted and they will be progressively introduced across all remaining Principal Activity Centres in Melbourne.

The purpose of the Development Assessment Committees is to ensure that planning decisions are made in accordance with the Planning Scheme, particularly in relation to areas of metropolitan significance.

Council is currently liaising with the State Government to determine the structure of the Committees and the timing and further updates will be provided at future meetings of the Issues Forum.

4. Report on 9 April meeting – topics identified for future discussion

Cr Larkin outlined the aim of the Issues Forum as primarily an information sharing group, with the key activities being:

- Updates on the implementation of the Doncaster Hill Strategy
- An opportunity to raise issues with Council
- Opportunities for feedback to those involved with Doncaster Hill initiatives.

Cr Larkin reported back to the group on the round table feedback from the inaugural meeting held on 9 April. Forum members identified their top three suggestions for topics for discussion at future meetings.

The main topics identified for future discussion at future Issues Forum meetings were:

- Parking
- Traffic management
- Public transport
- Amenity/liveability
- Environmental sustainability
- Civic Precinct and other precincts
- Open space and protection of recreation areas
- Development proposals and current planning applications
- Accessibility
- Doncaster Hill Strategy review
- Planning provisions/zoning changes and their impact
- Relevance to non-English speaking residents
- Relationship between facilities inside and outside the Hill
- Learning from other high density areas.

The responses provided to the questionnaire circulated to members in February will also be analysed to ensure that all the feedback has been captured.

The meeting agenda focused on three of the main topics Forum members wanted to discuss:

- Parking
- Traffic, and
- Public transport.

A revised agenda was circulated to attendees and included a presentation by Koonung Ward Councillor, Warren Welsh. Question time was also increased to 30 minutes.

5. Guest speakers Graeme Brown and Ray Kinnear, Department of Transport

Cr Larkin introduced Graeme Brown and Ray Kinnear from the Department of Transport. Ray is the Director of Public Transport Policy and Planning in the Public Transport Division of the Department of Transport and Graeme Brown is the Regional Manager, Eastern Metropolitan Bus Services at the Department of Transport.

Ray briefly spoke about future public transport planning, particularly in and around Principal Activity Centres. The Department aims to structure a public transport network around activity centres and Doncaster Hill is developing as a major hub in Melbourne's bus network. Ray believes it will become the busiest hub in Melbourne.

Graeme gave a presentation on public transport planning for Manningham and Doncaster Hill which focused specifically on Manningham bus improvements. Refer Attachment 1 – Department of Transport presentation.

6. Guest speaker Christian Griffiths, Greg Tucker and Associates Traffic Engineers

Christian Griffiths from Greg Tucker and Associates Traffic Engineers (GTA) addressed the Forum on the Doncaster Hill traffic model and traffic and road network planning. Refer Attachment 2 – GTA presentation

7. Address by Cr Warren Welsh

Cr Welsh expressed his concern about the viability of the Doncaster Hill Strategy, particularly in relation to the demographics and lack of demand for medium density housing, and the associated traffic and parking issues.

He believes that the Strategy would succeed in areas such as Box Hill because all modes of transport – trains, trams and buses – are in close proximity. Cr Welsh feels that there is apathy towards Doncaster Hill within the Manningham community and there has been a poor response to community consultation to date.

8. Questions from the floor

A numbers of questions were raised at the meeting and responses are provided below:

Question: There are blockages on the Eastern Freeway bus route system which leaves commuters waiting for long periods of time in gridlock – the Eastbound/outbound dedicated peak hour bus lane along Victoria Parade specifically between Smith Street and Hoddle Street.

Answer (provided by DOT): The Department of Transport and VicRoads are working with the City of Yarra to progress a peak hour bus lane outbound along most of Victoria Parade to ensure buses have an uninterrupted trip out of the City. This is critical for the success of the Dart/Smartbus network.

Question: The northbound/outbound bus lane/T2 transit lane along Hoddle Street between Victoria Parade and Johnston Street should become a dedicated bus lane.

Answer (provided by DOT): VicRoads is examining options to provide a dedicated bus lane in Hoddle Street outbound in peak hours. *Note:* Bus lanes already exist on the Eastern Freeway in and outbound and on sections of Victoria Parade and Lonsdale Street in and outbound. DOT and VicRoads are negotiating with the relevant authorities to provide peak hour lanes on all sections these major road links to the CBD.

Question: Bus shelters in the City are designed poorly, especially those facing north.

Answer: An amount of \$275,000 (2003 costs) has been set aside in the Developer Contribution Plan to fund weather protection at intersections, which includes bus shelters. There will also be an opportunity for bus shelters along the Green Orbital route to be redesigned as the Green Orbital system is upgraded. Council has received funding under the Local Area Access Program to construct a new bus shelter at the civic forecourt on Doncaster Road, adjacent to the Council Offices. Stakeholder consultation will be undertaken as this project progresses.

Question: Do we require parking stations or additional on-site parking for Doncaster Hill to reduce parking in local streets? **Question:** I am concerned that local streets are used for traffic and parking instead of main roads

Answer: Car parking is a key issue for both Council and the community. Any proposals for changes to car parking rates would need to be carefully considered in line with Council's existing policies and with extensive community consultation.

