

Residents had their say and Rosny Hill was approved anyway

ON Wednesday of last week, Clarence City Council voted to approve the application to build a hotel on Rosny Hill Nature Recreation Area.

So what? In a crowded world shouldn't we be sharing this publicly owned reserve and making it more accessible?

Well, yes. Only we're not sure how that will be achieved by clearing an area bigger than Blundstone Arena, adding a building longer than Eastlands, with a 10-metre-high facade (three-storey high), onto the face of the northern and western sides of

Beth Rees explains why her group is appealing against hotel approval

the hill. We're not sure how a 60-room hotel, restaurants, cafes and carparks will actually "enhance and complement public recreation and education consistent with conserving the natural and cultural values" as required by the Nature Conservation Act 2002, under which Clarence

City Council is obliged to manage this reserve.

We're dubious as to how the goal of the Mayor and some aldermen to "improve the night-life of the Bellerive precinct" actually fits into Bellerive, let alone the Nature Conservation Act 2002.

We're seriously concerned about process. There are sections of the Development Application that are non-compliant, nine of which are deemed to have "no acceptable solution" under the planning scheme. Aldermen were instructed by the council planning department that they could exercise discretion and

accept these non-compliances. In the public meeting they were instructed that under their responsibilities as planning authority they could not exercise that discretion by refusing to approve the application.

The Clarence City Council wants this development. It has a vested interest, being the land manager, facilitator and assessor of the proposal as both the managing authority and planning authority.

Well founded community concerns were cast aside by most council aldermen in favour of development, including the fact that we still

do not know the size of the area of public land to be sub-leased to the developer and further transferred to hotel management.

There are unrealistic, and likely unaffordable, claims about environmental restoration that may come about by hotel development, coupled with unrealistic expectations of continued community involvement in reserve management around the hotel.

There are unknown costs carelessly left to the environment and the community to bear.

So what's in it for us?

Council has not performed a cost-benefit analysis of the impact of the hotel on residents and ratepayers.

There will be some construction jobs in the building phase; these jobs may also contribute to local businesses.

The built hotel will provide employment for hospitality staff.

Profits will most likely go interstate or overseas.

There has been no estimate of the potential rates and lease payments.

On the other hand, the community will bear the cost of establishing and/or

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maintaining infrastructure such as roads, drains, sewerage and other services beyond the perimeter of the lease (whose area we do not yet know).

There has been no attempt to measure the "cultural values" required by the Act. The reserve appears neglected, and it has then been argued that the hotel is necessary to reverse this neglect.

For the Clarence community and ratepayers, the costs greatly outweigh the benefits.

There is an alternative. Rosny Hill Friends Network has presented to the council a more appropriate

development, "Re-imagining Rosny Hill Nature Recreation Area".

It would be low-profile and low-impact. It could be built in two stages, initially a high-quality viewing area, pop up coffee, walks, and children's playground; followed by a cafe and picnic/interpretation shelter. This proposal would increase the amenity of the hill, be family friendly, and provide a natural experience for all. There is strong community support for improved public facilities, particularly as a lookout.

What next?

Rosny Hill Friends

Network has been working to promote an appropriate development since 2014. It will appeal this decision and continue to promote environmental protection and suitable sympathetic facilities for scenic viewing and recreation.

There were 541 representations on the proposed hotel, most of them against it. That's democracy in action.

The community and ratepayers have spoken. Now they are being put to further expense to appeal this decision. Donations are flowing in, a concrete measure

of the concerns of ratepayers from all over Clarence and citizens beyond.

If this reserve cannot be protected as required by law, then what fate lies ahead for other reserved lands around Tasmania?

Rosny Hill is a little green oasis that provides peace and serenity to countless citizens.

We are the custodians of this hill. If we give it away, it is lost forever.

We owe it to our children and their children to protect and enhance it.

Beth Rees is president of the Rosny Hill Friends Network Inc.