

Your Ref: COR/1488-02
Our Ref. 2007/gl-nchar

Ms Julie Reid
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Dear Ms Reid,



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Comment on Neighbourhood Character Review

2007-12-14

In response to your letter of 26th October 2007, Beaumaris Conservation Society Inc. (BCS Inc.) submits the following response to the Bayside Neighbourhood Character Review – Stage 2.

BCS Inc. is concerned that the review has only identified a comparatively small area of Beaumaris for Neighbourhood Character controls. BCS Inc. considers the Clonmore Street, McNaught Street and Hume Street area as only one area of many in Beaumaris that is representative of a preferred Neighbourhood Character deserving controls. Selecting only one comparatively small area of Beaumaris for controls undermines the Neighbourhood Character value of the remaining areas of Beaumaris, and weakens the ability of residents and Council to defend the protection of Neighbourhood Character from inappropriate medium and single dwelling development in the future.

BCS Inc. is of the opinion that despite the considerable demolition of original housing stock and removal of vegetation during the recent years of urban consolidation and housing stock replacement, large areas of Beaumaris continue to strongly represent what we regard as a preferred Neighbourhood Character. To some degree, this preferred Neighbourhood Character has been articulated in Amendment C48 for the Bayside Planning Scheme.

Beaumaris Neighbourhood Character includes bushy gardens and low scale development unlike its neighbouring suburbs or any other suburb of Melbourne. Beaumaris was largely developed over one continuous period starting in the 1950s and continuing through the 1960s. Prior to that development, Beaumaris was characterised by [large areas of bushland](#) and small dune hills. This unique setting - and being bounded by the sea on two of the five sides of its pentagonal perimeter - contributed to a unique style of housing and indigenous bush garden development. The streets of Beaumaris are characterised by unpretentious housing of varying styles of the period set within bushy gardens. However, this character is now under threat from inappropriate medium density and bulky single dwelling development.

BCS Inc. submits that the preferred Beaumaris character still prevails across virtually all of Beaumaris, and is not confined to any one street or area. For this reason, BCS Inc. submits that all of Beaumaris should be included for Neighbourhood Character controls with only small areas excluded owing to the considerable diminution of Neighbourhood Character caused by excessive medium density or inappropriate single dwelling development.

BCS Inc. does not support the approach adopted in the Review, which only identifies areas that are considered to be rare or exemplary, are particularly intact or have a distinctive and strong Neighbourhood Character that could potentially be under threat from unsympathetic development. It is inequitable that this selection criterion has identified only a small section of Beaumaris suitable for Neighbourhood Character controls. BCS Inc. considers that the preferred Neighbourhood Character controls for Beaumaris should be inclusive of all areas rather than select pockets, which can quickly become seen as token museum precincts used to justify laxer controls for the rest.

BCS Inc submits that a street or area should not be excluded from Neighbourhood Character controls simply because there are several new medium density or bulky single dwelling developments there. Existing Neighbourhood Character should not be considered secondary to emerging Neighbourhood Character where the emerging development only represents a comparatively small proportion of housing stock in a street. The emerging pattern of medium density and bulky single dwelling development still represents a comparatively small part of Beaumaris. It would seem that while new developments may be small in number, their inappropriate size and impact on streetscape exaggerates their presence relative to existing housing.

For example, while one medium density development and at least two large single dwellings were recently built in Florida Avenue, Beaumaris, and greatly contrast with the prevailing streetscape, this street is still highly representative of what we would regard as a preferred Beaumaris Neighbourhood Character and this street provides a complementary transition away from the unique vegetative character of Coral Avenue. However, Florida Avenue has been excluded from Neighbourhood Character controls.

The fact that Clonmore Street, McNaught Street and Hume Street are the only areas identified for Neighbourhood Character highlights the damage to Neighbourhood Character from recent development and the inability of past and current planning policies to protect that character. It seems incongruous that both Council planning staff and VCAT have approved developments in recent years that were claimed to provide a positive contribution to Neighbourhood Character. However, the area of Beaumaris assessed to be appropriate for Neighbourhood Character controls is the Clonmore Street, McNaught Street and Hume Street area because it predominantly contains a mixture of buildings from the Postwar era, including 1950s Modern dwellings, set within bushy garden surrounds. Quite contrary to the continual comments and assurances of Council planning and VCAT, it now seems that the only area in Beaumaris with satisfactory Neighbourhood Character is an area relatively untouched from development.

BCS Inc. has been actively involved at Council and VCAT defending Beaumaris from inappropriate development. BCS Inc. acknowledges the requirement to accommodate some medium density development in Beaumaris. However, despite the best efforts of Council and residents to formulate and enforce policy that protects Neighbourhood Character, the preferred Neighbourhood Character continues to be seriously and regularly eroded in planning decisions. BCS Inc. seeks policy that will provide effective recognition and protection of the preferred Neighbourhood Character for all of Beaumaris.

BCS Inc. cannot support Neighbourhood Character controls that would provide protection of Neighbourhood Character covering one small pocket of Beaumaris while exposing the remainder of Beaumaris to continued, and possibly even more eclectic, excessive medium density development.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Cerbasi
President
Beaumaris Conservation Society Inc.