

Off the grid 21st Century style



By BRET CHRISTIAN

The world is beating a path to the door of Cottesloe ideas man Mike Hulme.

His idea, now becoming a reality, was to create a unique, friendly village that was self-sufficient in renewable energy, water and fresh food from community gardens.

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage has attracted people from diverse age groups and demographics, including first-home buyers, young families, empty nesters and retirees, academics and professionals, all wanting to live a more sustainable life.

“The plan was to build a village with the best of 21st Century technology coupled with the best of what we can learn from old villages in Europe,” Mr Hulme said.

“We have aimed for affordability, coupled with very low utility bills. Hopefully, people can work less and not be slaves to debt.

“Being able to spend more time with our kids, neighbours and hobbies is good for society,

Mike Hulme, inset left, successfully trialled battery storage for solar power at his Cottesloe home. The artist impression shows a community garden in the foreground of some of the Ecovillage buildings.

as is the opportunity to meet on shared ground and form friendships.”

Almost 100 lots have already been sold in the project, which is in the charming rural hamlet of Witchcliffe, 8km south of the Margaret River townsite.

Two of the five stages have almost sold out without any advertising.

Buyers are coming from as far afield as Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Townsville, New Zealand and London.

“Our future residents are enthusiastic, kind, caring people, interested in leading a sustainable life within a supportive community,” Mr Hulme said.

“They are motivated to reduce their carbon footprint and live a more meaningful life without compromising lifestyle, privacy

and amenity.”

High-speed fibre broadband will service each home, encouraging people aiming to join the working-from-home revolution or planning to set up a home business.

“Many professionals from Perth are being attracted to the village,” Mr Hulme said.

“I recently sold a lot to a young metallurgist working for BHP, who told me she only needs to head up to Perth once a month for meetings.

“She can’t wait to work from home in an environment where she can take a break from her home office, have a cuppa and

potter around her community garden with neighbours.

“Residents will come together to socialise and work in their community gardens, which comprise about 8500sq.m of shared green space, irrigated by water fed by solar pumps from community-owned dams.

“We’re providing people with friendly, welcoming places to come together and socialise, to share ideas and resources, and to give and get support from their community.

“Isolation brings anxiety and depression to our society that has lost so much neighbourly connection.

“These important connections

Hopefully, people can work less and not be slaves to debt

don’t happen on their own.”

Government approval delays meant that the project has taken 10 years of planning after Mr Hulme and property development partner Stan Perron bought the 120ha Foxcliffe Farm during the depths of the global financial crisis.

The property abuts the small village of Witchcliffe and came complete with a central dam and an organic vineyard.

Mr Hulme has now dug another two large lakes, providing natural swimming pools and water for irrigation.

The long delay for approvals meant that huge advances in technology in the meantime would be incorporated into the village and priced into the lots. Mr Hulme said car-driven suburban sprawl was the enemy of sustainable living.

In direct contrast to the rows of jammed-together cookie-cutter suburban homes and anonymous apartment blocks, the Witchcliffe Ecovillage will have trees, gardens, agriculture, and fast charging for electric cars where about 700 like-minded people are coming together.

Design guidelines ensure every home is solar passive and guaranteed solar access in winter, and homes and commercial buildings will be a maximum of two storeys.

Homes will be clustered around the community gardens with an average of 23 homes in each, on freehold survey strata titles, interconnected by an extensive path network.

The site has provision for professional rooms, short stay accommodation, a village square with pub, restaurant, cafe,

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McManus wants to end divisions

• From page 7

Last month, Mr McManus voted with every councillor except Andrew Mangano to abandon a Supreme Court challenge to the 24-storey Chellingworth development after planning lawyer Kenneth Pettit found there were “no reasonable grounds” to overturn the approval by a development assessment panel.

“When you’ve got a highly respected senior counsel who’s given you their opinion you’ve got to respect it,” Mr McManus said.

“We shouldn’t be recklessly spending ratepayers’ money.

“We can do some amendments to the planning scheme in time and see if we can get some reasonableness.”

At the April meeting, Mr Mangano said the decision let down affected residents.

“We’re resigning ourselves to failure,” he said.

Mr Mangano has backed Mr Youngman’s candidacy.

Like Mr Youngman, Mr McManus said he opposed mandatory tree protections designed to limit the ecological impact of developments.

“Developers have to stop clearing blocks completely,” he said.

“I’d support tree registration

on private property if it was voluntary.”

He also opposes a push to force subdividing property owners to cede land for rear lanes, in order to limit the number of paved driveways crossing verges.

“I’m dead against govern-

Subi free parking costs \$50

• From page 7

of the requirement, had also been pinged for the same offence.

The only place this reporter could find wording about displaying tickets was in small print on the ticket machine itself.

Mrs Cox said Subiaco needed to “change their tone”, do more to support local traders and not drive away visitors to the city.

But the council administration was unsympathetic to her calls and did not indicate it would take action to make the signs clearer.

“All City carparks clearly display regulatory signage indicating: P ticket 8am to 5pm Mon – Fri,” Subiaco said in a statement.

