



Objection to Application Number 1669/2015
9 Bridge Rd
Barwon Heads

Attention Erin Jones
Email: statplanning@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

1. SUMMARY

- **The unique coastal character of Barwon Heads needs to be protected**
- **Our township does not have the infrastructure or capacity to absorb this scale of development.**
- **To approve this application will set an undesirable precedent and alter the character of the area to a degree that will make it difficult for council to refuse similar applications in the future.**
- **This proposal is inconsistent with the Barwon Heads Structure Plan, with the residential neighbourhood, and its mass and bulk and removal of the historic house will have a huge and negative impact on the village of Barwon Heads.**
- **The bulk of this building, with boundary to boundary development is not suitable for Barwon Heads and is at loggerheads with planning objectives agreed with the community over the past 15 years.**

2. BACKGROUND THE BARWON HEADS ASSOCIATION – “THE BHA”

This objection is on behalf of the Barwon Heads Association, “the BHA”. We have about 160 members and close relationships with other groups in Barwon Heads. Our members are residents or ratepayers in Barwon Heads. These are our objectives:

- to advance the progress, welfare, and development of the community residing within Barwon Heads and District
- to provide a forum for discussion of matters affecting the community
- to represent the community in discussions with Federal, State and Municipal Governments relating to its progress, welfare and development.

At our monthly meeting on Monday 21st March 2016 discussed the proposed application for 9 Bridge Rd Barwon Heads and unanimously voted to object to the development. (There were about 50 people at the meeting.)

3. BARWON HEADS – THE VILLAGE BY THE SEA

Barwon Heads is known as the Village by the Sea. We are as our name suggests, situated at the mouth of the Barwon River, a very flat coastal village established on and behind sand dunes. We are land locked, flat and low lying, surrounded by wetland ecosystems, there are coastal inundation concerns. We have a single, mixed-use ‘main’ street. We have a varied population and have become a desired place for people of all ages to live. We cater for local tourism, however there is an increasing stress on the natural and built environments from increasing visitor numbers and growth of the local population. Our built form largely comprises detached dwellings with the occasional small scale mixed use unit developments and dual occupancy accommodation. Low level coastal planting (with a few larger trees) is typical throughout residential streets. We are the “Local Port of Barwon Heads”. The original streets in the village have wider road

reserves than the newer streets - typically, streets are symmetrical with grass verges and few pedestrian footpaths

Barwon Heads is not a designated growth zone, however there appears to be an expectation that it will become one by default and random high density developments.

4. BARWON HEADS – PART OF THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

Barwon Heads is part of the City of Greater Geelong. The Structure Plan clearly identifies unique character of the area. The new RDZ zoning invites developers to build to a scale that will put at risk the unique coastal character and village feel of Barwon Heads. This uniqueness has been identified in the planning framework we have relied on and been engaged in. This framework includes:

- Bellarine Localised Planning Statement 2015 (BLPS2015)
- Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2006-2016 (BHSP2010)
- Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan 2006-2016 (BPSP)
- Barwon Heads Urban Design Framework Sept 2003 (BH UDF2003)
- City of Greater Geelong Residential Character Study 2001 (GRCS2001)

We have also read with interest G21 Residential Land Supply Monitoring Project June 2015.

Bellarine Localised Planning Statement 2015

“To protect, preserve and enhance built heritage, cultural and urban character values and preserve the individual identity and role of townships.”

- *Ensure that development responds to the identity and character of the individual township in which it is located.*
- *Protect the character of local conservation precincts, places, objects and sites and heritage areas on the Bellarine Peninsula.*
- *Encourage development, which respects the setting of coastal settlements by providing reasonable sharing of views of the coast and foreshore and uses contemporary design that reflects existing built form.*

Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2010 – states: *Barwon Heads is not designated as a growth location and is in fact situated between two areas which are strategically supported for further urban development; Ocean Grove and Armstrong Creek. These two locations have long been designated to accommodate the future expected growth in Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula, in order that other smaller coastal towns and sensitive environments can be protected.*

Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan (BPSP), developed the following vision for Barwon Heads:

*“In the year 2016 **Barwon Heads** will be a unique, sustainable, residential and environmental hub; a landlocked community surrounded by pristine river, coast and wetlands. An intimate community which supports all age groups and provides a place of belonging for residents and visitors alike; where human impact is managed to support the fragile natural surroundings by:*

- *Clearly defined limitations on urban development*
- *Protecting and nurturing natural surroundings by managing human footprint*
- *Supporting walking, cycling, fishing, sailing, surfing, swimming and generally enjoying what our coastal village has to offer in an environmentally sensitive way”.*

Barwon Heads Urban Design Framework Sept 2003 - *Despite experience in undertaking countless studies along similar lines, the study team was overwhelmed*

by the interest shown in the project by local people. Barwon Heads is a beautiful coastal town. It is also a passionate and strong-willed community, in the very best senses of these terms.

