



Westbury Region Against the Prison Inc (IA 12477)
32 William Street, Westbury TAS 7303

13 August 2020

Mr John Jordan
General Manager
Meander Valley Council
26 Lyall Street
Westbury 7303

Dear Mr Jordan,

Substantial Modifications to the LPS

I make this submission on behalf of Westbury Region Against the Prison Inc (**WRAP**) which as you know was incorporated in late 2019 in order to oppose the unheralded decision to locate a prison near the historic town of Westbury. The vast majority of our members reside within Westbury village.

WRAP's objects include the following:

- a) to stimulate the public's interest in and appreciation for the beauty, character and fabric of Tasmania's small historic towns and villages and their rural surrounds;
- b) to promote and encourage the history and heritage values of Westbury as a small historic village;
- c) to encourage development sympathetic to the character of Westbury and its rural surrounds.

Making this submission on the Substantial Modifications of the LPS currently being exhibited therefore falls squarely within WRAP's objects.

We would like to comment on the following three modifications:

1. The subdivision and setback provisions of the Specific Area Plan over the Low Density Residential Zone.
2. The rezoning of part 1 Meander Valley Road, Westbury.
3. Deletion of the Local Area Objectives over towns including Westbury.

1. The subdivision and setback provisions of the Specific Area Plan

We strenuously oppose the introduction of smaller lots sizes in this area.

The potential for a prison to be built in proximity to Westbury may well have provided justification for such an amendment. However, currently there is no compelling rationale for it.

The State Government's Socio Economic Report on the proposed prison finalised in June 2020, found that Westbury had a very slow population growth over the past 10 years at +0.1% compared with +0.6% for the rest of Northern Tasmania.ⁱ

The demographic of Westbury is that it has an older population of residents when compared to the Northern Region of Tasmania and Tasmania as a whole.ⁱⁱ It also features a higher proportion of home ownership (40%) compared to the Northern Region of Tasmania (33%) and Tasmania as a whole (34%).ⁱⁱⁱ

Many people falling within these demographics have bought real estate and invested in Westbury precisely because of its current character and amenity, and do not want to see these eroded. While growth and prosperity are admirable outcomes in moderation, never ending population growth and expansion should not be the primary focus for every town across Tasmania.

The benefits of population growth in Westbury must be balanced with protecting the historic character and amenity of the town which will inevitably experience population growth in line with the growing population of Tasmania driven by mainland sea change.

As noted above, providing for smaller lot subdivisions might well have been appropriate if the Northern Regional Prison were to be located proximate to Westbury, but this is not yet a foregone conclusion.

We would therefore submit that allowing for smaller lot sizes is unnecessary and premature. We reserve the right to call on expert evidence in support of our objection.

2. The rezoning of part 1 Meander Valley Road, Westbury.

The Council has not listed any heritage places or precincts in the LPS. This leaves those who are interested in heritage matters to battle it out privately with those who wish to take steps to alter the character of heritage properties in the town.

We are therefore placed in the invidious position of having to oppose the zoning amendment over 1 Meander Valley Road, from agricultural to low density residential.

Oddly, the zoning amendment applies to half of the land included in this title. Two separate zonings of a single certificate of title should only occur in compelling circumstances. A proposal as this if approved would be very odd from a land use perspective, as it creates a somewhat arbitrary line through the property which can only be properly given effect to by subsequent subdivision. In this sense, it amounts to pre-emption of subdivision on the part of the owner and, if Council approves of the rezoning, of the Council's future position in any likely subdivision application.

The Council's position as set out in its report on the registered proprietors' application is that the land will not be used as agricultural land. Importantly, however, agricultural zoning currently

prevents the land from being subdivided and built upon, which we believe to be critical given the heritage listing of the land, which extends to the entirety of the certificate of title.

Again, in light of the slow population growth of Westbury, there is little compelling reason for the proposed zoning amendment, although the rationale may well have been more compelling in circumstances where sharp increase in population were to occur by virtue of other developments such as the prison. As noted above, the prison being located near Westbury far from a foregone conclusion although it may have in the past seemed more likely than it does now.

We would reserve the right to call upon expert evidence in support of our application in relation to the heritage values of the property.

3. The deletion of the Local Area Objectives

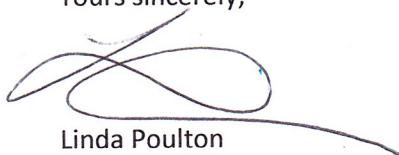
WRAP is opposed to the deletion of the Local Area Objectives over towns including Westbury.

These objectives provide important guidelines to local government in how development in within specific area plans can proceed. They are provide guidance as to how the council exercises its discretion on developments in these areas and add a layer of protection against inappropriate development.

There is already inadequate protection of heritage in the Meander Valley municipality and Council has no heritage officer to even address heritage issues. There are no heritage places or precincts in the LPS.

Heritage warrants more protection than it is currently being given, otherwise Westbury's historic significance (and those of similar towns) will completely disappear.

Yours sincerely,



Linda Poulton
President
WRAP Inc

cc: Jo Oliver, Senior Strategic Planner

References:

SGS Economics and Planning Report on the Northern Regional Prison released 18 June 2020

Meander Valley Heritage Study Report, Paul Davies Pty Ltd, Architect Heritage Consultants February 2006

ⁱ SGS Economics and Planning Report released 18 June 2020, p.2

ⁱⁱ Ibid, p.3

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, p.5