“This is standard signage

ments of any description taking land off people without compensation,” he said.

Nominations close on Wednesday May 12 for the June 18 election.

The winner will serve the remainder of Ms de Lacy’s term, until October 2023.

in compliance with the Australian Standards.

“Signs on carpark ticket machines indicate the first hour is free when a ticket is displayed.”

The City said motorists can ask for a review of an infringement, and more information about parking, fines and how to appeal them could be found on its website.

Mrs Cox’s fine was due to be paid this week.

She said her daughter took the initiative to write to the City to try to and explain what had happened.

“An automated response said someone would be in touch, but no one ever was,” Mrs Cox said.

“They are a heartless council that seem to want to drive people away.”

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backpackers, community centre and outdoor theatre, along with sports ground, conservation areas and a private organic vineyard,” Mr Hulme said.

Sustainability is enhanced by community infrastructure, including three megawatts of battery-stored renewable energy from rooftop PVs, and stormwater catchment in three large dams totalling 250 megalitres.

Although capable of generating all its own power needs, the village will be connected to the electricity grid because it will sell back excess power, saving more

“The site will have huge tracts of undeveloped space, half its area, with walking trails, bush conservation areas and a private organic vineyard,” Mr Hulme said.

Although capable of generating all its own power needs, the village will be connected to the electricity grid because it will sell back excess power, saving more

money for residents.

Each residential cluster will be productive and low maintenance, and include simple by-laws that enable community participation, while protecting residents’ quiet enjoyment and privacy.

“Dogs have to be kept indoors at night so they don’t annoy neighbours and to protect the native nocturnal marsupial populations, and no cats are allowed,” he said.

“A huge amount of thought has gone into the design.

“We are building a model for the future and I couldn’t imagine a more beautiful place to do it in.”

Red Cross asked for Lady Lawley plans

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“If not, they risk losing the trust and support of the public,” he said.

Other POST readers have also called on the Red Cross to make the deed public.

A spokeswoman for Attorney General John Quigley has previously said the deed was a matter for the Red Cross.

Lady Lawley Cottage offered children with complex physical and intellectual disabilities a home away from home, with caring staff, a pleasant oceanside environment and the latest play,

learning, craft and entertainment equipment.

It provided children and teenagers with space to develop independence, to socialise with peers and offered families much-needed respite from significant daily caring demands.

Four months ago the POST reported the Red Cross was considering handing it over to a new disability provider (*Red Cross considers lifeline for Lady Lawley Cottage*, POST December 26).

Disability providers such as Rocky Bay, Hannah’s House,

Identity WA and Cahoots have expressed interest in reopening the heritage-listed property and running it on a peppercorn rent.

Australian Red Cross WA director Craig Stewart said recently the organisation was continuing to consult with “a range of stakeholders” about the best use of Lady Lawley Cottage and had no intention of selling the building.

The building should be used to “benefit the community” and the Red Cross would keep the community updated, he said.

Prying eyes could look out over Subi Oval

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Oval, which is not a school-based sporting space (*Flats tower over Subi students*, POST, August 22).

Questions about student safety and security from neighbouring developments were also identified by the WA Council of State Schools Organisations (WACSSO) as a growing problem.

“Concern among parents is the development of apartments or other high-density housing that clearly looks over school grounds,” WACSSO said last year in its submission to the State Government about planning for school sites (*College fails to kick sports goal*, POST, November 28).

The Preserve Subi East Reserve Campaign Group said

it was disappointed about the lack of public consultation, transparency and accountability in relation to the process for subdividing land in the precinct.

Subiaco confirmed that staff handled and recommended approval for the subdivision application “under delegated authority”, not by a decision of the council.

Campaign convener Paul Clements estimated that the sale of the two lots – a combined area of 6257sq.m – would fetch the State Government between \$10million and \$25million.

“Money, not proper and orderly planning, is driving their decisions,” Mr Clements, a former Subiaco councillor, said.

“Reserves should never be

sacrificed for money or to make developers rich, and this is a 140-year-old reserve that can never be replaced.

“We call on and appeal to the McGowan Government and the WAPC to reverse this decision.

“There is a better way to preserve our reserve and achieve the Minister’s infill in SubiEast.”

He also warned that allowing high-rise development on the edge of the school oval would set a precedent for all schools in WA.

Minderoo moves in on Forrest Hall

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“The precinct will provide short-stay accommodation facilities including additional accommodation for scholars and fellows, a food and beverage outlet and office space,” it said.

“The completed precinct will enable more events and activities, increasing visibility, reputation and ultimately philanthropic impact of the Forrest Research Foundation – not just for individual

scholars, but for all foundation stakeholders [including the five WA universities], the community and the State.”

Both halls are named after their benefactors Andrew and Nicola Forrest, who donated \$130million to the Forrest Research Foundation.

Forrest Hall started out as a \$15million project but its final cost was closer to \$30million – most of which was donated by Minderoo – with Forrest Hall 2 estimated to cost \$35million.

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