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Representing Point Lonsdale Residents since 1910

Borough of Queenscliffe Destination Queenscliff Submission.

In regards to the Borough's Destination Queenscliff Precinct Plan, the PLCA understands the project covers only that area of south Hesse Street, the area known as Shortlands Bluff, the Ocean View Car Park and the south east corner of the sports reserve.

The PLCA membership have the following as their submission, and in addition, would respectfully like to bring to the attention of the councillors, CEO, and other Project Stakeholders the following key point below:

Heritage:

The Hassell design mentions heritage only in a passing manner without any clear articulation of the precinct's significant contribution to Australian history. No reference is made to the importance of the area to Aboriginal culture. There are documented reports of Wathaurung middens in the nominated area and a full survey of the area would be appropriate before any works occur especially in dune areas. Many parts of Shortland Bluff are intrinsically linked to Fort Queenscliff's initial design and subsequent operation. Apart from the defence structures, the navigational beacons have made a major contribution to the nation's development (noting that one of the community's objections to the initial siting of the cabins near to White lighthouse was that the development may interfere with the navigational beacons and impede views to and from Fort Queenscliff).

The area's history has strong potential to contribute to tourism and expand the visitor experience but at this stage heritage seems to be considered a 'bolt-on' to the Destination Queenscliff project rather than a design driver. It is well known that an application has been made to have much of the Queenscliff Headland listed for National Heritage. The PLCA fully backs this application and accordingly we have written to the Minister for the Environment and Energy expressing our support. The application identifies many historic elements of the precinct which should have been referenced in the Hassell report.

We consider the design must incorporate advice from local historical specialists to ensure project elements such as revegetation, tracks and signage all contribute to making Shortland Bluff a renowned heritage destination. We are concerned that without an integrated approach using subject matter specialists, Hassells may propose works which contradict the longer term heritage recognition and protection of the site. By way of example, the plan shows extensive revegetation and new pathways to the south of the Fort. This design seems predicated on not understanding the importance of the link between the defence purpose of the glacis slope linking to the moat and, ultimately, the Fort wall. Likewise, the plan makes no mention of the numerous military emplacements outside the Fort wall. Some of these, such as the 'see-saw' light as extremely rare and worthy of inclusion in the design from the outset.

In this context, the PLCA requests Council appoint a separate community-based consultation team to work with Hassells on the heritage attributes of this project.

1. Construction of 10 High Quality Lodgings.

The PLCA notes the proposed construction of new “lodgings” and a large earth barrier appears to be only partially funded. Lisa Neville - Member for Bellarine - has previously indicated State funding would not be forthcoming if the cabins are built on the Shorthand's Bluff area. Based on concept information provided it appears the 10 high-end “lodgings” will be located beyond the Recreation Reserve boundary and on to Shortland's Bluff, which is likely to put project funding at risk.

We also have the following questions and observations:

- Will the cabins need additional planning approval by DEWLP/CMP – particularly as they are elevated?
- Given the primary dune collapse at the netball construction site what guarantees and planning will take place to ensure it will not occur again?
- Why is there no vehicle access direct to cabins for guests, maintenance and cleaning purposes?
- It is noted there are 18 bedrooms but only 10 car bays for visitors and maintenance staff. How will the cabins “exclusive” car parking be managed where a guest brings two vehicles?
- The cabins and the café will be highly visible from the water, beach and coastal walking paths. This would appear to contradict the requirements of the Queenscliffe Planning Scheme's Schedule 2 Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO2) which requires, inter alia, that within the Queenscliff Lighthouse/Ocean View car park area the maintenance and protection of significant views of Port Phillip Heads, Point Nepean, Point Lonsdale Lighthouse, the shipping lanes, Lonsdale Bight and the coastline from land and sea. The Planning Scheme also requires the protection of landscape features and scenic vantage points from visual intrusion resulting from the inappropriate siting and design of new development. How does the Council reconcile its commercial development against the prescriptive requirements of the Planning Scheme?
- Will this development establish a precedent for further development along the coast, both within the Borough and elsewhere on the Victorian coast?
- Will any of this construction negatively impact the National Heritage Listing application (see Key Point above)?
- Has there been any extensive consultation and data analysis carried out on the impact to existing accommodation service providers? Can the results be published?
- Will the cabins be managed by a private contractor?
- If Council is to manage the new cabins what facility will be allocated, how many staff will be employed and what marketing budget, advertising and maintenance budget is planned for?
- Is there a financial model that has been developed to establish a pricing strategy that meets market expectations and covers operating costs?
- Can the detailed financial modelling be published as part of the public consultation? If not, why not?
- Are the boardwalks to the lodgings compliant with DDA regulations? i.e. Railings?
- Has a quantity surveyor been employed to verify capital costs?
- Will a “client side” construction company be employed to manage the project on behalf of the residents of the Borough of Queenscliffe?

The PLCA would also like to state that this proposal appears to be fraught with many pitfalls. We are very concerned that this proposal for additional accommodation will damage the existing accommodation providers ability to maintain a viable business in the Borough.

The original analysis that Council and the CEO has used to support the development identified a gap in the accommodation offering at the “6 star” end of the market. There have been a number of changes since the original recommendations by the consultants employed.

Apart from what is provided inside the cabins by way of luxury features and fittings, location and ambience would seem to play a part in client perception of what is 4, 5 or 6 star accommodation.

The cabins are no longer being referred to as ‘eco cabins’ and simply use what appears to be current smart building practise. The location within a caravan park around a football field would also seem to affect the visitor experience and ultimately the rating and income expectancy.

