The Richmond Football Club has opened its new swimming pool to the community.

Located at the Punt Road Oval in Richmond, the facility has been developed under a funding arrangement with the City of Melbourne and the Richmond Football Club. It will be used by the club for its training and rehabilitation programs and will also be available to the public at certain times.

The pool is 25 metres long, features four lanes and is ideal for serious and recreational swimmers. The venue is being managed by Klim Swim, a company established by the Klim family. A comprehensive Learn To Swim program has also been designed by a group of top international experts including Olympic swimmer Michael Klim and 2002 Australian Rookie Coach of the year Glenn Baker.

La Trobe, is set for redevelopment. Lieutenant Governor, Charles Joseph, originally owned by Victoria’s first Lieutenant Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe, is set for redevelopment. Council recently issued a Notice of Decision granting a planning permit to redevelop 101 Wellington Parade bounded by Agnes, Palmer and Charles streets.

Originally La Trobe’s private enclosure, the East Melbourne site was converted into Jolimont Square, a residential precinct, after La Trobe left in 1854. Later, the Adult Deaf Society of Victoria acquired the site for use as an institute, hostel, secondary college and recreation facility adding administration buildings, tennis courts, and a chapel.

Last year, a planning application proposed to build 43 (two-storey plus) apartments and 98 car parking spaces. But Council received 40 objections, and the amended application now allows for 22 dwellings (19 new, three retained) and 52 car parking spaces after consultation between developers, residents and the Council.

"The amended decision was appropriate and shows how the City of Melbourne’s commitment to public consultation can deliver significant results for all parties concerned," Lord Mayor John So said.

"The decision balanced residents’ concerns with appropriate development in the East Melbourne area, and has ensured Melbourne retains a significant piece of cultural heritage."

Public swimming times are:
Weekdays: Morning session 6am to 8.45am
Evening session 6pm to 8.30pm
Weekends: Morning session 9am to noon

Learn to swim times are:
Weekdays: Morning session 9am to noon
For more information call the Richmond Football Club Community Pool call 9427 1770.
Jolimont makes history

A window on Melbourne's history was recently uncovered by Heritage Victoria's time sleuths at developer Folkestone's Jolimont Square residential project at 101 Wellington Parade South, East Melbourne.

They unearthed the remnants of the site's first dwellings, dating to the 1850s when the 8000-square metre-site was owned briefly by Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe, Victoria's first governor.

Foundations, floorboards and fireplaces give an improved understanding of the way early Victorians lived in the eastern suburban enclave.

Heritage Victoria's find brought time to a brief standstill for Folkestone, which won a tender to develop the site two years ago. But the developer has kept a stiff upper lip throughout the process, and will launch the $17 million project on the market next week.

After buying the site from the Victorian Deaf Society for about $10 million, it will build two terrace rows of 21 dwellings designed by architect Robert Mills.

The terrace rows will be connected by an existing internal loop road that opens to Wellington Parade South. Also on offer are two period houses and a chapel, which will be sold as separate single residences.

It was reputedly La Trobe, or rather his Swiss-French wife, who gave Jolimont its name, borrowing it from a town in Switzerland. Agnes and Charles streets were named after their children.

The construction of Jolimont Square is expected to begin in February, with a completion date in early 2005.
Jolimont Square is set for a "polite contemporary" redesign by architect Robert Mills.

Collese… says the final design conjures up images of an old English square. While admitting there were planning difficulties (there were initially plans to build 40 residences on the 0.8-hectare site) Shelton says that, in the end, "it’s come out probably a better scheme".

"We wanted to emulate a lot of East Melbourne living, which is terraces, and we’ve been able to do that with this new form.

Mills, whose previous work includes the design of the Fawkner Apartments in the former Fawkner Club Hotel and the Versailles Apartments in Brighton, says that while contemporary in design, the project will fit the character of the surrounding district.

The exterior form has been "layered" with the upper levels set further back from the street to create a softer streetscape and to create space on the first floor for terraces.

"When you look at these buildings, you already know them," says Mills. "You’re comfortable with them because that’s what’s been used for centuries."

