

22A Fellows Street,
Kew 3101
1st November 2003

For information Mr Mark Whinfield
Manager Property Services

Mr John Tabart
CEO
Vicurban
Dear Sir,

Re CLOSURE of KEW COTTAGES

It is understood that the Victorian Urban Development Authority is acting as planning consultants to the Victorian State Government through the Department of Human Services in connection with the proposed closing of the Kew Cottages now known as Kew Residential Services. We would like to bring to your attention the following environmental concerns regarding the proposed closure of this facility and the possible redevelopment that may follow.

1. The destruction of an attractive landscape precinct covering 27 hectares, located in the existing Yarra River Biodiversity Corridor and also the possible destruction of well established trees of considerable heritage value and the long time habitat of many birds and animals.
2. The possible disturbance and/or destruction of aboriginal relics on the site
3. The likely adverse effects on the local infrastructure such as;
 - (a) traffic flows
 - (b) schools
 - (c) additional car parking problems, both on and off site, schools, shops etc

With regard to items 1,2&3 above we would refer you to the following City of Boroondara and other reports which we feel are relevant and should be carefully considered in providing consultative services to the Government:

City of Boroondara's Draft Biodiversity Corridors Plan
Heritage Study of KRS site by John Patrick and Associates
Preliminary Environmental Site Assessment and Geotechnical Investigation, Kew Cottages, Kew Victoria, 12 April 2002
Kew Cottages Conservation and Management Plan, April 2002
Kew Residential Services Site – Preliminary Site Report, Boroondara KRS Working Group, 22 March 2002
The Kew Cottages Site Precinct (Morphology) Study, May 2002
Indigenous Heritage Study by Terra Culture, heritage consultants.
Bird Study of Kew Cottages Site by Ornithologist Roger Richards.

We would also like to draw your attention to the National Trust Significant Tree Register which has listings for a number of trees on site and to also advise that the Kew Cottages Coalition (KCC) intends applying for an additional listing of a number of Eucalypts which we consider very worthy of preservation. This listing may affect the proposed location of some buildings as these trees do not appear on the untitled preliminary master plan currently being circulated among interested parties.

It would be a great pity if this historically rich, environmentally sensitive, park like landscape situated so close to the city is not given the full professional consideration it so rightly deserves and therefore is not treated like any ordinary development using purely economic rationalist criteria. We believe the social and physical impacts on this environment could be particularly severe if a proper and thorough environmental impact study is not conducted before current development plans are completed. May we also suggest that any further site or development plans are correctly and clearly titled to facilitate reference and identification. Also additional information such as scale if drawn to scale, north point and adjoining street names as usually shown on plans would be most helpful particularly to those unfamiliar with the site.