This would mean the new cabins would sit at the same level, and in direct competition with the accommodation offered by our existing 4 and 5 star providers!

2. Kiosk.

The PLCA makes the following comment regarding the proposed Kiosk:

- The location of the new Kiosk is designed with a clear glass area joining the visitor amenity block with the Kiosk counter for internal and external sales. This is no doubt trying to reduce any impact the structure may have on the view along Hesse Street south to the Rip. The loss of the three mature cypress trees to provide car parking for cabin visitors would seem to be at odds with Council policy to protect significant vegetation in the Borough. Were design alternatives considered which would have retained these trees? The three cypress trees in the old “bull ring” area give much-needed cover from the hot sun and provide a pleasant rest area. It is noted even the designer sees wind as a major discomfort for the patrons. It is our suggestion that as the trees have little impact on the view by pedestrians and they provide much needed shade they be retained.
- In the absence of financial data we can only assume the financial arrangements for the lease on the Kiosk/café will be such that it will provide the operator an unfair advantage over those business operators on Hesse Street. The location alone would see a major benefit but when added to parking, Council managed amenities and beach access, it is real leg up. Has there been any analysis on the effect of the 40 seater café/Kiosk on existing businesses – particularly those in Hesse St? If yes - is the data available & can it be released?
- Will the Café / kiosk be restricted to day time hours or will it be available for events and evening functions and dining?
- Is there is a remote possibility of the Kiosk/ Café closing for private functions by a private operator? The PLCA has issue with any impact, and on restrictions to any of the site availability to the General Public.
- Clarification of seating: 40 seats in total or will there be additional seating outside?
- Typically buildings should not encroach above the vegetation line along our coast and should not be visible directly from the beach – this kiosk (and proposed Lodgings) appear to do all that.

3. Lookout Platform.

The PLCA believe the lawn strip proposed to be placed in front of car park would be better suited behind the car park near the Lighthouse Reserve allowing the existing parking arrangement with its excellent views to be retained.

4. Enhanced Pedestrian Access/Improved Pathways.

Improved pathways in and around the fort area are welcome if they are done with sensitivity to the vegetation, and in particular the historic and heritage aspects of the area mentioned in the ‘Heritage’ introduction above are carefully evaluated & managed.

This includes the maintenance and in some areas re-establishment of the moat and views from the fort mounds.

A connection to walks to Point Lonsdale would also offer visitors a unique coastal experience and bring us one step closer to a walking path to Ocean Grove and beyond.

5. Facilities to support ANZAC Day events/Lighting Fort Wall.

The PLCA believes the repositioning of existing commemorative plaques and memorials (eg 2 Commando Company) should be done to ensure pride of place. Infrastructure should be in place to ensure that major commemorative events including ANZAC day are safe, easy to access, and cost efficient for the community. Lighting of sections of the fort wall will enhance the appeal of the proposed heritage walk and add a new feature to the tourist offering.

6. Coastal Revegetation

PLCA understands a local community group have offered to carry out new plantings at Shortland's Bluff near the dry moat if Council agrees to remove the invasive weeds that have taken hold of the area. A sensitive revegetation program that includes examples of pre-settlement vegetation would enhance the Lighthouse Reserve/Shortland's Bluff precinct and improve the visitor experience.

7. Car Park

The PLCA believes the following points should be addressed in regards to the Car Park.

- If the area is being designed to attract visitors and children then the runoff from the carpark should not run onto the beach. An alternative should be found and a better, permanent arrangement found. Toxic material that drops from vehicles will find its way to where the children play. If this not dealt with Council will be liable.
- The separation of vehicles and visitors with children is a good design feature. Viewing from cars must be taken into account as many older visitors and during cooler months this is a major attraction to the area.
- The spending of funds along the south end of Hesse Street should be reviewed as there are more pressing areas that need upgrades. It would also allow longer vehicles, RV's and buses to park near the Bowls Club as there are currently no long spaces in the rip car park.
- Will the enhanced Car Park be monitored by Local Laws as the enhanced area may lead to more "free campers"?
- We note the reduction in net car parking spaces in the order of at least 40%. We believe this will result in congestion in the area and perhaps visitors may not stop and visit during peak visitor times.

8. Hesse St South

- The Hesse Street South streetscape and approach to Ocean View Car Park would be greatly improved if the overhead power lines were placed underground. Although this would be a costly undertaking (rough estimate of \$1.5 million given) it would be well worthwhile and should be included in the Destination Queenscliff project.
- The proposed loss of mature trees a concern between the Bowls Club and Recreation Reserve entrance as is the proposed removal of the 3 cypress trees at the southern end of Hesse Street .

9. Pathway to Citizens Park.

The PLCA are happy to consider a coastal loop that would link Thwaites Walk in Citizens Park with the walkway that leads to Maytone and on to Lovers Walk.

10. Interpretation

Although not listed as a separate component in the Destination Queenscliff Brief, the PLCA considers this to be a critical element of the project. Our view is that the Borough must appoint an interpretation group well versed in story and develop a consistent world class interpretation / signage approach as part of the "sell".

Access and future capabilities must be considered so that project outcomes including builds, reflect the story touched upon in the Key Point on page 1, and have a future presence not a transient approach or band-aids that soon becomes dated. Whatever the outcome, it must honour the existing sites and be sympathetic to neighbourhood/s characters.

Finally, in conclusion, the PLCA requests a 2nd round of Public/Community Consultations occur given the many of the details of project that have not been released as yet – and therefore will not be part of the process of public scrutiny.

David Kenwood
Vice President, on behalf of Membership and Committee, PLCA
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