



Sellicks Woodlands and Wetlands Action Network (SWWAN)

Sellicks Beach Growth Area Joint Amendment Submission

- 9 October 2025

For over 5 years now, with strong support from the community, SWWAN have advocated for recognition that biodiversity loss is an imminent threat to our food security, health and economy and that decades old plans for greenfield housing on the urban fringe restrict our ability to protect existing habitat and reverse the ongoing declines in the environment. For this essential reason, SWWAN call for the scrapping of the Sellicks Beach Growth Plan to instead build a nature reserve above Sellicks Beach that will buffer the Aldinga Washpool's southern boundary and preserve an essential connection for wildlife to habitat in the hills and Fleurieu.

SWWAN propose that the government rejects the rezoning application for the Sellicks Beach Growth plan and believes that greater community benefit will come from rezoning this land as Conservation and being restored as habitat. Revegetating the land behind Sellicks Beach as a nature reserve will protect the washpool and enhance the Aldinga Scrub's biodiversity value, protect Sellicks Beach residents from urban heat and quarry dust, and preserve the idyllic nature of Sellicks Beach.

The plan from last century for building 1700 houses on rural land behind Sellicks Beach is unnecessary. It will do nothing to reduce the immediate and acute effects of the rental crisis and make negligible difference to the State' Government's 30-Year housing targets. If built, the development would erect an urban wall between the new Aldinga Conservation Park and habitat in the hills and Fleurieu, isolating wildlife populations and reducing the future resilience of the park. Adding 4000 people to the Sellicks Beach population comes with huge cost for new infrastructure, creates greater potential for contamination of the washpool and will increase urban heat and associated health risks for current Sellicks Beach residents.

SWWAN have made many submissions, including two petitions in 2021 and 2023 with over 1500 signatures, opposing the development of Sellicks Beach and the need to restore the environment to avert the extinction crisis and the effects that it will have on our food security, agricultural economy and society. This submission is part of these wider calls by SWWAN and the community for restoring the habitat of the Willunga Basin and Fleurieu Peninsula. The proposed nature reserve will provide significant environmental benefit towards achieving these goals. For the future of our community, we ask that the South Australian Government rejects the Sellicks Beach Growth rezoning proposal and takes this opportunity to live up to its stated long-term goal of protecting and enhancing biodiversity and its commitment to no further extinctions by building the Sellicks Beach Nature Reserve as proposed in this submission.

Sincerely,

The Sellicks Woodlands and Wetlands Action Network.

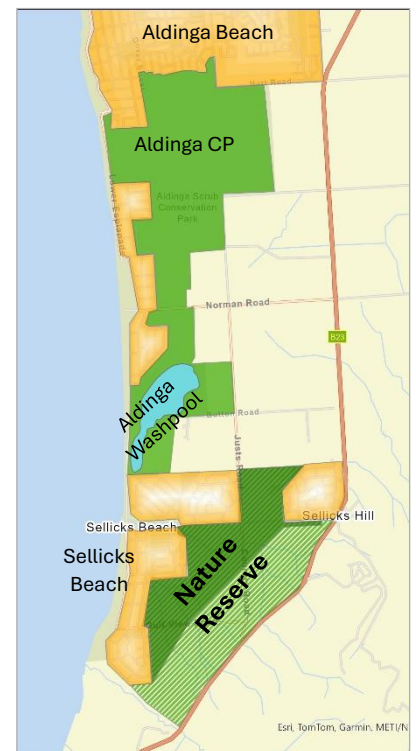
Introduction

The land proposed for the Sellicks Beach Development is located to the south-east of the current township on largely rural land. SWWAN are proposing that the State Government reject the residential rezoning request for the Sellicks Beach Growth Area. We ask that the State Government instead restore this land as a community nature reserve that will protect and enhance the sustainability, resilience and biodiversity value of the Aldinga Conservation Park and surrounding areas, for the benefit and protection of the environment, community and future generations.



Fig 1 (Left): The 134ha proposed development (Red) is 600m from the boundary of Aldinga Conservation Park (Green) and less than 1km from the Washpool (Blue). The development completes the urban (orange) encirclement and isolation of this newly declared conservation park.

Fig 2 (Right): The Sellicks Beach Nature Reserve (Dark Green) proposed by SWWAN will create a vital habitat connection between the conservation park and the hills. A further 170ha could be added by including the rural areas SE of the development (Hashed Light Green), a total area equivalent to Aldinga Scrub (300ha). Rural land to the east of the existing conservation park is another opportunity to expand the habitat in the future.



