

From: Antony Scott Taubman
Sent: Tue, 17 Nov 2020 16:49:19 +1100
To: hvc@huonvalley.tas.gov.au
Subject: Draft Amendment PSA—2/2017 for proposed amendments to the Huon Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2015.
Attachments: 20-11 HVC submission PSA 2 - 2017.pdf

Huon Valley Council

Please find attached for your consideration a submission in relation to Draft Amendment PSA—2/2017 for proposed amendments to the Huon Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2015.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter

Faithfully,

Antony Taubman
Roya Rezakhanlou-Taubman

ANTONY TAUBMAN
ROYA REZAKHANLOU-TAUBMAN
45 ESPLANADE ROAD
CYGNET 7112

ASTAUBMAN@GMAIL.COM

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**Draft Amendment PSA—2/2017
for proposed amendments to the Huon Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2015.**

Introduction

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to Council’s consideration of this proposal. The Huon Valley Council has established a well-deserved reputation for strategic vision and an inclusive approach to planning decisions, including their environmental and social impact, and we understand that review of this proposal is in good hands. We appreciate, too, that the applicants have invested considerable time and effort in developing what is an elaborate proposal.

In general, the value of progressive development of the Cygnet township is self-evident: it provides for economic growth, supports local businesses and employment, promotes diversity and access to housing for younger families, and contributes to a vibrant community. But, as the planning policy framework emphasizes and requires, these objectives must be pursued in a holistic, integrated manner that takes account of social and environmental considerations, and not simply the creation of high-density housing to the maximum extent possible.

The proposed subdivision – its unprecedented scale, its environmental and social impact, its emphasis on high-density occupation, and its likely influence as a benchmark for future development of Cygnet – potentially marks a major turning point in the evolution of the township and its environment. Our submission is that the proposal should be seen in this broader perspective, and not simply be reviewed for its technical characteristics, nor purely in terms of the provision of a large supply of high-density housing as an end in itself.

A proposal of this relative scale is clearly a matter with bearing on the very character of the township, with diverse impact and consequences for different sections of the community. We suggest that each of these aspects needs to be considered in a systematic and inclusive way, especially given the extensive and transformative effects of the proposed development.

The proposal in perspective

There are several ways of framing the considerable scale, and thus the transformative impact, of this one proposal.

- The project, if fulfilled, would lead in itself to an increase of around 10% of the entire existing housing stock of the Cygnet township.
- The project, if carried through with the expected density of housing, would lead to an increase of around 16% of the township’s population.
- The location and physical layout of the proposed project, together with the very limited common space, would create a dense, inward-looking, self-contained estate – a micro-suburb

- on the fringe of the township, at a location that would negatively impact on the general outlook towards the defining features of the location, the estuary and surrounding hills.
- In comparative terms, one single project would create a quantity of housing lots on the same scale as the three recent subdivisions taken together: Devereux Court, Dorgan Court and Lourdes Rise. By the analysis in the proposal itself, these three projects remain only partially taken up, with some 35 lots remaining vacant. Annexure 14 of the proposal itself identifies a significant number of alternative housing development sites, effectively dismissing the possibilities of sites that objectively appear to have considerable positive prospects than this proposal to be effectively and sensitively integrated within the existing townscape and to be readily supplied with utilities and appropriate traffic arrangements with less environmental impact.

The proposal therefore represents an historic transformation of the scale and density of Cygnet township in a single step, under a planning scheme that is still interim in character. At the very least, this would suggest an inclusive approach to development and implementation of the proposal that took full account of its impact on the community and the environment in general.

Location and density of housing – its social and environmental effects.

We note that there is a general policy preference for high density housing. However, this objective should be balanced against environmental and social considerations and should not be seen purely as an end in itself. The creation of a virtually self-contained island of development on the outskirts of the township, when there remain options for further development of housing stock within the heart of the town, risks creating social and environmental impact that detracts from the very qualities that distinguish Cygnet and make it an attractive living environment. In particular, a sharp transition from rural landscape to high density housing on the edge of the town gives an impression of the high density satellite suburbs on the outskirts of capital cities, rather than a sensitive and natural transition befitting a country town.

The submission effectively dismisses the benefits of the existing Scenic Landscape Corridor, on the subjective basis that the applicants do not consider the area to be “of scenic landscape significance or value”. Unfortunately, we submit, this simply ignores or sets aside the very characteristics that give Cygnet such significant scenic qualities as a traditional country town set in a mixed rural environment. The failure to recognize these qualities underscores the need for the project to be reconsidered in terms of its relatively high impact not only on the land in question, but the entire south-eastern portion of the township and the approach to Cygnet on a throughway that is already increasing in usage. The planning scheme requires that projects “ensure that buildings and works do not cause an unreasonable change to, or have an unreasonable adverse effect on, the scenic landscape value of Scenic Landscape Corridors.” Clearly, this objective is not achieved by simply asserting against the facts that a confirmed and established Scenic Landscape Corridor does not have scenic value.

Generally, the environmental qualities of the site have not been fully considered, with an emphasis on purely functional matters. The overall site currently offers sweeping views of the estuary – including the Port Cygnet Marine Conservation Area and surrounding hills from the Channel Highway as one approaches Cygnet, giving a beneficial sense of openness and integration with the distinctive natural environment. The land currently provides refuge for birdlife, particularly in inclement conditions, most notably the black swans, already reportedly diminishing in number, that literally gave Cygnet its name. A concentrated block of high-density housing would, in a single project, fully obstruct or frustrate both of these distinguishing environmental features that help to define Cygnet’s very identity. The proposal asserts that “environmental values are degraded from clearance and farming

activity and so the proposed amendments are unlikely to impact on significant values”, suggesting that high-density housing has the same environmental qualities as open farmland – again, clearly indicating that environmental considerations are not adequately or sympathetically considered.

We submit that a more balanced and better integrated approach would entail less emphasis on high-density housing as an end in itself, and instead provide for larger blocks that are integrated with planned open spaces. This approach has numerous advantages beyond a simple binary choice between intensive housing or open pasture: it would better articulate the transition from rural to township, would create less of a direct burden on infrastructure, would lead to less traffic intensity, would avoid the creation of a dense, isolated estate and would lessen the impact on the environment. It would lead, still, to a welcome increase in available housing and other potential benefits for the community, without creating an unfortunate zero-sum trade-off between the goals of opening up housing and maintaining the character and environmental qualities of Cygnet. Both objectives can, and should, be advanced, of course, but, we submit, need not be set so squarely in opposition to each other.

In our view, only such a more moderate and balanced approach to what is by any local measure a large-scale, transformative and disruptive project would, as required, “ensure that the effects on the environment are considered and provide for explicit consideration of social and economic effects when decisions are made about the use and development of land.”

We would be pleased to have any opportunity to engage more fully with the planning process and thank you for your consideration of this submission along with the other points of view being expressed.