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BURNHAM BEECHES

# 'Beeches' freeze

**Zoe Lewis**

WORK has ground to a halt on the \$15 million facelift to turn the Burnham Beeches site into a five-star resort.

The site has sat idle for about 15 years and it is now unclear when refurbishments will be finished.

And this stumbling block comes despite a planning permit to build and then subdivide 60 dwellings on the Sherbrooke site being lodged with Yarra Ranges Council.

When contacted by *Leader* last week, Burnham Beeches general manager Matthew Armytage said construction had been frozen "at this stage" but the project was definitely still going ahead.

He declined to say at

what stage works were at, why work had stopped and when it might start again.

But he said the project's \$15 million budget had not blown out.

He said the heritage-listed estate would still be run by Select Hotels, which has stated on its website that the hotel will be opening in late 2010.

The website says the hotel will include a restaurant, piano bar, wine cellar, conference facilities and a wellness centre that will have a "wine spa", hydrotherapy pool, and private sauna rooms.

It will also have guest rooms ranging from standard to the "premier" suite, which includes a bedroom, ensuite bathroom, dressing room, living room,

private bar and a balcony.

Council spokesman James Martin confirmed a planning permit for the use and development and subsequent subdivision of 60 dwellings had been lodged but the council was waiting for more information from the applicant.

He said no decision had been made on it yet.

Save the Dandenongs League president Betty Marsden said she wanted to see the estate open again but said she would treat the planning application with caution.

The site had been earmarked for retirement accommodation years ago until plans fell through.

The council approved the site for a five-star resort in 2005.



**Right: A view of Burnham Beeches. Left: General manager Matthew Armytage at the historic site. Below: One of the design features.**

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