

# STONEVILLE PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

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Alannah Mac Tieman MLA  
Minister for Planning & Infrastructure  
2, Havelock Street  
West Perth  
WA 6005

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006

Cc.  
WAPC  
Minister for Health  
Jaye Radisich MLA  
Jonathan Throssell, CEO Shire of Mundaring  
John Beaton, Council President Shire of Mundaring  
Perth & Hills Division of General Practitioners  
[www.saveperthhills.org](http://www.saveperthhills.org)

Dear Ms. MacTieman,

## **Re. proposed Parkerville & Stoneville townsite developments**

I am writing regarding the various concerns our members and the many visitors to our website [www.saveperthhills.org](http://www.saveperthhills.org) have expressed regarding the above and similar developments planned for other hills localities.

These developments were approved by the Mundaring Shire Council in 1996/7 but the WAPC would only allow them to be classed as "Urban deferred" since the method of effluent disposal has not yet been resolved for such extensive landlocked developments.

Notwithstanding the difficulties regarding sewage disposal, much has changed since these developments were first approved. The following issues are considered to render such planning proposals impractical and a threat to the existing social structure:

- Health
- Infrastructure
- Retirement Accommodation
- Financial Implications
- Environmental
- Employment
- Public Opinion

- **HEALTH**

It is very difficult to attract doctors to Midland and the hills area. Doctors, like most of Perth's residents, regard living in the hills as a 'lifestyle' decision and most prefer to live near the beach or Perth and Fremantle. Consequently, according to Chris Carter the CEO of the Perth & Hills Division of General Practitioners, the doctor to patient ratio in metropolitan Perth is 1:810. In the hills it is 1:2100. He stated in a recent letter to our Association: *"As such, current populations in the hills do*

Chairperson	Mike Davies	9295 3979
Secretary	Joanne Shell	9295 6665
Treasurer	Natalie Pratt	9578 3444

*not receive optimal access to primary health care – a situation that can only get worse if we as a community cannot match General Practice and allied health supply to population growth".* A surgery in Chidlow completed more than 2 years ago has never seen a patient as it has been unable to attract the necessary medical professionals. He further stated: *"It is foreseeable that with the closure of Royal Perth Hospital at its current city site, the catchment for Swan District Hospital will 'creep' down to inner north-east Perth".* The planned rebuild of Swan District Hospital is designed to remedy the existing situation plus reasonable population growth. It is hard to see how the extra number of beds that will result could cope with the 7,000 people (minimum) that these 2 developments alone would generate plus the added 'catchment creep' when Royal Perth closes. Since there is currently a great deal of pressure for large sub-divisions in the hills the foregoing is of great concern. Even if there were a monumental increase in the number of hospital beds, what will attract such a huge number of medical professionals to service them if we can't attract them at the moment?

- **INFRASTRUCTURE**

The 2 townsites are both over 5 kilometres from the centre of Mundaring. The town planners report by Koltasz Smith & Partners pages 51 & 52 for the Stoneville development states: *"The majority of the building lots are larger than the minimum size of development (R20) that is required by Transperth to introduce a new bus service. Transperth would be interested in serving R30 group housing developments if this could be achieved....."* In other words if the development were to consist entirely of 300 + square metre blocks the residents would be able to have a bus service. Therefore given many residents of the new developments may have to rely entirely on public transport Transperth's position is cause for alarm.

A modest retail area is planned for "Neighbourhood Shops" in the Stoneville development and only 925 square metres for shops in the Parkerville development. Therefore the need to travel to Mundaring and Midland would be ever present.

In an article in the West Australian (22-5-04) entitled "Village life back on track" it was stated that you believed all new developments should be transit oriented. Your view was that *"Transport is such an important part of land use, such an important part of the way people conduct their lives that we need to bring together land use planning and transport planning"*. Your view was that we must reduce our reliance

on motor transport. This is eminently sensible given recent increases in fuel costs and the problem of pollution that afflicts so many large cities. The Parkerville and Stoneville developments could not be further from your vision for Perth's future in this respect.

