



## Minutes

Meeting: Pentridge Residents Community Group (RCG)

Date: Monday, 29 August 2016

Time: 6:30 – 7:30pm

Venue: Pentridge, 1 Champ Street, Coburg, Victoria 3058

Chairperson: Sharaf Khan

Minutes: Hannah Martin

### Present:

Community	Michael La Porta, Robert Stansall and George Kapouleas
Coburg Historical Society	Malcolm McIlvena
Moreland City Council	Mayor Samantha Ratnam, Crs Rob Thompson and Lambros Tapinos.
Moreland City Council Officer	Michael Wade
National Trust	Felicity Watson
Shayher Group	Anthony Goh, Scott Tseng and Georgie Sleurink
Facilitators	Sharaf Khan and Hannah Martin
Apologies	Robert Cogui

1. Introduction

2. Current Community Consultation

*Council decision to review Masterplan*

- 2.1 **Shayher** noted concern about the recent decision of the Council to commence a process to review the Masterplan given it had already been consulting with the Coburg community, Council and other interested parties about the development at Pentridge. Shayher stated that the point of their community consultation was to incorporate the views of all interested parties.
- 2.2 **Councillor** commented that the context of the Council's decision has been ongoing, and that everyone has had concerns. The Councillor stated that there have been a clash of ideas at every planning application to date. The Councillor then explained that Council previously thought the Minister would retain its status as the responsible authority for the site and therefore some confusion has arisen following the return of the responsible authority status to Council. The Council would like to think that they can have positive influence on the site.



- 2.3 **Councillor** continued that after meeting with the community and Shayher Group the Council would like to proceed with collaborative approach in the first instance, to sit down with the community and Shayher and other developers in order to decide on a way forward where the community feels their views are incorporated and heard. The Councillor stated that this is the next generation of development.
- 2.4 **Councillor** explained that from their perspective there has been no community consultation in regard to the Masterplan in the last ten to fifteen years. Since then, the Masterplan has changed significantly. The Councillor noted it would be good to hear the community's view of all aspects of the Masterplan and that there would be a mix of different views.
- 2.5 **Resident** sought clarification on the type of consultation the Council would hope to implement.
- 2.6 **Councillor** replied that they would hope to have small working groups where the community is able to provide feedback on the Masterplan, and that a Town Hall Forum was unlikely to be productive. The Councillor also suggested a weekend workshop meeting and online submissions. The Councillor stated that he personally would like to discuss the panopticons, one of which looks as though a 17 storey building will sit on top of.
- 2.7 **Shayher** stated that the specifics of what ultimately happens to the panopticons is a matter to be determined by Heritage Victoria. Shayher explained that the panopticons were demolished a long time ago and the best panopticon is located in Division A, which is still intact. How the building the Councillor referred to is best dealt with remains under consideration by Shayher.
- 2.8 **Shayher** explained whilst they understand Council's concerns, for the last three years Shayher has done everything "by the book" in accordance with the Masterplan which was in place when it purchased the site and of which it understood had previously been consulted on. In particular, a number of elements are now in place (including the internal roads) as per the Masterplan. Shayher then explained the steps that they took to brace the walls and other heritage works and that there over the three years since it purchased the site there has been a significant investment in order to prepare and ready the site for development as per the Masterplan. Shayher explained that the costs of any changes to the site, including even altering a road opening to Champ Street, would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Shayher explained that its hesitation at any changes is not because they would like to cut out the Council or community, but rather that changes to or departures from the Masterplan presents a difficult and challenging financial proposition, particularly in light of the investments it has made to date.
- 2.9 **Shayher** explained that unlike previous developers, they have delivered on cleaning up and preparing the site for development. Other than the proposed Air Apartments, its focus for the next 3-4 years is to activate the piazza, hotel, shopping centre and public space. Architects are currently working on the relevant design elements in this regard now. In addition, Shayher plans to roll out a set of events for the community this year and over the coming years to activate the site.
- 2.10 **Shayher** stated that it is proud of finding a reuse for B Division, as part of the proposed hotel. Shayher explained that finding a reuse for the Heritage buildings that is economic over the



long-term is a challenge, particularly given that they were originally designed to operate as part of a prison.