The Doncaster Hill Parking Precinct Plan, gazetted in the Manningham Planning Scheme in September 2004, assesses the expected future car parking requirements of Doncaster Hill and the way in which these requirements can most effectively be managed. Developers within each of the seven Doncaster Hill precincts are required to provide car parking in accordance with specific parking rates set out in the Doncaster Hill Parking Precinct Plan. These rates take into account the types of uses within a development, ie. mixed residential and business and the anticipated demand for parking at different times during the day and night. The requirement for medium density developments is to include basement level on-site car parking for both residents and visitors, to reduce the need to park on local streets. All developers are required to comply with the car parking requirements set out in the Doncaster Hill Parking Precinct Plan.

The consideration of parking stations was an option under a scenario of no or limited on-site car parking for developments. This option was deemed as not viable to address car parking issues and would have significant financial, environmental and amenity impacts. For example, a parking station with 850 car spaces would cost approximately \$40 million and would require eight levels, plus one acre of land. Land alone would cost approximately \$10 million.

A key objective of the Doncaster Hill Strategy is to avoid congestion on local roads by improving access to and from main roads, and creating dedicated bus and cycling lanes. Council continues to strongly advocate on behalf of the Manningham community for improved public transport and the creation of user friendly network of pedestrian and cycling paths to reduce car dependence.

Question: Where will the main bus interchange be located in Manningham?

Answer (provided by DOT): The primary interchange is located at Westfield Doncaster and DOT believes it will become one of the busiest hubs in Melbourne.

Question: How could GTA support the Doncaster Hill Hotel application with only 37 allocated parking spaces. How could a traffic plan be developed to support the hotel, given the associated traffic issues?

GTA Consultants undertook a review of the Doncaster Hill Hotel application following the initial permit application which was supported by a separate traffic and parking assessment. Our review was undertaken in accordance with relevant standards and guidelines.

It was further supported by traffic and parking surveys and empirical evidence at other similar sites. The evidence was presented to and accepted by VCAT and the development therefore gained a permit. The development has far in excess of 37 car spaces and satisfactorily accommodates both its parking demands and traffic impacts.

Question: Is it true that the Donvale bus service is going to be removed from Park Road, Donvale?

Answer (provided by DOT): Route 365 to Donvale will still operate, but the route will marginally change.

Question: Is there a planned bus extension from Doncaster to Warrandyte?

Answer (provided by DOT): There are no plans in place at this stage for a dedicated Warrandyte bus route from Doncaster.

Question: Is there a proposed access road extending Hepburn Road to Clay Drive and through to Frederick Street? If so, how will Council provide protection to properties further to the south?

Answer: Hepburn Road is proposed to be extended from Walker Street to Frederick Street, but no road extensions are planned in the short term and Council will consult extensively with residents before any proposed road extensions are undertaken. A total of \$264,000 has been included in the Developer Contributions Plan to fund traffic treatments for local roads, ie. narrowing, speed humps. No traffic calming measures will be undertaken without consultation with residents and an assessment of the impacts on traffic flows.

Question: What are the height limits for developments in the Doncaster Hill Strategy?

Answer: Council limited heights of development within Doncaster Hill by implementing the Doncaster Hill Strategy. The Strategy caters for medium rise apartments around major activity centres and the maximum height is 40 metres on the highest areas and heights reduce to the boundary to provide protection to surrounding properties. Approximately 70% of development will be five or less storeys.

Whitehorse City Council doesn't have a strategy in place which limits the heights of proposed developments. Whitehorse is currently considering a 30 storey apartment development in Box Hill.

Question: Council has talked about bus travel - why hasn't the tram or train been mentioned?

Council continues to advocate for improved public transport across Manningham and has gone on record many times, lobbying for improved bus services in terms of frequency, quality and numbers; light or heavy rail and a tram service. A community bus service has just been announced by the State Government and an improved bus service was one of the recommended outcomes of the Eddington Study. Council is also currently preparing a feasibility study for the extension of the North Balwyn (Route 48) tram from Balwyn Road to Doncaster Hill and beyond.

Question: There is a concern about traffic congestion in Bayley Grove, particularly from people using the restaurants on Doncaster Road.

Answer: Council understands that some patrons of the restaurants make use of Bayley Grove for parking and this will be monitored.

Question: Will buses be accessible for people with a disability and for older residents?

Answer (provided by DOT): Yes all buses will be accessible to people of all abilities.

Question: Doncaster is too hilly, particularly for older people, who won't use pedestrian/cycling tracks. There is also a risk of collisions between pedestrians and cyclists.

Answer: The Doncaster Hill Pedestrian and Cycling Plan aims to maximise opportunities for residents and visitors to easily access all areas of Doncaster Hill. The objectives of the Strategy focus on the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists on wide bicycle/walking tracks. The Strategy recognises that people have varying mobility levels and all ability levels will need to be catered for when creating the shared facilities.

8. Questions from the floor

As question time went for 45 minutes instead of the allocated 30 minutes, Cr Larkin asked attendees to vote on whether or not to proceed with the group discussion session.

The majority of those in attendance voted not to proceed with the group discussion. Cr Larkin thanked Issues Forum members for their attendance and closed the meeting. The next meeting of the Doncaster Hill Issues Forum is scheduled for **Wednesday 22 October**.