- **RETIREMENT ACCOMMODATION**

Much has been made of the fact that these developments would provide retirement units. The Stoneville development is planned to have 75 units and the figure for the much smaller Parkerville development is not known, but one would assume it to be considerably less. We believe that this idea is flawed for a number of reasons.

1. We have already discussed the difficulties that lack of public transport would create. These developments are well away from Mundaring. Retirees often rely heavily on public transport and those who don't would find themselves spending a great deal on petrol whilst possibly living on a fixed income.
2. If there is a need for such accommodation already, it does not seem logical to import a further 7000 people into the area and only supply 100 plus retirement units. The population of Mundaring Shire is currently 34,000. Given the principle of 'transport oriented development' it would seem that the best place for such units would be in the townsite of Mundaring. This would allow easy access to all amenities, services, shops and transport. We have anecdotal evidence that developers are using the provision of retirement units as a way of gaining approval for high density developments. If this is the case then this would be a numerical time bomb.

There is currently land available for retirement accommodation in Mundaring. Unfortunately the Mundaring Sewage Plant, not many years old, is at full capacity and no more development can be approved until this is remedied.

- **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The City of Swan recently published the Ellenbrook Impact Study in order to assess the financial benefits or otherwise to the City of this development. It was projected that by 2005 rates levied would have created an additional \$16.8 million leading to a cumulative surplus of \$12.7 million. In fact the City has a deficit of \$4.14 million. The CEO has resigned. In essence this has come about as a result of the City investing too much in infrastructure and only 47% of the blocks being sold thus far. We have always doubted the commercial sense of trying to create suburbia in a hills setting since the appeal to most people of the hills is space and freedom. The Ellenbrook experience seems to confirm this. In this last year of housing boom it has only managed to sell 104 lots – 346 less than the year before. This is a development with community centres, schools, a large shopping centre, libraries, sporting facilities and of course transport. Even with all these facilities the high level of dense urbanisation has proved to be unattractive to potential buyers.

The Councillors that approved the Parkerville and Stoneville developments did so in the belief that they would drastically improve the Shire's revenue base. Should an 'Ellenbrook' occur here the fallout would be devastating for such a small Shire and this is of great concern.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

There are a whole host of reasons why the environment would suffer from such development and I won't attempt to cover them all here. However, one issue that raises the most concern is the problem of disposing of sewage from so many dwellings in a land locked environment adjacent to a water catchment. Currently, according to a letter we received from the Water Corporation, the preferred option is for one large sewage plant in the Parkerville development (adjacent to the John Forrest National Park) to service both townsites. The plant would have to deal with sewage produced by approximately 7000 people each day plus grey water – a huge amount. This would somehow have to be absorbed by the environment on a daily basis, winter and summer. Inevitably much of this would be discharged into the creek that bisects the Parkerville townsite and thence into Jane Brook and the Swan River.

By the Water Corporation's own written admission, there have been many problems regarding water quality coming from the sewage plant that services the Mundaring townsite. This was heralded as a "state of the art" facility when residents protested about its construction. When challenged about poor performance the Water Corporation's view is that there are 500 toilets now connected to it so therefore processing cannot be interrupted.

Larger hills blocks are capable of harvesting water from their roofs at a time when water is becoming a very precious resource. Furthermore, modern septic systems can easily and safely deal with what is produced by the largest of families.

### **Artificial fertilisers**

Urban developments with scheme water are typified by large areas of lawn and are able to support exotic plants. These all require artificial fertilisers which inevitably migrate into the water catchments and thus the Swan River. The Department of Agriculture and the Swan River Commission through education initiatives such as "Heavenly Hectares" are helping to reduce fertiliser run-off that is causing algal blooms in the Swan River. These developments could easily reverse much of what has been achieved in this area to date.

