

Barwon Heads Association Inc.

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Councillors S.Asher, J. Mason and T. Sullivan

City of Greater Geelong

5 December 2022

Dear Councillors

Site: 66-68 Hitchcock Ave. BARWON HEADS PP178-2017

The Barwon Heads Association is very concerned by the almost-complete development at 66-68 Hitchcock Avenue Barwon Heads to provide for 4 retail shops on the ground level and 8 residential apartments on the upper level plus a rooftop terrace on the third level.

Our small community is devastated that the cement and black aluminum facade is an extreme departure from the original approved plans, secretly achieved through a series of Secondary Consent applications that council has approved after giving insufficient consideration and weight to the Barwon Heads Design and Development Overlay (DDO 25).

This development was approved under PP 178 - 2017 and, for several years now, has been widely promoted to have a timber facade both at the top and ground levels which face Hitchcock Ave. The top-level facade was to have timber battens and the ground level facade was also to be clad in timber. There were also originally timber columns at the front facade which were to have planting/greenery growing across them. These features were included in endorsed plans under PP 178 - 2017. An artist's impression of the development's facade, featuring the timber finishes, is still currently being marketed on the various websites for the residential apartments and retail tenancies. The image has also been displayed at the development site for the past few years and was only removed a few weeks ago when the construction fence was taken down. An extract of the images is below:



Although many residents of Barwon Heads were concerned about the magnitude of the development on the main street relative to existing sites and the impact on parking (amongst other concerns), residents generally noted that the use of timber and greenery at the facade were considered to be an attractive image and not inconsistent with the DDO. Accordingly, many residents chose not to object to the original planning permit application in 2017, although we note the BHA did object on a number of grounds. We note the development has suffered extensive delays but the community and surrounding

businesses have been patient, having gone without a number of carpark and a footpath on a very busy area of the main street, for several years.

We are now in December 2022 and the residents of Barwon Heads are aghast that the actual development and facade is an extreme departure from the timber design that council originally approved and has been so widely publicised; the front facing facade on Hitchcock Ave is in fact clad with grey cement sheeting and black powder-coated aluminium. There has been zero use of timber or greenery and we understand that there is no intention to use any timber whatsoever on the facade. This result is of great concern to many in the community and manifestly inconsistent with the DDO. It looks like an office block in a suburban strip mall, not at all appropriate for a small coastal town. See images below:







The Barwon Heads community is currently wondering "How did this happen??"

The answer, is that this was achieved through a series of secret Secondary Consent applications relating to the front facade that council has approved, without giving sufficient consideration or weight to the requirements in the DDO. These incremental changes to the facade have in aggregate created a monstrous, ugly eyesore on the main street of our small coastal town, unbeknown to any of us. The BHA contends the finished design would never have been approved under the original planning permit, when subject to public comment and scrutiny.

The Barwon Heads Design and Development Overlay Schedule 25 (DDO 25)

We note relevant sections of the DDO stipulate the following with regard to new developments:

The key design objective of the DDO is to "enhance the established coastal character of the Town Centre"

In relation to the Streetscape Character, the design objective is to "reinforce the casual, unpolished and beach qualities of the street" by (1) Utilising and reinterpreting traditional Barwon Heads building forms and finishes in any new development (i.e. simple forms and detailing, and use of light materials such as timber etc); (2) New development should be responsive to the climatic conditions of the site and locality, and the amenity of neighbouring properties; and (3) utilising vegetation species suitable for local conditions in any new development.

In relation to Building Details and Finishes, the design objective is to "Encourage buildings that have regard to the palette of materials and colours in the street, and demonstrate a high level of contemporary finish" by (1) using simple building details; (2) using a mix of contemporary materials, colours and finishes; and (3) incorporate materials used traditionally in the town (i.e. weatherboard)

The BHA contends the current facade is entirely inconsistent with these design objectives and stipulated requirements in the DDO.

The Secondary Consent Applications

The facade changes approved by council under the various Secondary Consent applications are set out below:

1st Secondary Consent application (approved 19 June 2019): Council approved use of black powder-coated battens on the upper level rather than timber battens (amongst other changes)

2nd Secondary Consent application: Council approved a number of internal changes

3rd Secondary Consent application (approved 8 August 2022): Council approved removal of timber columns and plating/greenery (amongst other changes)

The BHA is bewildered that council considered these design changes to the front external facade to be 'minor' and suitable for approval by Secondary Consent hence avoiding public notification and third party appeal rights.

BHA's Request of Council

The BHA understands the current endorsed plans (dated 22 August 2022) still require the ground level retail stores to be cladded in spotted gum, but as you will see from photos of the current product, the developer had no intention of doing this and has instead cladded the ground level in grey cement sheeting. We further understand the developer will imminently be making a 4th Secondary Consent application to have the cement sheeting approved instead of timber, and that Ms Cynthia Quach in the CoGG statutory planning department has indicated she is inclined to approve the application on the basis the cement sheeting material accords with the DDO.

In aggregate, this series of Secondary Consent applications have been used to circumvent and avoid the need for an amendment to the planning permit which would have required thoughtful consideration by council and rightly have been brought to the attention of the local community for their input and comment. In our view, if the current front facade had been the subject of the original permit application there would have been considerable concern and submissions lodged by the local community. The community has been deprived of the opportunity to protect the streetscape character of our precious coastal town, via a misuse of the secretive Secondary Consent mechanism. We are shocked and dismayed that council have facilitated this fundamental change, albeit incrementally.

The BHA urges council NOT to approve a 4th Secondary Amendment and instead requires the developer to use timber cladding on the ground level, being a light material to provide a contrast to the heavy cement and aluminum materials in order to protect the streetscape character in line with the DDO.

Street carparking

Council is well aware of the community's concern about the shortage of carparking and this development required Council to grant a waiver of 8 spaces. We note that new street line marking appears to be prohibiting the use of 2 street car parks in front of this building. Please advise whether this is Council's intention and if so can it be reconsidered.

Tree removal and replacement

We note that Condition 11 of the planning permit requires street tree replacement **prior to the occupation of the development** in accordance with the condition. We note one shop is currently being fitted out. We request that council ensure compliance with this condition and the nature strip be reinstated with natural turf.

Yours truly,

Barwon Heads Association

Philip Bade

President

Attachments



Schedule 25 Barwon
Heads DDO.pdf



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Endorsed plans 178 o