- 2.11 **Shayher** also commented that when the hotel was announced, there was an immense interest in the Coburg site, which is ‘telling’ from a demand perspective.
- 2.12 **Councillor** then asked whether the rooms would be a little small. **Shayher** explained that the walls may need to remove some of the walls between cells (subject to approval from Heritage Victoria) to make the rooms appropriate for hotel use.
- 2.13 **Councillor** stated that they would like to see the view of the community on those changes.
- 2.14 **Shayher** explained that they intend to keep some of the cells in their original state.
- 2.15 **Shayher** explained that they are aware that some people won’t like these changes and that this will go to community consultation with Heritage Victoria, which is supported by Shayher. Shayher stated that they are not there to destroy the heritage, but to find the balance between preservation and reactivating/reusing the heritage buildings in an economically viable manner. Shayher commented that as it stands, given its previous use as a prison and the sizes of the cells, this is challenging.
- 2.16 **Shayher** also explained that the more detail that goes in to the heritage protection, the more expensive it becomes.
- 2.17 **Resident** suggested that Shayher knew that before purchasing the property. **Shayher** agreed that upon purchase they knew it would be a challenge. Shayher explained the number of consultants that they liaised with in order to understand where the limitations were.
- 2.18 **Councillor** suggested that Shayher get in touch with the economic development department of the Moreland City Council, and explained that they have contacts in different businesses and may be able to support or link ideas for the community. **Shayher** agreed.
- 2.19 **Shayher** explained that one of the ideas for A Division is to make the building into an Arts Precinct – with current interest from the Melbourne Ballet Company. Shayher highlighted it was also considering ideas including reusing some of the spaces as galleries. Shayher’s general stance is that if we can involve the community, they will. Shayher also highlighted their link to a local education provider, where Shayher will look to sponsor students to work in the hotel and involve the education provider in activating the site generally.
- 2.20 **Resident** referred to Council’s statement of 2001 community consultation, and suggested that Council should have continued to take an active interest and have a positive influence. The resident commented that it is strange that the Council only now wants to engage a consultant to review of the Masterplan and stop Shayher, who appears to have made a bona fide decision in good faith to purchase the site on the understanding that there was a concluded Masterplan in place. The Resident further noted that given there is always a role and opportunity for Councillors and senior management of Council, irrespective of the climate, to engage with the development of the site, for Council to say now that they want to wipe the slate clean is a “rich and ambitious and unnecessary” and a waste of the community’s money.



- 2.21 **Councillor** responded by explaining that the Masterplan was really out of Council's hands in 2009, because it was under the power of then Planning Minister Justin Madden, and a decision was made prior to that. Council's ability to undertake any real change was limited because it wasn't the responsible authority until October 2015.
- 2.22 **Councillor** also commented that there were significant changes to the Masterplan a few years ago and Council put in an objection, showing that they tried to influence process. The Council had wanted high rise in the middle and low rise on the outer areas of the site.
- 2.23 **Councillor** stated that they are so happy to hear about what Shayher are doing, and that they are open to consultation.
- 2.24 **Shayher** commented that the first two developers left the site because it was "too hard", but Shayher have rolled up their sleeves and cleaned up the site, all in preparation for where they are now.
- 2.25 **Councillor** asked Shayher if their economic assessment of these buildings suggests that they are able to sell them in the market. Councillor referred to other local developments that are struggling to sell. Councillor "applauds" the opening up of the piazza and the town square.
- 2.26 **Shayher** explained that from its perspective, this is a short term issue because the underlying fundamentals of strong population growth in Victoria remain strong. For Shayher, Pentridge is a long-term commitment, as they will be there for 10+ years.
- 2.27 **Resident** commented on residential apartment standards, stating that Shayher is going to great lengths to preserve the site. Resident also commented on the access to public transport as a benefit to the site.
- 2.28 Another **Resident** commented that the public transport will be overwhelmed.
- 2.29 **Resident** stated that the site is well designed, well built and with green credentials, and that all of these layers separate buildings at Pentridge from others that are failing.
- 2.30 **Councillor** agreed and suggested that lower density buildings would be more appealing. Councillor suggested that a six storey building would be more appealing than a sixteen or seventeen storey building.
- 2.31 **Shayher** stated that they are unable to speak for other developer sites, but reiterated that they intend to commit to Pentridge over the long-term, giving them a point of difference. Shayher explained that all the investments made to date were on the basis of the heights of the plan. For Shayher, if they depart from the Masterplan they will run into other issues.
- 2.32 **Councillor** requested to further these conversations with Shayher privately.
- 2.33 **Resident** stated that it is good to see that Councillors are present at the RCG meeting. The resident stated that there is unrest about the height of the development in the community, but that the bulk of people don't mind that it's developed. Resident suggested concern that shops won't open. Resident also stated that he has set up his own letter drop to keep residents informed and give another opportunity to ask questions.