### **The black cockatoos**

We have had a large number of emails to our website regarding the effect that habitat clearing will have on the Black Cockatoos. Their nesting requirements are very specific and in short supply. As a result their future is uncertain. Though some remnant vegetation will be preserved there will be a

huge amount lost, particularly in the Parkerville development. It has been pointed out that the Water Corporation has set up "Cockatoo Care" on its website dedicated to preserving Black Cockatoo habitat and yet the provision of scheme water and reticulated sewage are the 2 essential ingredients of high density development. In other words the Water Corporation, by solving the developers' problems will be destroying the very habitat that the Black Cockatoos so desperately need. Larger blocks would not only preserve such valuable habitat but most owners of large blocks are keen to revegetate degraded areas with local natives thus having a positive environmental impact.

### **Cats**

Currently there are no regulations in the Shire that prohibit cat ownership – 2 cats per household are permitted. With approximately 2500 new households in Parkerville and Stoneville it is likely that the cat population would increase dramatically given the urban nature of much of the development. The Parkerville site adjoins the John Forrest National Park for the entire length of its western boundary. Domestic cats could devastate the bird and small marsupial population and, should any of these cats become feral, their numbers would have an impact on a much larger area of the hills.

### **Pest plants and noxious weeds**

Many plants that are quite acceptable in suburbia become pest plants in the hills able to degrade large areas of bush. Lavender which is very common and well adapted to our climate is such an example. Furthermore noxious weeds thrive in reticulated environments. Compost, mulch and chicken and sheep manure import such weeds in large quantities. Therefore it is of enormous concern that the artificial eco systems created by such urban development would be responsible for impacting adversely on local bush and the John Forrest National Park.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

There are not a vast amount of employment opportunities in the hills. Certainly all those new residents who wished to do so could not find employment locally. The hills with their low density population and geographical location are not viewed as the best place to set up business (a prime retail site in the busy Mundaring Village Shopping Centre has been vacant for more than a year and a commercial site near the Shire Offices on Great Eastern Highway has been vacant for years). The population would have to increase by hundreds of thousands before business considered the hills a source of customers. Likewise employment and business opportunities in Midland are limited and will doubtless be served by those attracted to the city by Midland's re-development. This raises the question as to what would an un-employed person without a car (or with limited funds to buy petrol) do to improve their lot in one of these developments? Gidgegannup has also been earmarked for such urban development and according to the local Progress Association this might be sooner rather than later. Such development would only heighten the shortage of employment and related transport.

### **PUBLIC OPINION**

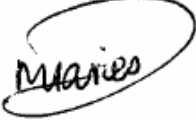
In conclusion it is felt by very many hills dwellers that the proposed urbanisation of the hills has not been well thought out.

The Mundaring Magazine (which is re-badged and distributed as the Swan Valley and Kalmunda Magazine) is delivered to 57,000 homes. In last month's magazine it published 5 pages of "Letters to the Editor" on this issue. They were in response to a letter the previous month which supported elements of such development and called upon locals to express their views. The Editor described the response as "overwhelming and unprecedented". He received over 70 letters, many 2 and 3 pages long, from all over the hills (not just local to these developments) and numerous phone calls. As a consequence he devoted 5 pages of this month's magazine to edited versions of some of the letters. Only 2 letters supported the developments and to avoid accusations of bias he included both of them. I enclose these for your information as all planners are mindful of local public opinion.

The sales of bumper stickers that support our website are accelerating as they become more evident locally – we will soon have sold 2000 and be ordering more. Our website has received over 20,000 hits since it went to air last August.

I apologise for the length of this letter but our members and visitors to our website believe we need to begin a dialogue with your Ministry in order to ascertain your views and be kept closely informed of the progress of the planning process. We are particularly concerned that if these developments go ahead as planned we may experience the kind of "urban infill" that has seen rural properties around Ellenbrook and Morgan Fields re-zoned to Urban against the wishes of their owners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Davies", is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Mike Davies  
Chairman