

10 December 2020



Jo Oliver
Senior Strategic Planner
Meander Valley Council

Jo.oliver@meander.tas.gov.au

Representations – 3/2020 – Blackstone Heights

In response to the redacted representations provided on 4 December 2020, the following comments are offered in the hope that they assist Council in its workshop deliberations. A revised and more detailed submission may be provided to Council prior to its Council meeting on this matter and it is requested that this document be used for no other purpose than for the workshop.

Of the 32 representations, 30 appears to be from local landowners. Whilst we appreciate that this is a large number of representations, it is nevertheless represents' just more than 6% of Blackstone Heights households.

The key issue for the amendment is that there no increase in the potential number of dwellings. The current scheme allows an ordinary (and bland) subdivision of 1600m² lots and potentially down to 1200m² under the LPS, but in either case represents more than 600 dwellings. The site is over 100 hectares in total! Whilst some representations consider that slope and other issues preclude the full subdivision of the site, this is not true. The site is 100% zoned residential, has no biodiversity or scenic protection code and the worse of the topography represents a challenge at best; not an impediment.

The purpose of the amendment is not to create development potential but to rather change the form of residential development. That is, the amendment allows clusters of standard residential density amongst large areas of open space and bushland.

Relative to the current planning regulation, the proposed form:

- Does not increase traffic generation, but does improve the viability of bus services through a compact form and substantially reduces traffic generate through the associated local business amendment and existing infrastructure onsite;
- Allow a substantial area bushland to be retained and restored;
- Allows a substantial area of open space to be retained which could be used for the community for passive recreation and walking, rather than the existing road network; and
- Allows for a consistent scale and form of development, given the low density residential zone otherwise has little, if any, effective control over building scale or siting.

The following provides comment on some of the specific issues raised.

Traffic

The proposed development, along with the recently approved subdivisions in Blackstone Heights, do not change the situation with respect to traffic volume. The traffic generation from this site will not be greater than that allowed under the current planning scheme, and must already be factored into road network planning.

Conversely, traffic generated from the casino development, and other land releases from unzoned land, represents growth in traffic. Whilst a coherent road strategy is required to manage the timing of upgrades if new areas are opened to residential development; for the subject site the issue is limited to the timing of improvements as land is released to the market. Our TIA addresses when and what improvements are necessary.

Clearly, Blackstone Heights would benefit immensely from an extension of Mount Leslie Road. That land is in a different ownership and there is little that Tasland can do to progress that particular infrastructure. Further, the amendment (consistent with the structure plan) does not propose a crossing over Dalrymple Creek. Critically, the land through which the road will be developed is not currently zoned for development. The time may be right for Council to rezone this land.

With respect to the City of Launceston, we do not consider it necessary that the development of this site necessitates a city-wide traffic model. Again, the site is currently zoned for residential development and that the traffic generation potential is no greater than that existing. In terms of the traffic generation, the strategy is set. The amendment only seeks to vary the form of residential development and the traffic management response is no different than that required for an ordinary subdivision of residential land.

Traffic modelling of the kind suggested by the City of Launceston is best undertaken by the City and/or Meander Valley Council. It is notable that the City of Launceston concludes its submission by stating that it wishes to work with Meander Valley Council and the Department of State Growth to this end. Tasland fully support this action. Tasland met with City of Launceston officers earlier this week to discuss the issues raised and look forward to future opportunities to discuss. However, planning for future growth must not hold up or cause delay to the progress of this amendment.

In summary, it is important for Council to adopt a traffic strategy as:

- The potential of this site and others in Blackstone Heights, are now being realised,
- There is newly created additional demand being brought about by the Casino and other potential zone changes,
- The new dwellings facilitate on the site will be brought to market in a staged manner, provided more than sufficient time to adopt and implement a traffic strategy.

Infrastructure costs to ratepayers

The roads and infrastructure within the development will not be transferred to Council. Rather, they will be managed through the Community Development Scheme framework. The maintenance burden does not fall to ratepayers, whilst rate revenue will still flow to Council. It is ridiculous to suggest that this development places a cost burden on ratepayers.

