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Melbourne Racing Club — proposed development

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The Melbourne Racing Club (MRC) is seeking Council's agreement to exhibit a proposal for high density retail/commercial/residential development between the Caulfield Racecourse and the railway line. The land includes land owned by the MRC and some Crown Land.



According to documents submitted by the MRC, part of the proposal would be up to 15 storeys high. The development would include over 1,000 residential units. It is not clear how many of them would be dwellings or hotel rooms or student accommodation. In addition, the proposal would involve a major new shopping centre. It would include 35,000 square metres of retail and office development. That would be three times bigger than the Glen Huntly activity centre.

In relation to much of the retail development proposed, no off-street car parking would be provided. Council considers that such a retail development should provide for the cars it is attracting. Council is also concerned that parking might be located on the racecourse which is Crown Land and which is supposed to be available to the community as a public park and recreation ground.

Council is concerned with the zone that is proposed by the MRC for this land, which is a Priority Development Zone (PDZ). If such a zoning was approved, the individual planning applications for individual developments would not be advertised to the public because:

- when the community has the chance to comment early in the process, there would be little to comment on; and
- if/when more details about specific proposals were available down the track, there would be no opportunity for the public to comment.

You would have a situation where a planning permit for a single storey dual occupancy in nearby Normanby Road would be advertised in the normal way but a 15 storey retail and office building would not. There would be no right of appeal to VCAT.

In addition, the proposal provides little detail about how the development will ultimately look or likely land uses, certainly in terms of intensity. The level of detail is basically limited to building heights, number of storeys and set backs only. Given the lack of detail, it is impossible for Council or the community to come to an informed view about the impact of the proposal. The community (and Council) cannot meaningfully comment on what are largely concept plans. The PDZ would prevent further involvement of the community when a detailed proposal eventually

comes forward.

At the Council Meeting on 4 September 2007 Council resolved to:

- 1. Not seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare the amendment as proposed by the Melbourne Racing Club in its current form.*
- 2. Write to the MRC stating that Council is prepared to initiate meaningful community consultation by exhibiting either:
 - a) an amendment which deals satisfactorily with all the matters listed in Attachment 3 to this report or;*
 - b) an amendment to rezone part of the subject land (Smith Street precinct) to a Mixed Use/Business Zone and include the Incorporated Plan as a Reference Document only in the Planning Scheme.**
- 3. Write to the Minister detailing Council's position and reasons and proposing meaningful community consultation by requesting Ministerial authorisation for exhibition of 2(b) above.*

Council is strongly of the view that if/when a 'real' development is proposed, it should be capable of going through a normal town planning process which includes public notification.

Council's preference is for the MRC to firm up the detail of its proposals and proceed through the local town planning process in the normal way.

The alternative path some developers take is to lobby the State Government to remove Council from the decision-making process and establish a Priority Development Panel to approve development.

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