Why should we build a nature reserve?

Biodiversity:

We need to increase habitat coverage from less than 10% to over 30% in each landscape to prevent further extinctions. Restoring large areas of land is essential to reversing the extinction crisis. It is particularly important to protect and expand existing habitat, replace missing critical habitat and to create connections between them. SWWAN's proposal does all this. The proposed nature reserve will protect the significant habitat located within the brand-new Aldinga Conservation Park and would add an equal area to the south providing an essential connection to other habitat in the hills and further south.

The park would be the equivalent in area to adding another Aldinga Scrub to the south of the washpool. Restoring the 300ha behind Sellicks Beach as a nature reserve would buffer the Washpool and provide an essential connection for wildlife to habitat and populations in the hills and beyond. This will increase the resilience and viability of the newly declared park as well as providing benefits to biodiversity wider afield.

The historic ecosystem of the area would most likely have been a mixed *Eucalyptus porosa* (Mallee Box)/ *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping She-oak) woodland with an understorey of shrubs and grasses. *Eucalyptus* grasslands are the most critically endangered ecosystems due to their early clearance by farmers. Drooping She-oak woodlands are critical habitat for Glossy Black Cockatoos. Both are highly valued as restoration projects.

The Greater Adelaide Regional Plan states many times that it is a long-term goal to enhance biodiversity and identify opportunities to create biodiversity corridors to improve flora and fauna habitats. This is one such opportunity.

The Environmental Report, written as a development harm mitigation report, identifies many significant elements within the area, including flora and fauna of conservation significance that will need to be protected from being harmed by the development. Had the report been written as a report into the land's potential for restoration, it would proclaim the region as an exemplary opportunity to protect and extend existing habitat with enormous environmental and social benefits. Given the delay that is occurring for the results of the dust sampling, there is time and opportunity for the Government to commission a second report on this lands potential for restoration using the existing data. We ask that this occurs.

Health:

The dust problem prevalent in Sellicks Beach would be reduced by a nature reserve due to slower wind speeds over wooded areas relative to bare paddocks. Slower winds are less capable of keeping particles suspended and the habitat would act as a filter, both reducing the risk of negative impacts of dust from quarry operations. The dust problem will get worse with climate change, and we must do everything we can to reduce these effects.

The nature reserve will also cool the environment and reduce urban heat for the existing residents of Sellicks Beach. The avoided health costs associated with access to nature is well established. The nature reserve will have walking trails, lookouts, birdwatching points and other recreational amenities to encourage use.

Tourism:

The secluded and peaceful township and beautiful surrounds of Sellicks Beach are a major tourism drawcard. A nature reserve instead of housing will enhance the attractiveness of the area and diversify tourism opportunities.

Connecting the Aldinga Conservation Park to the hills via the Sellicks Beach Nature Reserve would give tourists another reason to visit the area. A unique walk through such varied connecting ecosystems from the scrub through the washpool, climbing to a lookout over the coastline and finishing with a meal at the Victory would be irresistible for nature lovers.

There is great potential to connect further to the Fleurieu via the Old Sellick Beach Trail to the newly declared parks and the Heyson Trail at Cape Jervis. A long-distance walking trail so easily accessible from Adelaide would attract tourists from all over the world year-round.

Eco-tourism is huge and will become more so in the future. There is a great long-term economic opportunity here for the region to increase its share of the eco-tourism market creating

sustainable jobs and ecosystems and an opportunity for the State Government to demonstrate their environmental and climate credentials to Australia and the rest of the world.

Agriculture:

Improving biodiversity increases the resilience of our agricultural communities and economy. With the arrival of Varroa Mite in South Australia we need to do everything we can to increase populations of native pollinators before the wild bee population and the free pollination they provide collapses. PIRSA has predicted that most wild honeybee colonies will be wiped out within 5 years. It is imperative for the agricultural community that we dramatically increase the amount of habitat available for native pollinators if farms are to continue to be viable. Increasing the size and connectivity of the environmental sanctuary that is Aldinga Conservation Park is an essential part of protecting the future agriculture of the Willunga Basin.

Why should the Sellicks Beach Growth Rezoning be rejected?

Biodiversity:

Biodiversity and the environment in South Australia are in an ongoing state of decline. The reason is that the 10% of habitat that remains is not enough to support current populations of wildlife. Protection is necessary but not enough and we must increase habitat in each landscape to above 30% if we are to prevent mass extinctions.

