

26 February 2018

Hon. Richard Wynne  
Minister for Planning  
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.  
Uploaded via DEWLP website and sent via email

Dear Minister Wynne,

As a resident of [REDACTED] in the Macedon Ranges, I am writing to strongly object to the Localised Planning Statement (LPS) for the Macedon Ranges Shire Council (MRSC) and specifically to the LPS for the town of Woodend. An outline of the history to this objection is as follows.

- In 1994 with the amalgamation of four local shires, the community members of Woodend (and other MRSC communities) have been lobbying either the Macedon Ranges Shire Council and/or the various State governments and their agencies to engage with the community in order protect the character, integrity and environment of both the Macedon Ranges and Woodend.
- About ten years ago, the Macedon Ranges council engaged a consultant to ascertain Woodend residents' attitudes to the town's future. The result was a clear acceptance that while some growth was inevitable, only a modest and regulated growth was desirable.
- About 8-9 years ago, a property developer sought, as part of a large development project proposal, to have the town boundaries redrawn to incorporate this development. A groundswell of community opposition ensued, reinforcing the community consensus for modest rates of growth and the demand that the State and MRSC become transparent and accountable in their planning decision making.
- In 2011, the MRSC adopted the Settlement Strategy for the Shire that responded to an "identified need for an integrated and long term plan to manage the growth and development of the Shire".
- In 2013 Council published a preliminary Woodend settlement strategy in which was noted sufficient residential land within the town boundaries to accommodate growth to at least 2036.
- In August 2015, the finalised Woodend Settlement Strategy was implemented for Woodend via Amendment C84 which had gone through the full planning scheme amendment process, including consideration by an independent panel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C84 NOTES:

- The panel's resulting report supported the council's view of sufficient infill land within the town boundaries to [at least] 2036. The report further identified three **potential** sites for post-2036 further investigation regarding each site's potential inclusion within the town boundaries.
- Each site would only be incorporated in a staged manner (not concurrently) and based only on an identified need to accommodate an expected low to moderate growth over a finite period – in other words, incorporation would be on a site by site basis, staged over years and decades, post 2036.
- Any such investigation would be individual, non concurrent, and.
- Each site would require in-depth investigation into that site's suitability for township development and inclusion and would be based on an identified need of the town's boundary to be expanded to accommodate an expected future modest growth. Such investigation would take into consideration the constraints on each site in terms of both suitability and challenges in conversion from rural land into suitable township land. Preliminary analysis has indicated difficulties and constraints on the site to the northwest, while the southeast site also includes a flood plain.
- Incorporation of any site would only be considered following such extensive investigation and following in-depth community consultation and input. In other words, each site would be only incorporated in a staged and in a thoroughly vetted manner as agreed each time by the Woodend community.

- June 2016 –MRSC’s In the Rural Living Zone Strategy – Amendment C110 Panel Report is published. Clause 21.02-1 Settlement – notes the significant agricultural, environmental and landscape constraints on development in Woodend, Macedon and Mount Macedon and directs a minimising of development in those areas.
- June 2016 - The Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme Amendment C098 - Woodend Town Planning Structure and Neighbourhood Character Study (aka Woodend Town Structure Plan) is finalised and gazetted by the State government.
- Feb 2017 – The Planning Minister accepts all Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee recommendations and work begins on Macedon Ranges protection Working Plan. For Woodend, this work was to include all the protections outlined and accepted in the C98 Amendment (Woodend Town Structure Plan, which in turn was informed by the C84) and was to include **community consultation**<sup>2</sup> specific to Woodend localised planning statement.
- 27 July 2017 - The Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee final report is released.<sup>3</sup>
- December 2017 - The Localised Planning Statement for Woodend is published.

### **CURRENT SCENARIO:**

The current Woodend Localised Planning Statement (LPS), which was to have resulted from the so-called Working Plan, which in turn was to have been a collaborative effort between the State authorities, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council **AND** the Woodend community, and was to include the pre-existing protection conditions found in both the C84 and the C98 as well as the C110. When the C84 Woodend Town Structure Plan was being developed (with extensive community consultation together with a community reference group) there were three sets of study areas looked at in terms of future growth. However, as noted in the C110, it was determined that the expected growth in population for Woodend could be adequately accommodated by the existing vacant land within the town boundary until at least 2036 without any need to convert any existing greenfield land.

While growth beyond 2036 will need to be studied with a view to possible expansion of the town boundaries, there was never any expectation that either the second or third sets of study areas be designated for that growth other than **potential** study sites to accommodate individual rather than concurrent 15 year growth plans. There was never any expectation that there would be such an expansion of the legal town boundaries that would incorporate designated “settlement boundaries” of areas only previous looked at as potential study areas for very long term growth – well beyond 50 years. These LPS settlement boundaries are inconsistent with a low to moderate growth target for Woodend, which would **only** see smaller tracts of rural land, possibly within some of this proposed settlement are, having the least amount of constraints for conversion from rural to township land possibly being included in a future settlement strategy for the period of 2036 to 2051.

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<sup>2</sup> Best practice for community consultation shows that to work effectively with a particular community, there must be a carefully developed consultation and communication strategy to ensure increased understanding of community needs and aspirations; and it requires that proper consultation and effective communication with the community is undertaken before and during implementation of a project. This has not been the structure of the latest form of “community consultation” regarding the LPS. Rather, State planning staff got together with MRSC planning staff and drafted the current LPS whilst ignoring the community all together. The information sessions to exhibit the draft LPSs does not constitute engaged consultation. Instead it sets up an adversarial relationship, something the community of Woodend has long worked to overcome. The aim should be to ensure effective communication and participation that leads to outcomes that satisfy the majority of stakeholders.

<sup>3</sup> On page 23 of this report, section 4.5 Recommendations, 3<sup>rd</sup> dot point: “Direct Macedon Ranges Shire Council that the settlement boundaries be informed by existing policy and strategic work including: a) the State Planning Policy Framework at Clause 11 (Settlement) and Clause 16 (Housing) b) Clause 21.13 of the **Local Planning Policy Framework c) The Macedon Ranges Shire Council Settlement Strategy 2011 d) Amendments C98 [Woodend Town Structure Plan] etc.**

Nevertheless, had those working on the Woodend LPS (State planning staff and MRSC planning staff) included in-depth study of the previous work done over the preceding decade and had they included realy community consultation as they considered what to include in the LPS, the result would have been different. However, neither happened and the resulting LPS is a document contradictory to the expectations of Woodend community and contradictory to the potential protection promised by the recent legislation. Rather, this LPS has effectively dismissed the conditions of protection assured. This current LPS fails provide a sound 50-year vision or an integrated framework for either the town of Woodend or the Macedon Ranges Shire. It fails at both levels to build on all the strategic work undertaken over the past decade to provide adequate protections against poor land use decisions. It does not reflect community values and expectations that any growth would be low to moderate and compliant with any of the previous work done to ensure that growth and protection.

I ask that this Localised Planning Statement not be accepted but rather returned to the authors with a direction that they sit down with a community consultative reference group similar to the one empanelled for the Woodend Structure Plan to draw up an appropriate and acceptable LPS for the community of Woodend.

Respectfully submitted,

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Resident of ██████████