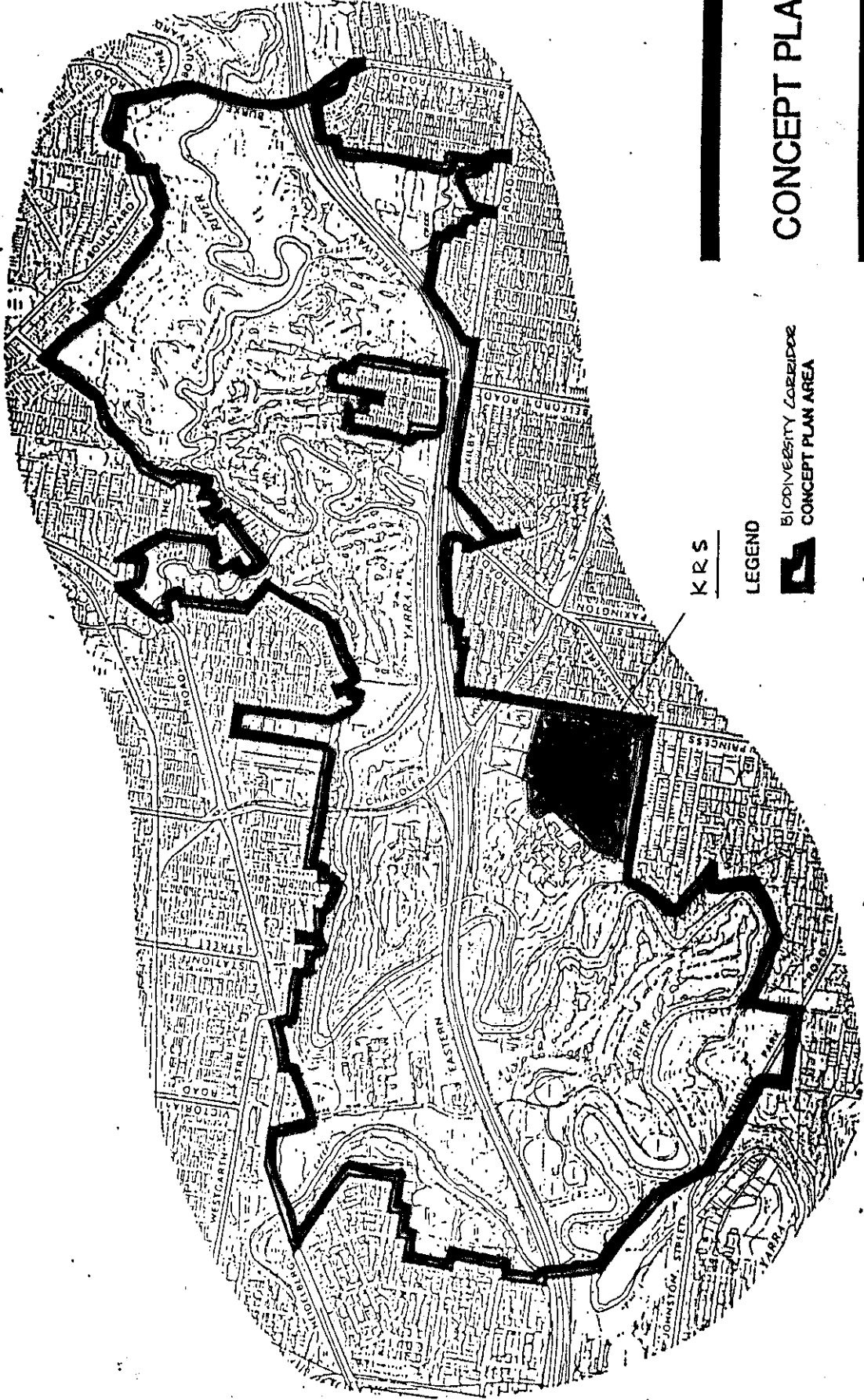
Yours faithfully,

Brian Walsh,

President,
Kew Cottages Coalition

Cc The Hon. Sherryl Garbutt MP
Minister for Community Services

Mr Ian Whalley
President Kew Cottages Parents Association



KRS

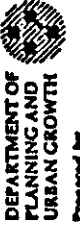
LEGEND

BIODIVERSITY CORRIDOR
CONCEPT PLAN AREA



CONCEPT PLAN AREA

MIDDLE YARRA RIVER CONCEPT PLAN
Dights Falls to Burke Road



DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING AND
URBAN GROWTH
Prepared by



Department of Conservation
and Environment

Tree Notes on Kew Cottages

Four visits have been made to the site to evaluate the existing vegetation, but this has been by no means an exhaustive review. The trees are briefly discussed in groupings or landscape elements as follows:

1. Remnant vegetation

Six or more mature River red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) of majestic proportions are growing in a north/south corridor at the rear of the Princess Street residences. These trees are remnants of Red gum woodland, which would have originally covered the site, and are in excess of 200 years old. (Refer to Chapter 1, Melbourne's indigenous plant communities, in *Flora of Melbourne*, Society for Growing Australian Plants Maroondah, Inc.) The trees have girths of 4 metres or greater (1.3m diameter). The "Canoe Tree" was a River red gum.

