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Hon Peter Foster MLC
Committee Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

By email – env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Chair

Petition 065 – Preservation of Mount Claremont Fields

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission for your consideration on the petition regarding the spot rezoning of the Christchurch Grammar Mt Claremont playing fields.

The Town of Cambridge's reasons for refusing to progress this spot rezoning application are detailed in the minutes of the 25 February 2022 Special Council Meeting.

I note that in the documentation provided to the Town of Cambridge by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, it was noted that the subject land may only be used for the purpose of playing fields, sports pavilions, clubhouses, and buildings ancillary to that use. However, the Department of Planning was not willing to provide the Town of Cambridge copies of any relevant agreements between the Department and Christchurch Grammar regarding land use due to Commercial in Confidence reasons.

It is difficult to understand how the DPLH can on the one hand confirm that Christchurch Grammar can only use the land for sporting fields, and on the other, Christchurch Grammar is seeking a Local Planning Scheme amendment to enable housing development. I suggest that the Committee engages with the Department further about the accessibility of these documents and if required, engage with the Office of the Information Commissioner.

While Christchurch Grammar maintains that it has the legal right to progress a Local Planning Scheme amendment over these lands, it has not otherwise addressed the Town of Cambridge's requests for documentation regarding any entailments or restrictions over the use of the land. The Town of Cambridge notes that the purchase of the land and any associated official documentation of restrictions took place prior to the Records Management Act of 1997. Records that might have existed regarding restrictions on land use do not exist at the Town of Cambridge, beyond the land sale being noted as for the specific purpose of sports fields and a future preparatory school.

Beyond these issues regarding whether a formal contractual agreement existed for the well-understood purposes for which the land could be used, this is another incident of spot planning. The Town of Cambridge planning officers note that the potential use of this land for housing was not raised at any point throughout the recent Local Planning Scheme revision, which was signed off by the Minister for Planning in 2021. The first that the Town was advised about this proposed rezoning was when the school raised it during a Statutory Planning Committee meeting while finalising the Local Planning Scheme.

Broadly, the subject land sits within the urban zone in the Metropolitan Region Scheme and as Parks and Recreation Reserve in the recently revised Local Planning Scheme. It is surrounded on two sides by Bush Forever Site 315, which links Bold Park to the ocean. It is skimmed by one of the Target sites for revegetation identified in the Capital City Planning Framework Vegetation Connectivity Analysis, which noted the need to better connect Lake Claremont with Bold Park.

There are numerous pressures on land in the western suburbs. All of the western suburbs' councils are attempting to comply with the population growth required to meet their obligations under Perth & Peel @ 3.5 million. The Town of Cambridge has already identified where their population growth will occur to meet these requirements, and the subject land was never suggested as a potential growth site. Indeed, public open space that is playing fields is in high demand in the western suburbs. We have seen conflict between user groups over Mt Claremont Oval and Rosalie Park. We have also seen the concerns raised by the residents of the City of Subiaco as the Subiaco East project takes land originally slated to be playing fields. Youth and female sports participation continues to rise in Western Australia and the current undersupply of playing fields in Perth is only expected to get worse.

If the land is truly now surplus to the school's needs, I suggest that they sell the land back to the Government at a similar discount to that for which it was originally purchased, so that it can be used for the benefit of the wider community.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BPettitt', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC
Member for South Metropolitan