Shelton says the project, whomse name comes from the original Jolimont Estate owned by La Trobe, will have "classic appeal without being too offensive". "It sort of coined a term — polite contemporary — which sits quite comfortably with everyone," he says.

A fall in land height along Agnes Street means that, unlike those homes facing out on other streets, residents will enter from the central courtyard at the first floor. As with all the houses, the first floor will contain the main living areas.

"By elevating the living room you capture more of the view," says Mills. "It’s a very old solution. In European cities, you’ve got all the living on the first floor because the quality of light is better and privacy is better."

The three-storey terraces will feature a home office or home theatre on the ground floor with the bedrooms on the third level, while in the two-storey homes, the bedrooms will be on the ground floor.

Mills says the houses, which range in size from about 223 square metres to 381 square metres, have been designed on an "extravagant scale" (including 2.9 to three-metre-high ceilings). Floors are a mix of stone, carpet and dark-stained polished blackbutt hardwood, while kitchens have reconstituted stone benchtops.

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The central courtyard will help to bring light into the houses and aid cross-ventilation, while aluminium awnings help protect against the hot summer sun. Each home has a two-car garage.

Other features include terraces, a security system and intercom and high-speed voice and data cabling.

Shelton says he believes the market will respond well to the project which he describes as an "enclave in the inner city". "You go through the main gates and it’s very private. It’s a bit of an oasis."
A respect for the city's past is guiding this exclusive housing development

By PAUL EDWARDS

The Jolimont Square development in East Melbourne is not for everyone. It's just for everyone who can afford it. Tucked away in a historic site between the MCG and Fitzroy Gardens, the small, exclusive development by Folkestone Limited starts at $1.45 million per unit and heads northwards to $2.35 million.

"These prices are entirely realistic," Folkestone development manager Tom Shelton says. "You get an awful lot of home for your money."

And that's the truth. The largest homes are a whopping 41 imperial squares — 380 square metres — exclusive of garage, terraces and internal courtyards. That's 41 squares of living space — and what spaces they are!

The hidden world of Jolimont Square is in one of Melbourne's most coveted and peaceful enclaves. More than any other part of town, East Melbourne refuses to change. In many cases, the powers that be refuse to let it change.

Thus it has been with Jolimont Square. The developers knew there were great sensitivities attached to the former Victorian Deaf Society site in an old square running off Wellington Parade South.

"This is one of the oldest parts of Melbourne," Mr Shelton says. "To achieve a sympathetic development we had to conduct an archeological investigation, which revealed foundations dating back to the city's earliest days. Then we had to comply with Victorian Heritage Inventory considerations regarding a couple of impressive existing houses, a chapel and a very fine bluestone wall."

Jolimont Square extends over almost a hectare and was subdivided from the larger Jolimont Estate owned by the first governor of Victoria Charles La Trobe. Described as one of the more important and historically significant sites in Melbourne, it was named after Jolimont in Switzerland, where La Trobe and his Swiss wife Sophie had honeymooned.

The new 23-lot development retains a central carriageway where horse-drawn vehicles would once have clattered.

However, the residents will hear precious little clatter of any kind — six-star STC-65 acoustic insulation will eliminate sounds of neighbours, traffic and even the grand final roars from the nearby MCG.

Folkestone reports considerable interest since the development was formally launched, with several signed commitments. The launch took the form of a jazz-and-cocktail party for 200 people who had indicated interest. RT Edgar and Kay & Burton are handling sales and inspections are by appointment only.

The luxurious terraces were designed by Robert Mills, who specialises in high-quality houses and apartments and regularly travels overseas to monitor trends. Each home has a two-car garage with direct access and 3m ceilings. There are internal courtyards and lightwells and large outdoor living areas.

Ground floors, garages and main outdoor terraces have concrete slab floors; upper levels have timber truss floor systems. Living areas, studies and bedrooms have pure-wool carpets, while kitchens, powder rooms and other areas have polished and stained, blackbutt hardwood flooring. All homes have reverse-cycle air-conditioning, high-speed voice and data cabling, security systems and intercom. The entire development has a wrought-iron security gate to the main entrance and internal driveway.

