

16 February 2010

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory
and Municipal Services
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via email: committees@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

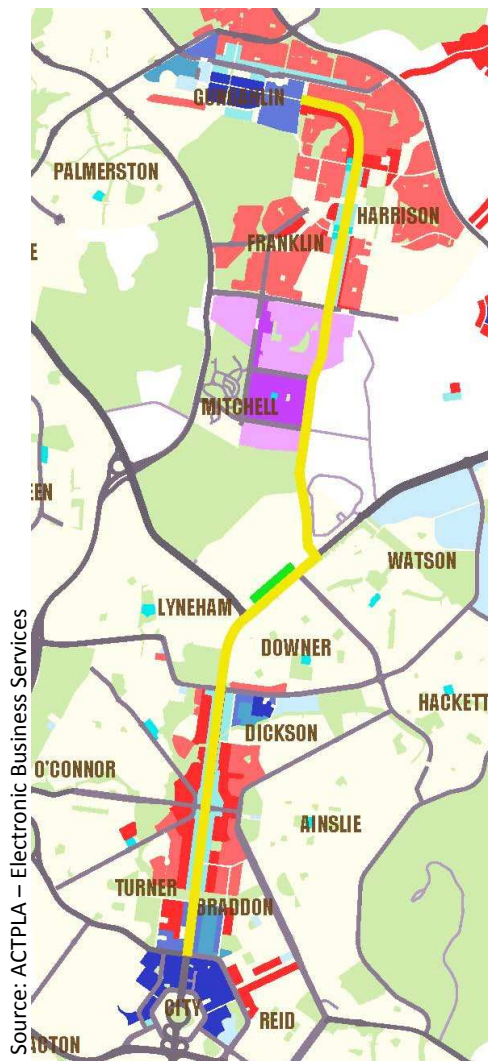
Inquiry into the RZ3 and RZ4 residential redevelopment policies in inner North Canberra

We are providing comments for the Committee Inquiry into RZ3 and RZ4 residential development policies in inner north Canberra. We focus on term of reference 2 – whether similar redevelopment policies should be extended to other areas surrounding Northbourne Avenue in north Canberra, if so, where and to what density.

It is widely acknowledged by environmental experts, government bodies and the general public that in order to increase environmental sustainability, Canberra must undertake urban intensification. It is imperative that it is undertaken, and important that it is done without unnecessary detriment to existing resident's amenity. Sustainability is about meeting our needs today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

A review of submissions made on this matter to date indicates general support for the above view. There is obvious support for urban intensification through rezoning of land to RZ3, RZ4 and RZ5, while there is an understandable preference for intensification to be undertaken sensitively and with minimal impact upon established neighbourhoods.

A major transport corridor in the inner north corridor is the Civic – Gungahlin corridor, incorporating Northbourne Avenue and Flemington Road. Opportunities exist along this transport corridor for the introduction of additional RZ3, RZ4 and RZ5 zones which enable urban intensification without compromising the amenity of existing residents. There is undeveloped land in inner north Canberra where rezoning may be possible, which meets objectives of urban intensification, responds to housing demand, and is not detrimental to established communities.



Source: ACTPLA – Electronic Business Services

A representation of the Civic – Gungahlin transport corridor is shown in the image to the left. As evident in this image, areas north of Wells Station Drive and south of Antill Street, which front the major transport corridor are generally zoned to allow higher density residential – as either RZ3, RZ4 or CZ5.

Between Wells Station Road Franklin and Antill Street Dickson the Territory Plan precludes medium and high density residential development along this major transport corridor. Non residential uses include industrial land, Epic showgrounds, Canberra Racecourse, Yowani golf club and Lyneham sports centre. The only residential along this stretch is low density along the southern side of Northbourne Avenue in the suburb of Downer. A wide road reserve is allowed as a buffer between the road and residential uses. Consideration should be given to appropriately selected portions of land along this corridor being rezoned to allow medium to high density residential development.

The green highlight located in Lyneham in the image to the left indicates a location where there is high potential for rezoning to medium or high density residential land. The land indicated is currently zoned Broadacre and is not utilised in a way appropriate to its location on the corridor.

This piece of land is an example of a solution to the problem of where to locate high density residential land without adversely affecting existing communities.

Access to Civic and Gungahlin Town Centre from this area is extremely convenient, with Civic 4km to the south and Gungahlin Town Centre 6km to the north. Either of the centres may easily be reached by frequent (15 minute interval) inter town bus services along the Northbourne Avenue corridor. Dedicated cycleways along Northbourne Avenue increase potential for bicycle use from the area. Dickson Group Centre is only one kilometre distant and can easily be accessed on foot or by bus.

MAJOR ISSUES FOR COMMENT

How do these policies affect you and how would you like to see them changed (if at all)?

These policies affect all future residents of Canberra. It is important that urban densification is given a high priority in order to ensure it is undertaken in a timely manner and in a way which is least detrimental to the current residents. It is an accepted means to a more sustainable city and rigorous studies should be undertaken by government bodies in collaboration with independent professionals to ascertain an implementation strategy.