City of Greater Geelong Residential Character Study (August 2001) - The study was prepared for the entire municipality by Planisphere, and identifies seven residential character precincts in Barwon Heads. The community consultation program undertaken as part of the study identified the following community concerns: retaining the coastal lifestyle feel of the town; removal of native and indigenous vegetation; protecting the coastal ecology, wildlife habitats and river environment; maintaining a low scale building form; retaining the 'quaintness' of the original settlement area; encouraging and retaining an informal style of public domain streetscape treatments; discouraging large, bulky dwellings with high site coverage and boundary to boundary development.

5. OUR OBJECTION

We urge the council to refuse the application, and take into consideration the following.

- a. **This is an overdevelopment of the site and will have significant negative impacts on the village of Barwon Heads, the neighbourhood and is inconsistent with the Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2010. "A place where the informal qualities are retained, because these elements that give the town its special character..."**
- b. **Heritage house - demolition of the old house – Honnington -, which we now know is more than 100 years old is inappropriate.** (photos date it back to 1895)
This is one of the oldest properties in Barwon Heads and should be recognized as such. This house is a major focal point of the town. It is a major feature driving west down Bridge Rd, and driving south down Hitchcock Ave. The information provided by the Applicant is not accurate relating to this house. Barwon Heads has few heritage buildings that are important to our community. The house at 9 Bridge Rd is part of the fabric of old Barwon Heads and known by all. It is a rare survivor of old, showing where our community came from and where it might be going. It is a disgrace that it is not listed. There are refurbishments of houses with much less historic appeal throughout Barwon Heads. Why has this house been forgotten?
- c. **Streetscape - the precedent of a development of this scale and bulk on this corner of Bridge Rd and Hitchcock Ave is unacceptable.** The site has wide frontages to Bridge Rd and Hitchcock Ave, which enhance its visibility. The original character of the street relies on the old house, and the old cypress tree which is visible all the way down Hitchcock Ave. The dominance of the design is of major concern. The proposed building is significantly different to the predominantly lower scale Hitchcock Ave streetscape. The impact will result in an inner urban character rather than a continuation and respect for the coastal village. In Bridge Rd a significant number have been restored in recent years with the facades being retained in total as single storey timber houses. The Properties at 11 Bridge Rd are well set back with lots of vegetation.
- d. **Neighbourhood character - the failure to reflect neither the existing neighbourhood character nor the preferred neighbourhood character.** We note the design objective DDO25:
 - o protect existing views and vistas
 - o enhance established coastal character
 - o provide an attractive, safe, accessible environment
 - o encourage development within the town centre to protect the amenity of surrounding residential areas

This application does none of these things. What is the default basis for determining whether or not the building is consistent with a preferred neighbourhood character? Surely this has to reflect the values of the coastal

village. (These values are not defined by the slope of a roof, or the use of weatherboard finish). The site is surrounded by residential dwellings between 1-2 storeys. It sits on a high point, and the scale and bulkiness of the building show no respect for the neighbourhood or its coastal location. The Bridge Rd streetscape between Hitchcock Ave and Golf Links Rd is important to Barwon Heads, as an exemplary example of predominantly single story housing, mostly of weatherboard cottage style. There is an expectation from residents that the residential nature will be retained.