Central to the estate is a garden featuring elm trees and landscaping.
A contentious project in East Melbourne has become a model of what co-operation can achieve, reports Georgina Hall.

A historically significant East Melbourne property will be redeveloped in an ambitious project that not only survived initial opposition from the Melbourne City Council and a highly mobilised resident group, but managed it without an appeal to Victoria’s planning tribunal.

Jolimont Square was home to the first governor of Victoria, Charles La Trobe. It is steeped in history, a common occurrence in this tiny inner-city suburb, which has 68 Victorian Heritage Register listings — more than any other suburb in Melbourne.

Folkestone developers spent 18 months planning the project until council and Heritage Victoria permits were issued. While Folkestone project manager Tom Shelton groans at the length of the planning process, many other developers keen on this picturesque area see the postcode and planning permitting as opportunities.

Torn Shelton project manager Tom Shelton shows off a mock-up of the Jolimont Square project. Picture Nicole Georgina Hall.

"We just had to factor in the active opposition we knew we'd face, acknowledge it and accept that it wasn't going to be easy, but we thought being transparent was the best approach," Mr Shelton says.

East Melbourne is not just historic — the mansions and townhouses, bedsits and converted churches are occupied by a monied and smart vanguard of passionate local resident protectors. If any development was going to get bogged down in vehement protest, this was it.

The initial application for 43 apartments — including two four-storey towers, and the removal of two established elm trees and an internal loop road that was a classic example of early colonial subdivision — was surely doomed to be buried under tens of council paperwork and ultimately join the long and costly queue at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Current VCAT statistics show the wait for planning permit appeals is between four and six months, and industry pundits estimate an appeal costs about $200,000.

Folkestone bought Jolimont Square in November 2001, and a February 2002 planning submission to the Melbourne City Council generated more than 50 complaints arguing against the height and setback.

In June 2002 a resident lodged a nomination with Heritage Victoria, which meant any party with plans for the site needed a permit from Heritage Victoria before even beginning to get an MCC planning permit.

"It has become a little bit of a frustration for developers where resident groups have used the threat of nominating a property as a way of stymieing or delaying development," Mr Shelton says.

"If owners nominated properties themselves if there is any hint of a site being used for Heritage Victoria interest by lodging a nomination themselves if there is any hint of a site being of state significance."

"It is in the interests of all stakeholders if these two acts were much better co-ordinated where there is overlap on the one project," he says.

But in the interests of all stakeholders if these two acts were much better co-ordinated where there is overlap on the one project, he says.

It appears much of Folkestone’s Jolimont Square success was due to its willingness to consult local residents early in the project, and maintain contact even during the more difficult periods.

Folkestone project manager Tom Shelton.

There were also significant design concessions. The approved project site plan is vastly different to the original, now comprising 19 two-storey terraces in two rows on either side of the loop road and garden, and preserving the elm trees, the Spanish chapel and two existing residences.

"We just had to factor in the active opposition we knew we'd face, acknowledge it and accept that it wasn't going to be easy, but we thought being transparent was the only way to ensure that relations were good and open," Mr Shelton says.

Such openness included more than 20 meetings with the MCC planning committee, Heritage Victoria and various residents’ groups, something the company had anticipated and factored into the project and into the sale price of each $1.5 million terrace.

MCC councillor and the chairwoman of its planning committee, Catherine Ng, concurs the Jolimont Square project was a protracted negotiation because of the heritage listing, but that most planning permit applications had a turnaround time of 32 days from an application lodgement to decision.

She says the MCC had only 93 planning appeals lodged with VCAT in 2002/03, ranking it 12th of 80 councils.

For the past two years, only six appeals related to East Melbourne, compared with 59 from Brighton and 58 from Richmond.

Ms Ng agrees with lawyer Philip Martin in calling for greater clarity in the planning system, believing there should be harder, faster and clearer rules at the council and State Government levels, where a more prescriptive regime with more certainty would remove a lot of angst.