

IN THE MATTER OF submissions on the Selwyn District Council's
Draft Rural Residential Strategy 'the RRS'
by MG and JM Austin

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF FIONA ASTON

Submitters Land and Relief Sought

1. Mr and Mrs Austin own 12.5452ha of land immediately adjoining the western edge of West Melton Township adjoining State Highway 73 along the southern boundary, The Austin's property is zoned Rural Inner Plains and immediately adjoins a Living Zone (to the east).
2. This submission seeks to include the Austin's property along with 10ha owned by the Fitzgeralds to the West of the Austin's property, and 14.9733ha owned by the Hughes to the north of the Austin's property. The Hughes property also adjoins Halkett Road to the north. Together these three properties make up the 'Site' (37 ha).
3. The landowners have discussed the submission and I am advised by Mr Schultz, agent for the Austins, that all are fully supportive of inclusion of the Site in the RRS.

Background

4. The Site adjoins the Prestons Down residential development to the east which includes larger 4000 – 5000m² sections along its western boundary (adjoining the Site). I understand that all sites on the western boundary of the living zone have been sold, but not all are built on as yet. This may provide an opportunity to achieve possible connectivity from the Site to the Preston Downs.
5. There is a large area of Living 2 zoned land to the south of West Melton, which has held this zoning for some time with the current landowners not proceeding in developing this land for rural residential purposes. It is identified as an existing urban area in Chapter 6 of the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (CRPS) so rezoning of this land to urban densities is not precluded.

Possible Development Concept

6. Nicole Lauenstein has presented a very preliminary development concept for the Site. Key features include:-

- A continuation of the green link from Prestons Downs to the township centre, into the Site;
 - Retention of view shafts to the west;
 - A central open space to be used for stormwater management if required, and to ensure a sense of ruralness and openness for central lots. The latter can also be achieved by the appropriate mix and positioning of different sized lots. Generally larger lots in the centre, and smaller lots on the edges which can enjoy a 'borrowed' rural outlook from adjoining rural land.
 - Generous landscaped setbacks and buffers from the state highway and Halketts Road;
 - Retention of existing shelterbelts to retain rural character.
7. Ms Lauenstein considers that ideally there should be two connections points between the Site and the adjoining Prestons Down development. One connection may be possible along the northern boundary of the east-west green link, extending the existing road running along the northern edge of the link.

Reasons for inclusion

8. The submission demonstrates that it meets the pre-requisites for consideration as a suitable site for rural residential development.

Reticulated Servicing

9. The Site adjoins existing development to the east, and although investigations have not been carried out, it is anticipated that extensions to reticulated services can be made. West Melton is covered by the Eastern Selwyn Sewerage Scheme.
10. Capacity of the current sewer system will need to be considered as part of any future development of the Site. An option is the installation of wastewater holding tanks to enable the discharge to the ESSS during off peak flow times. This will need to be considered in greater detailed with appropriate engineering solutions provided at the time of development. This

Township consolidation/integration

11. The Site is able to make connections to both SH73 and Halketts Road to provide for vehicle and pedestrian access to the centre of West Melton. This would represent a 1 – 2km walk from the Site, which is not considered to be a significant walking or cycling distance and would provide for appropriate connections to West Melton.
12. Options for achieving an alternative connection (either vehicular or pedestrian) are being investigated to provide for greater connectivity.
13. In addition, an attractive walkway and cycleway link to the township centre via the existing east west green link can be provided.

Natural Hazards

14. The Site is not subject to any known natural hazards. The Site is outside the part of the District where a geotechnical assessment is necessary prior to development.¹ The Site is not subject to any identified flooding or drainage issues.

Constraints

15. The Site is not considered to be subject to any significant constraints, and does not include any significant ecology or sites of cultural or historical significance.

Officers Report

16. The Reporting officer opposes the inclusion of this site for the following reasons:

- West Melton is a discrete rural town with limited capacity to support large numbers of rural residential households and there are sufficient rural residential sized sections to sustain immediate demand.
- Policies and objectives for the future urban growth of West Melton identify a desire for development to occur north of SH75. It would be premature of council to provide for rural residential development to the west if further studies identify this as a future growth path.
- The northern portion of the Site contains Class 2 Soils.
- Providing connections to SH75 is likely to reduce the safety and efficiency of the highway and may contribute to ribbon development.
- There are limits to the capacity in the wastewater network servicing West Melton.