- e. **Scale of the proposed building - the scale of this building is overbearing, and will have a significant impact on the neighbouring residential area.** We object to the form, mass and bulk of this design. This is a confused, super sized Cape Cod replica, boundary to boundary, which is totally out of character for Barwon Heads. The dominance of the scale and design in this location is of major concern. It will ruin the coastal feel of Barwon Heads and set an appalling precedent. The application invites other properties in Bridge Rd and the southern part of Hitchcock Avenue to also develop to this scale, which will further put at risk the residential nature of the surrounding residential area and put at risk the established coastal character. The building does not enhance the coastal character, fails to provide a safe & accessible environment, and puts at risk the amenity of surrounding areas. There has always been an emphasis on discouraging large, bulky dwellings with boundary to boundary development in Barwon Heads. (**City of Greater Geelong Residential Character Study August 2001**). This application fails on all counts.
- f. **Landscaping and vegetation** – the proposal will require a mature, significant tree to be removed. There is insufficient area for any landscaping in Hitchcock Ave, further exacerbating the scale and impact of the design. The tree has a significant presence in the village and is the last remaining Cypress in Barwon Heads. The lack of any capacity for vegetation in Hitchcock Ave will result in a very suburban (anywhere but coastal view) to all who drive west down Bridge Rd.
- g. **Inappropriate use of residential land for commercial** - The application for 3 shops in an area which is “pure residential” is inappropriate and will set a precedent for the creep of similar developments in the residential area of Bridge Rd & Hitchcock Ave and beyond. There is significant capacity for further retail and commercial businesses in the commercial zone and more than adequate provision for growth. Many recently built retail premises are currently vacant, reflecting poor design and the failure by developers to provide appropriate parking for employees and customers. There is a strong risk that this application will provide a de-facto commercial area which will spread west down Bridge Rd, and South down Hitchcock.
- h. **Traffic Report – the information provided is dated and does not reflect the real situation.** The traffic report that accompanies the application has photos showing no cars and little traffic. The photos are old. The stats were taken on a weekday in October. We all know and experience a different Barwon Heads most days and certainly every weekend. The analysis in this report is inadequate and does nothing to support the application. 1 vehicle movement every 10 minutes into a residential road is not negligible, especially for Barwon Heads.
- i. **Parking - There is inadequate parking in the area to handle current use, and a waiver of parking cannot be supported.** The constant application by developers to waive the parking requirements has already resulted in the reliance on residential areas for parking to service the commercial area of town. One of the features of our coastal village is that we don't have lots of footpaths. There are no footpaths in the southern part of Hitchcock Ave, and pedestrians, cyclists have always shared the roadway with cars. This is a dead end street which has recently become the local car park for workers and visitors. There are significant safety concerns for locals and residents with drivers constantly driving up and down and doing quick U-turns to find parking. Driveways are often blocked. It is inappropriate for the developer to rely on this part of Hitchcock Ave as supplying suitable parking capacity. The proposed mixed use development has a statutory requirement to provide 17 car spaces, and is seeking a reduction of 7 spaces (those generated by visitor car parking) and will undoubtedly generate additional

demand for the already fully stretched parking capacity. There are 6 cars spaces provided for the 3 residential units. Locals are now noting that there are many “residential premises” used for holiday letting with multiple families staying and limited car parking. It is apparent that many locals rent their homes without giving access to the double garage. Other developments in the village, even though appearing to supply the required parking spaces have car spaces, which are incapable of housing the now fashionable large 4WD vehicles, which are housed on the streets. Bridge Rd has large bus stops on each side and limited parking before Henley St. Henley St has become the default car park for workers and visitors. This will be exacerbated by this development. There is no capacity to continue to accept applications by developers to waive the statutory car parking requirements.

- j. **Bicycle Facilities – the failure to provide bicycle facilities is unacceptable, even though this is not a statutory requirement it shows a disregard for the workers and residents who will work and live in the building and the current practice to encourage cyclists.** This failure does nothing to support the application to waive parking for the development that people will walk or ride.
- k. **Failure to provide appropriate loading zone is unacceptable –** the proposal relies on staff parking and available on street parking for loading and unloading. This will not work, and is another example of trying to get away with minimal facilities to support this development. Ironically there is no on-street parking on either boundary of 9 Bridge Rd that has the capacity for loading without breaching parking guidelines.
- l. **Community Safety –** the lack of safe footpaths and appropriate parking puts at risk the family environment of the coastal village of Barwon Heads which has historically enabled people of all ages to happily walk/ride around town and feel safe. This is an acknowledged problem in Barwon Heads, and the State Government through Vic Roads has committed \$800,000 to improve pedestrian amenity and safety in Barwon Heads. This is to manage current issues that have been identified – hardly the benign area referred to in the traffic report. This money is not allocated to the residential precinct that this development will occupy and impact with its parking waiver.
- m. **What is coastal –** it is an affront to define coastal by referring to cheap building materials. There is nothing coastal about this design; it will have a massive impact on our coastal and eclectic feel. Its bulk will – as the applicant says, encourage others to do the same. Its bulk will totally change the streetscape of Hitchcock Ave facing south and Hitchcock Ave/Bridge Rd facing west. It is an urban design suitable for areas like Prahran or West Geelong.
- n. **Structure Plan –** on page 31 of the town planning submission from MHBD the statement “as a consequence of the structure plan Bridge Rd etc. have been re-zoned”. This is not a consequence of the Structure Plan at all, and this is an example of more inaccurate references in the documents accompanying this application. We understand that the Barwon Heads Structure Plan is about to be reviewed.

The application should be refused.

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