

27 March 2009

FARRER ACT 2607

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and
Municipal Services
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Ms Derigo

Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 288 (Lyons)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the above draft variation in relation to the parts of variation affecting Blocks 3 and 4 Section 69 Lyons and Block 8 Section 47 Lyons. We are opposed to Draft Variation No 288 for the following reasons.

Building height

While we have no objections to high-rise buildings being constructed in the Woden Town Centre in keeping with the ACT Government's Garden City Values and Principles, we do not support high-rise development on a site, which—while adjacent to the Woden Town Centre—is outside the perimeter of the town centre. As yet there is no Neighbourhood Plan developed in consultation with the community for Lyons and until that is done the density of Lyons should remain low to medium density.

We therefore oppose the proposal for the height of buildings in the Lyons development to be raised from a medium density maximum height of three-storeys to a high density six-storeys (to be permitted over the entire site) and the proposal for a ten-storey tower building on the corner of Melrose Drive and Launceston Street.

The proposal in DV No 288 represents an ad hoc approach to change the medium density character of Lyons to high density.

Unless it is proposed to have other tall buildings in Lyons—and we hope that is not the case—the ten-storey tower will stand alone looking out of place. Lyons is not part of the Woden Town Centre and therefore should retain its low to medium density character.

Overlooking and overshadowing

The shadow diagram used for consultations was based on a four-storey development. It is a reasonable assumption that the proposed ten-storey tower building (on the northern aspect of the site) and six-storey buildings will overshadow a significant part of the other buildings on the site and much of the open space causing loss of amenity for residents at certain times of the year. Likewise, taller buildings with longer shadows will also impact on solar access of residences within the enlarged shadow zone.

As many have pointed out, the ten-storey tower block and six storey buildings will overlook single storey residences to the north and west of the site and significantly reduce their privacy and amenity.

It is our view that as the development is in a suburb, the building height limit on the site should not be more than four-storeys.

Impact on wind patterns

Garden City provisions contained in the Territory Plan purport to champion Garden City values and have been encapsulated in objectives and expressed in design principles to guide redevelopment. However they appear to have been selectively ignored in the design of this development with its six-storey buildings and a ten-storey tower block.

One objective of Garden City is to integrate site development and design to provide safe, useable private and communal open space. Another is to utilise prevailing winds, cooling breezes and ventilation for amenity of residents. Yet, despite information about wind flows being essential for good design, and despite the well known 'Wind Tunnels of Woden' which virtually destroy all amenity in the open public spaces of the Woden Town Centre on windy days, studies relating to wind flow appear not to have been done nor have they been insisted upon by ACTPLA. There is little evidence that the design either incorporates the positive effects of air flow for cooling or ventilation, or counters the negative effects so evident in the adjacent Woden Town Centre and about to be reproduced in the new development.

Conclusion

We oppose Development Variation No 288 to the Territory Plan for the above reasons. We feel the ACT Government has a responsibility to the community to adhere to its own Garden City values, objectives and provisions to ensure high standards in building design and that buildings are aesthetically pleasing and pleasant places for people to live. Our observation from living in Canberra for some years is that too often short-term economic considerations are given priority over high standards in design and community views.

Yours sincerely

(signed)

Tom Lithgow

Shirley A Lithgow