17. Based on 1 - 2 households per ha, the Site could accommodate 31 - 62 rural residential sections. Ms Lauenstein's preliminary design provides for a relatively low overall rural residential density based on 7 households per ha and yield of around 25 lots. This is a small node which is not a significant addition to West Melton which currently has a projected population of 2028². Although there are areas in the township of existing L2 zoning, and two small additions identified in the RRS as preliminary area 2, there is currently no RR development at West Melton (although there is some larger lot residential development within the township).

18. The Reporting Officer has reached the conclusion that the existing rural residential sized sections already provided for through existing development and the preliminary area proposed will provide for development in the immediate term. This is the 5 year period he recommends until a future review of the RRS. In my opinion this 5 year timeframe does not provide any certainty for the District's residents, landowners, infrastructure providers or policy planners as to the future growth of the District and is inconsistent with 2028 time frame of the LURP and Chapter 6 of the CRPS. It is also inconsistent with the stated timeframe for the RRS of 10 -15 years. Paragraph 6.3 of the RRS states:

¹ See RRS Map 20

² Officers report paragraph 3.182

The identification of rural residential areas is not only a statutory requirement under the LURP, but is also important because it provides direction to the community, development sector, service providers and land owners in respect to where rural residential development is anticipated within the UDS area of the District for the next 10 to 15 years (or sooner depending on housing uptake and monitoring reviews).

19. The Reporting Officer seeks to limit development to the west of the Township in case the Site is identified as a future growth path through future council analysis processes. However the RRS location criteria specifically seeks that obvious future growth paths are avoided. If currently unidentified growth paths were sought to be protected on the off chance that growth might need to expand into this area in all instances in Selwyn, then there would be no scope for future development. Planning needs to be undertaken based on the information available at the time of the decision making process, including any currently identified future growth paths.
20. In any case, the Site is unlikely to be suitable as a future urban growth path unless additional connections through the Prestons Down development to the east can be achieved. Ms Lauenstein has advised that at least 2, ideally 3 vehicular links are appropriate for this density of development, and additional pedestrian links. This is most unlikely to be feasible, given that land at the Site boundary with Prestons Downs has already been subdivided and sold for large lots residential purposes.
21. If SDC want to retain the option for this area as a future growth path 'just in case', the RR development can be 'future proofed' to facilitate this. The future proofing concept will be considered in much greater depth in the evidence to be presented for the Dryden Trust and Trents Road Developments with respect to sites at south Rolleston and west Prebbleton respectively.
22. The Site contains Class 2 soils in the northern portion of the site, which is similar to much of Canterbury plains. The location of the Site and the encroaching of urban development boundaries towards the Site and other features of the Site, outweigh the need to protect versatile soils.
23. While connections to SH75 have initially be proposed, ideally the submitters would like to find an access point to the adjoining living zone to the east, and are making investigations to achieve a suitable solution which would avoid the use of SH75. If a connection to SH75 is required, this will most likely be one combined access point.
24. Given the orientation of the site (north-south) and given its narrow frontage with SH75, I consider that RR development here is unlikely to contribute to ribbon development. Ribbon development consists of development adjoining the length of a road and is typically only one or two houses deep (back from the road frontage). By contrast the Site will have separate roads to provide access and will be for a much larger depth back from the road frontage, consistent with a township expansion, rather than ribbon development.
25. I understand that the wastewater system would require an upgraded pipe (with a larger diameter) to service additional development in West Melton. I also understand

that the capacity is only reached during peak flows in the system, and that during off peak times the pipe has some capacity. A suitable engineering solution to this problem is to store wastewater and release it during off-peak times, (ie overnight when most residents are sleeping). This solution enables the development of the Site without a servicing constraint or limitation. This system has been accepted and used elsewhere for rural residential development, including in Ohoka. I am aware that this approach is going to be discussed in evidence by Russell Bengé for the Croft/Williams site at Tai Tapu this afternoon.

Date: Wednesday 9th April 2014