- 2.34 **Resident** referred to first RCG meeting, where it was asked why there were not more attendees. Response was that it is common. Resident alluded to a shroud of secrecy of what the developer and Council is doing.
- 2.35 **Councillor** pointed out that the Council has given this resident a synopsis.
- 2.36 **Resident** stated that they are concerned about how the wall will be opened.
- 2.37 **Councillor** explained that the Council has decided to enter discussions with the developers (Shayher and Future Estate) for the purposes of having another look at the Masterplan. One component is that Council will seek to drive community engagement, driven by both Council and developer. The second is that the development, where Council explained that the community has seen great renderings of how the cuts in the wall will look – beautiful images. Third component is heights, that will happen and will continue to happen, Council would like to have that discussion and debate with developers and seek to please everyone.
- 2.38 **National Trust** asked if these conversations also included Future Estate.
- 2.39 **Councillor** explained that there would be 3/4/5 developers to engage with immediately, at any time the developers can jump off and continue to do what they're doing, those that want to be here 10+ years will deliver beautiful results.
- 2.40 **Councillor** stated that they want to “fill the hole” in Moreland.
- 2.41 **Resident** expressed a concern of ‘hotch-potch’, due to the different developers, important that discussions allow a flow on effect in Coburg generally.
- 2.42 **Resident** asked for information about the Council officer’s role.
- 2.43 **Council officer** explained that he meets with Shayher and Future Estate regularly. He highlighted that the Coburg Traders Association has suggested that local businesses are currently struggling, and that he believes that this set of works is what Coburg needs. He also referred to the example of Coburg North, and stated that more competition for a growing population would be better for the area.
- 2.44 **Resident** agreed, and stated that he does not want to make local businesses suffer but is keen for residents to shop more locally.
- 2.45 **Council officer** suggested that Coburg is a hub that is not shining to its potential.
- 2.46 **Resident** stated that he wrote to Heritage Victoria with a ‘please explain’ and asked if Shayher had a number of apartments from a financial perspective that it was driving for in order to make the site viable.
- 2.47 **Shayher** stated that there needs to be minimum mass of people on the site to make it viable. Shayher wants the majority of the site to be owned by private residents and the community to the extent possible in the long term.



- 2.48 **Resident** asked for clarification of height modifications, increases and decreases as part of the Council's proposed review of the Masterplan.
- 2.49 **Shayher** explained that it understood that any changes to the site that depart from what is specified in the Masterplan is not possible without a review of the Masterplan.
- 2.50 **Councillor** suggested engaging State Government for a financial contribution to the site, in particular for a museum. **Shayher** explained that the Masterplan for Pentridge Village (not the Masterplan for Pentridge Coburg) currently obligates Future Estate to deliver a museum. However, Shayher remains open to discussions with State Government.
- 2.51 **Councillor** stated that it is more about Shayher's need to progress, and that they are far more inclined to sit down and discuss what we can do with Masterplan.
- 2.52 **Council officer** noted that what Coburg is seeing is a future community asset in progress, and that Coburg is lucky to have a developer who wants to spend money on a heritage site such as this.
- 2.53 **Councillors** praised the \$2m that Shayher has commenced investing to restore the A Division roof, the guard towers and the rock breaking yards . Councillor noted that while there are Councillors that are not willing to speak to Shayher, the majority are willing to work with developers and community to bring a 12-18 months program in line with all objectives. Council requested a follow up meeting in a few weeks.
- 2.54 **Councillor** suggested that Shayher and the Council should approach the State Government together. Shayher took this suggestion on notice.
- 3. Other**
- 3.1 It was agreed that consideration of the remaining items on the Agenda would be deferred to the next RCG meeting.