Impacts to natural values and landscape

The concerns that are raised with respect to natural values and landscape are misplaced and overstated. As viewed from existing Blackstone Heights properties, the site has no scenic values. It is undeveloped residential land currently in pasture or regrowth with some native bushland. The land is 100% within the low density residential zone and has no regulation with respect to native vegetation or scenic values. The status under the planning scheme is that at any point in time it can be cleared and developed in full for low density housing. Whilst 1600m² is low density, it is far from sufficiently low to enable any vegetation to be retained. The view expressed in representations that wildlife can co-exist with lots developed at 1600m² is clearly wrong.

Relative to the current planning regulation, the proposed development reduces the footprint of residential development and retains large areas of bushland and open space.

Character and lot sizes

The residential areas are, by and large, well separated from existing development. For instance, the TasWater property provides a substantial buffer from Canopus Drive to the proposal. The proposal does adjoin existing development along Glover Avenue and Canopus Drive.

With respect to Glover Avenue, the existing development provides 39 dwellings over 2.9ha of private land. This equates to a density of 1 dwelling per 744m² of land. The proposal does not increase density above that which exists. The proposal is entirely consistent with the established character in this area of Blackstone Heights.

The lifestyle living area does not have any directly adjoining land owners. It is separated from adjoining development by Panorama Road. The lots on the opposite side of Panorama Road are 1500m² in size but enjoy a rural character by virtue of the fact that the surrounding land has not been developed. These lots also support large dwellings and outbuildings with a gross floor area generally above 400m². Clearly, the land adjoining will be developed in full and the existing character is a short-lived benefit to residents. The lifestyle living area will not require individual access to dwellings. The future development will entail small, two or three bedroom low maintenance units. The SAP could be amended to require outcomes such as a 5m to 10m landscaped frontage, 5m to 6m height standard and gross floor area in the order of 120m² per dwelling.

With respect to Canopus Drive, the master plan provides separation from 24 Canopus Drive through a walkway, and this is reflected in the SAP boundaries. Beyond this, a setback standard from the residential precinct to the open space precinct could be adopted which provides even further separation from the adjoining private land whilst assisting in creating an attractive open space environment.

Tasland have also presented Council with a staging plan which shows the eco cabin in a later stage. This staging plan could be reflected in the SAP through adoption of the plan or a requirement that 50% of stage 1 is developed prior to any development approval is stage.

Above all, the development is entirely consistent with Council's planning for the area as detailed in the Prospect Vale – Blackstone Heights Structure Plan. Rather than provide for more of the bland low density residential development, the structure plan identifies the Tasland site for clustered residential development (i.e., standard density nodes surrounded by open space) and for a activity centre. Tasland are pursuing both directions through the two amendments.

Community infrastructure

Representations have raised concern with respect to medical and education facilities. There is little a developer can do to influence the provisions of schools by the Education Department. However, the Department regular forecasts enrolments and makes the necessary investments to cater for that.

Moreover, the concerns regarding a lack of community infrastructure are unclear. The development provides for community infrastructure and builds upon the local business amendment on part of the site. Tasland are developing the only non-residential uses in Blackstone Heights through the approved café. If demand determines that child care, medical or other services are financial viable, it is Tasland, and Tasland alone, that is providing land and development to cater for community infrastructure and use.

Pressure on existing services

The view that there is insufficient services is not shared by TasWater (who have no objection to this proposal). The development will look to develop site specific systems and be self-contained and self-sufficient with respect to services. The representations appear to have not read the proposal.

Community Development Scheme

The preparation of a community development scheme will be a complex and lengthy undertaken and will not be completed until such time that there is certainty for the development.

However, should Council wish we can prepare an outline of a CDS to inform the scope and clauses that are integral to the development vision.

Will the development be bound by the Specific Area Plan?

The Specific Area Plan will regulate the future use and development of the site. The SAP as proposed provides a high degree of control over future development. Should Council desire even more control then we would welcome that ability to discuss. However, the representations that purport to claim Tasland have ulterior motives are disingenuous, far-fetched and represent the anti-everything mentality.

If you have any queries regarding this matter please contact me on 0400 336 796.

Kind regards

Shane Wells
For Tasland Developments