The Aldinga Conservation Park, including the Washpool, is the largest area of habitat in the region. It is an important nursery site for the rest of the Willunga Basin. As can be seen in the maps above, the proposed development will lock in the new Aldinga Conservation Park and isolate it from wildlife populations and habitat to the south. This is the equivalent of placing a marina around a marine sanctuary. This effect has been exacerbated by the duplication of Main South Road blocking migration routes to the east. The tripling of the population of Sellicks Beach, will place further pressure on the integrity of the washpool.

Housing Crisis

The development will do nothing to fix the immediate problems in the rental market and is irrelevant and unnecessary to meeting Adelaide's 2055 housing target.

The proposed development will not be built for at least 5 years and will therefore do nothing to help the immediate, acute and harmful effects of the rental housing crisis, such as financial stress and homelessness, occurring now at significant social cost to the community. A major factor in this is the disproportionate number of short-term stays that could otherwise be in the long-term rental market. In Aldinga SA2, with a rental market of approximately 1600 homes, there are on average only 25 vacant, a vacancy rate of 1.5%. At the same time there are over 250 whole home Airbnb's being advertised regularly. If these short-term stays were listed as long term rentals the vacancy rate would be nearly 15%! This is where the government and council should be directing their attention if they want to solve the acute effects of the housing crisis.

This statement is supported by the findings of the State Government's inquiry into short term housing effects on the rental market.

The development will have virtually no impact on the long-term housing crisis either. The development represents only 0.5% of the future housing target of Greater Adelaide's 30-year housing plan, making it virtually irrelevant to meeting the 2055 target. The development has also been made unnecessary by the large number of major infill developments that have been announced in the last decade since this land was set aside decades ago. The 3600 homes proposed for Port Stanvac alone accounts for more than double what the Sellicks Beach development provides in the south. Other examples of new major infill developments that make this rezoning unnecessary are Bowden, Glenside, the West End Brewery and Coca Cola sites, Blackforest and many, many others.

It is worth noting that population growth projections have recently been lowered. The State Government's housing plans are based on the unlikely highest population growth projections of outdated data. Further evidence that this development is unnecessary.

Health

The proposed 1700 homes over 134 ha will increase the urban heat effect for the entire suburb with negative impacts for the whole community. By building between the current township and the quarry, the development will be at greater risk than current residents to health problems associated with the dust problem. The large increase of hard surface across the area will increase the ability of winds being able to transport dust due to a lack of disturbance making the current dust problems for existing residents worse.

The secluded, tranquil lifestyle for current Sellicks Beach residents will be ruined by tripling our small townships population. The stresses associated with a reduction in the quality of life will lead to mental and physical health problems. The proposal alone has caused great anxiety within our community.

Tourism

The secluded and peaceful township and beautiful surrounds of Sellicks Beach are a major tourism drawcard. Turning it into another Seaford Meadows will ruin the views from iconic businesses like the Victory Hotel and local cellar door Berg Herring. The proposed development would likely cause a decline in tourism to the area due to it not being secluded, peaceful or beautiful anymore.

Infrastructure

Considerable expense, likely hundreds of millions of dollars, will be required to provide the necessary infrastructure for the tripling of the Sellicks Beach population. A significantly smaller amount could be used to provide missing services like sewerage to current residents and the difference put towards restoration of the most essential infrastructure, the environment. The site is also a poor choice from a social services perspective. Sellicks Beach has poor social infrastructure and lacks adequate access to services such as public transport, healthcare,

shops and job opportunities. Future residents will be socially and financially worse off than purchasing in a development closer to the city with better public services and lower travel times.

We feel it necessary to address the following issues.

LAND VALUE and INVESTMENT

All investments come with risk. Sometimes it is high, sometimes low, but there is always risk involved in speculation. Speculators have invested in the land along the Willunga Basin Coast, and in particular around Sellicks Beach and Aldinga, for decades in the hope of profiting from the area's eventual urban development. Unfortunately, during the last several decades, the world has changed, and so too has society's needs for the future.

The need for restoration and action on biodiversity loss is paramount and must take priority over unnecessary development for the sake of future generations and communities. The continuation of urban sprawl that these investors banked on years and even decades ago, is no longer appropriate (if it ever was). The need for development of Sellicks Beach to help meet Adelaide's population growth has been made unnecessary by recent large developments nearby and closer to the city. Unfortunately for these investors, the risk that the parameters around the investment would change putting the investment at risk has been realised. The global and local situation has changed significantly and the greater need for the land, for the future, is for restoring biodiversity. This must preclude any further greenfield development in Sellicks Beach.