2. Main drive

This road was the main access drive to the former Willsmere mental hospital. The drive is described in the National Trust's Statement of Significance as "a rare double avenue of trees culminating in an elliptical carriage sweep". The western end of the drive has unfortunately been destroyed by the Willsmere residential development. The trees lining the drive are amongst the oldest plantings on the site, with the size of some suggesting an age of 100 to 120 years. The road is framed by four rows of deciduous oaks and elms, with inter-planting of evergreen Moreton Bay figs and Bhutan cypress. The two inner rows are English elms (*Ulmus procera*), while the two outer rows are Algerian oaks (*Quercus canariensis* hybrid). The planting is more intact to the southern side of the road, where the oaks are spaced at 11 metres and the elms at 22 metres. There are 29 oaks in the outer row with gaps indicating a further 9 missing trees. There are 24 elms remaining to the roadside. The outer branches have been pruned to give the trees an upright form. There are ten Moreton Bay figs (*Ficus macrophylla*) inter-planted between the elms at the western end, suggesting that this species was once planted alternately with the elms for the full length of the drive. Some of the figs are smaller and would have been later plantings, either to replace dead fig trees, or to replace fig trees that may have grown too large. Trees to the northern side of the road are planted in the same pattern, except that there is an additional middle row of cypresses. The rows of trees to this side of the road are more disjointed with many gaps. There are only 6 surviving elms, inter-planted with 11 Moreton Bay figs, and 21 oaks to the lower northern side. The middle row includes 7 Bhutan cypresses (*Cupressus torulosa*), with an upright growth habit, and two wide-spreading Monterey cypresses (*C. macrocarpa*).

3. Lower drive

An avenue of alternating English oaks (*Quercus robur*) and Algerian oaks, with many gaps. These trees are smaller than those in the main drive and may have been planted around 1920, under the guidance of Hugh Linaker. Linaker was appointed as landscape gardener for all Victorian mental asylums in 1913 and was certainly involved with Kew Cottages. (Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens, p. 371.) A fine example of Linaker's work is the oak drive and adjacent row of Canary Island pines at Mayday Hills, Beechworth.

4. Oak avenue / south-west walk

Algerian oaks line a gravel path between sloping banks leading to the south-western entry to Willsmere. There is a short row of Canary Island pines (*Pinus canariensis*) to the south. Other trees include Lilly pillly (*Acmena smithii*) and Irish Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*). Remnants of planting beds to the northern side indicate that this walk was once a special feature of the grounds.

5. Oak avenue, Boundary Road

A discontinuous avenue of Algerian oaks lines the road parallel to the eastern wall of Willsmere.

6. Pine row, Princess Street

A discontinuous row of Canary Island pines (*Pinus canariensis*) with a Monterey pine (*P. radiata*) at the northern end. The trees are in groups of 3, 3, 4 and 11, from the southern end near the roundabout to the north. The tallest Canary Island pine appears to be the second

from the southern end, measured at 23 metres. This species is fairly common in cultivation and can grow from 20 to 45 metres. This row may have been planted by Linaker.

7. Specimen trees

These trees are scattered throughout the site and range in age from around 80 to 100 years. The following are notable:

- Bishops pine (*Pinus muricata*). Listed by the National Trust.
- Holly-leaved cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*). This tree is unusual in cultivation in Victoria. One specimen within Willsmere is listed by the National Trust. The tree on the north of the main drive near the roundabout is a good specimen. There is another growing from a stump to the east of the chapel.
- A group of Australian conifers in the south-western corner of the site include Bunya Bunya pines (*Araucaria bidwillii*) and Hoop pines (*A. cunninghamii*).
- Large examples of Monterey pine and Monterey cypress.
- Deodar cedars (*Cedrus deodara*).
- Smaller exotics such as Pepper trees (*Schinus molle*), Ash (*Fraxinus species*) and Irish Strawberry.

8. Australian trees

Australian trees have been added throughout the site from the 1960s to courtyards and car parks. These include Eucalypts, Wattles, Sheokes, Grevilleas, Hakeas and Firewheel trees. These trees, together with indigenous understorey planting, provide significant habitat for wildlife.

Recommendation

Heritage Victoria will only add items to the Heritage Register that are considered to be of special significance to the State of Victoria. The main drive is the only landscape element on the site that may be worthy of nomination, although it has partly lost its meaning with the removal of the link to Willsmere. The Canary Island Pines row is fragmented and is of local interest only. It could be protected by a City of Boroondara planning or vegetation overlay. The River red gums should certainly have this level of protection, with a defined protection zone wherein development should not be permitted to encroach.

26 August 2003

Barrie Gallacher, B Arch, ML Arch, RAIA, AAILA
Architect, Registered Landscape Architect, Landscape Heritage Consultant

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