What other considerations would you like taken into account to ensure redevelopment in the affected areas creates a liveable neighbourhood character?

Investigation into rezoning of suitable land along major transport corridors for residential use should be considered to provide an alternative to the redevelopment of existing neighbourhood areas.

Should similar redevelopment policies be implemented elsewhere in the ACT? If so:

a) Where?

Land fronting major established transport corridors should be considered for rezoning to residential, especially where existing communities would not be adversely affected. One particular site suitable for this type of rezoning has been highlighted above.

b) What density (height limit and plot ratio) should apply?

The policies of RZ3 and RZ4 should be adopted, subject to site specific planning studies.

c) What type of policy is appropriate (code, moratorium, etc)?

The Territory Plan is the appropriate mechanism to control infill development. Rezoning supported by strategic planning studies, structure plans and precinct codes are all appropriate.

d) What would be the purpose and/or intended outcome of the change?

To provide residential land to the market which is environmentally sustainable, close to transport options, near employment hubs, affordable, meets market demand and provides choice to potential home buyers.

e) What would be the impacts on the amenity enjoyed by the residents of the affected areas?

Positive impacts to residents in affected areas would be an increased population density which would result in greater safety, vibrancy and livability. It could be expected that areas affected would become attractive and commercially viable to a wider range of services and facilities as a result of greater presence of activity.

Negative impacts on existing residents should be minimized by careful selection of land suitable for redevelopment.

f) How could the impacts on affected residents be ameliorated?

Rezone land which does not neighbour existing residents.

What are the merits/disadvantages of encouraging higher density development along major transport corridors? Please give consideration to factors such as:

a) The demand for high density development and housing preference

Housing demand in ACT is extremely high and people are increasingly seeking well located, low maintenance, environmentally efficient homes. Opportunities to supply housing of this nature are limited and hence any potential areas identified should be carefully considered.

b) The capacity for existing infrastructure and services to absorb additional development

The provision of infrastructure along major transport corridors is simpler and cheaper than providing the same infrastructure to more distant areas. Major transport corridors will be adversely affected more by commuters forced to drive from distant outer suburbs, than by those utilizing buses and bicycles from denser residential areas close to the CBD.

c) The implications on housing affordability and provision of public housing

Housing affordability will be increased by an increase in supply and choice.

d) The extent to which such developments might reduce overall travel

Increasing the percentage of the population residing near a major transport corridor and closer to the CBD will reduce travel distances, improve the inter-modal split in favour of more sustainable transport such as bus, bicycle and foot.

e) The impacts on the amenity of surrounding residents and how best to ameliorate those impacts

The opportunity exists to meet goals of increased density along major transport corridors without negatively impacting existing residents by rezoning land which is currently unused and underutilized, away from existing residential areas.

f) The effect on housing type and mix

The increased provision of high density housing within 4km of Civic is appropriate and very much in demand – evidenced by the lack of supply in and around Civic, and high prices relative to other major Australian cities.

i) What would be the impact of redevelopment on community infrastructure, including services and facilities?

Impact upon community services would be a case by case analysis to be undertaken during the evaluation of a site for residential uses.

j) What are the likely impacts on existing house prices in the area, if any?

Increase in housing supply will result in a spread of demand over a larger number of dwellings for sale and consequently reduced pressure on prices. This will increase housing affordability.

k) Environmental sustainability issues

Locating higher density housing close to the CBD and major infrastructure is a logical step towards increasing environmental sustainability.

Should high density development be extended to other major transport corridors?

Yes, all major transport corridors should be evaluated closely for opportunities to increase density and hence increasing access to public transport.

We have identified an area along the Civic – Gungahlin major transport corridor that contains at least one opportunity for rezoning to meet the Government's policy to supply infill development. Further investigation of this area should be encouraged.

There is a high level of agreement regarding urban intensification among other submissions to date. The submission from the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment illustrates the need to intensify urban development, stating 'the need to strive for integrated sustainable planning (...particularly with respect to achieving higher densities...)...and progressing sustainable transport'. This need can only be met by the provision of further RZ3, RZ4 and RZ5 zones near major transport corridors.

It is our opinion that suitable sites near major transport corridors, such as that highlighted above, should be evaluated for rezoning as RZ3, RZ4 or RZ5 zones. This area is ideal for medium to high density residential development as it responds to the need for housing in the ACT without compromising the amenity of existing communities. Furthermore it is ideally located on the major transport route of Northbourne Avenue between the City Centre and the Gungahlin Town Centre. This site can help Canberra work towards the overall sustainability goal of meeting the needs of today without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

We suggest that the committee recommend further investigation of residential opportunities along the Northbourne Avenue / Flemington Road corridor between Antill Street and Wells Station Road, with the intention of identifying opportunities for sustainable infill development.

Yours sincerely
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