Although the expected profits associated with securing the land for development will not be realised, landowners have many options to secure a fair return. Sale to the government for establishment of the nature reserve must be at a fair price. Options to stay can come with returns from carbon credits and other income opportunities. The only option no longer on the table is urban development.

LAND OWNERSHIP AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The land proposed for rezoning is owned by private owners, businesses and investment companies. SWWAN is proposing several options for collaboration between all stakeholders to facilitate the creation of the nature reserve. Precedents for this type of action include Glenthorne Park and the acquisition of houses adjacent the Main South Road infrastructure project. As the land is already proposed for development it is obviously not necessary for agricultural production.

We put forward these possible options:

1. Sale – The land is bought outright by the government for a fair price and transferred to the Department of Environment for restoration as habitat.
2. Sale with option to stay – Owners sell the land to the government for a lesser amount and are given an ongoing paid role in the restoration of the land. This will allow owners who live on the land to stay on their property and be a part of the project. ^a
3. Partnership – Partner with Government or third-party organisation to remain in possession of the land and undertake the restoration works themselves. ^{a b}

4. No immediate restoration – This option is particularly applicable for land currently used for vineyards and orchards where owners may want to continue to operate their businesses while the reserve is built around them.^b

^a In options 2 & 3 training and certification in Conservation and Environmental Management could be offered in some form.

^b In options 3 & 4, though the owners retain ownership, the only option for eventual sale is to the government for the nature reserve.

REQUEST

The enormity of SWWAN's request is not lost on us but we are proposing no more or less than we think is necessary based on the issues that face us and the latest knowledge. We feel that despite the well understood need for restoration for biodiversity, that the potential for revegetating this site has never been considered or evaluated due to the primacy of housing in our planning system. We also feel that the parameters and knowledge around the need for housing and the causes of the housing crisis have changed recently and that the plan to develop Sellicks Beach is premised on outdated forecasts and conceptions. We note the findings from the State Government's Inquiry into the negative effects of Short Term Stay on the Rental Market, the recent revising down of population growth targets and an expectation of moderate population growth for the foreseeable future rather than the highest projections.

To facilitate informed decision making and enable decision makers to better evaluate SWWAN's and the Government's proposals for the site, SWWAN ask that during the six months wait for the completion of the Air Quality testing, that the State Government commission the following three reports.

- An environmental report on ecological restoration potential of the development site, using the data from the existing environmental report.
- A cost benefit analysis of the ecological, social, health and economic outcomes of the habitat restoration proposed by SWWAN.
- A review of the State's housing targets and the need for housing at Sellicks Beach given changes in population growth forecasts and the findings and recommendations of the recently concluded State Government Inquiry into the effect of Short Term Stays on the Rental Market.

Conclusion

SWWAN's proposal to build a nature reserve and prioritise ecological restoration at Sellicks Beach provides Governments at local, State and Federal levels an opportunity to create a future-ready, sustainable community and an opportunity to demonstrate their environmental and climate credentials to Australia and the rest of the world. It has the wide support of the local community.

Our submission shows that the proposed rezoning of this land to residential land is a poor idea. The development is not required to meet future housing targets and won't do anything to resolve the rental housing crisis. The urbanisation of this rural land will isolate the new Aldinga

Conservation Park and, in most likelihood, have a negative impact on the integrity, resilience and sustainability of the conservation park, particularly on the nationally significant washpool.

On the other hand, SWWAN's proposal to restore the rural land behind Sellicks Beach as a nature reserve will protect and enhance the qualities of the Aldinga Conservation Park and offers a major contribution to ensuring no further extinctions locally. The nature reserve will maintain the idyllic nature of Sellicks Beach and contribute positively to the health and quality of life of Sellicks Beach residents as we face a changing climate. The plan provides countless opportunities in eco-tourism and will help protect our agricultural economy.

SWWAN urge the Government of South Australia to reject the rezoning of the Sellicks Beach Growth area for urbanisation as proposed by the Planning Commission. We ask that the State Government recognise the great need and opportunity for environmental restoration here by supporting SWWAN's plan for a nature reserve to be built on the land to protect and enhance biodiversity in the region for the benefit of future generations.

Sincerely,

The Sellicks Woodlands and Wetlands Action Network.

SWWAN

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