

Your local voice



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Mary Porter, AM, MLA
Chair,
Standing Committee on Planning,
Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services
ACT Legislative Assembly.

12 July 2012

Dear Madam Chair,

Draft Variation 306 to the Territory Plan

The Weston Creek Community Council welcomed the opportunity to appear before the Committee yesterday. Unfortunately we did not cover all of the matters that we wished to.

Firstly, I have attached the Supplementary material that Ms McGinn had forwarded to me and which I had not forwarded to the Secretary of the Committee. Please accept my apologies for this error.

Secondly, there were two matters which we did not have time to cover and I would ask if we could include this as part of our Submission to the Committee. Obviously, if you or other members of the Committee had questions on this Supplementary material, we would be more than happy to discuss them.

I did raise the matter of the timeliness and continuing to keep people informed when commenting on Development Applications with ACTPLA. My comments were sent to ACTPLA on 8 March and I can provide a copy of this if the Committee would want but more than 4 months have now passed without any idea of what is happening with this particular Development Application. It is for 186 Residential Apartments so I expected it to take some time but the absence of any update leaves one just in limbo.

In relation to ACTPLA, another matter that was raised with Council was the standard of communication with responders and those who lodge Development Applications. I have attached a copy of the letter which a resident received recently from ACTPLA. The points here are that

- the letter is unsigned
- Para 3 says that the prescribed period for making a decision on the application is 30 days but there is no date specified in the letter as a start date while the letter has three dates in it namely 6 July, 11 July and 24 July, and
- Para 4 states that if a decision has not been reached within the prescribed period of 30 days then the application will be deemed to have been refused BUT no advice will be provided of this deemed refusal.

We spoke at the hearing of making the process simpler and easier for residents to understand. I doubt that letters such as this one or the absence of any information to me are doing this.

My final point relates to height restrictions which we only touched on. Council has concerns with the fact that Town Centres, apart from Civic, have no height restrictions. This leads to concerns with the development of high rise accommodation. Council has particular concerns with proposals for the Woden Town Centre. It is the social impact of these developments which is of real concern. While we have developments which are welcomed by the community we have also seen the poor social outcomes of many high rise developments in many cities both within Australia and outside.

The concerns with Woden are the proliferation of announced residential proposals and the plethora of one bedroom apartments or less of those that have been announced. It also brings into question the lack of consideration of other proposals in the near vicinity when applications are lodged. High rise proposals that I am aware of that have been announced are:

- Woden Green has a 35 storey building and up to 4 more Towers of up to 20 storeys
- Borrowdale House redevelopment is a proposal for 27 storeys,
- Woden 9 has 3 Towers proposed of 28, 20 and 15 storeys, and
- I understand that there is another proposal nearby for a 17 storey building.

That's 10 Towers of high rise Apartments that we are aware of plus the present Sky Plaza Tower. Is this what we, the community, really want?

The major concern is the number of 1 bedroom Apartments or less proposed. This must have social impacts not so much for now but for the future. Take Woden 9 which is the only proposal that I have full numbers for.

Of the 440 Apartments only 12 are 3 bedroom which is less than 3%. 2 bedroom number 159 or 36% so we have over 60% at one bedroom, lofts or Studio Apartments.

For the 17 storey building – of the 240 Apartments proposed here only 7 are 3 bedroom. Again this is less than 3% while there are only 36 2 bedroom apartments which is 15% of the proposed. In other words over 80% will be one bedroom apartments or less.

All this too at a time when we are seeing a diminishing of sports facilities in the same area. The Bowling Club has ceased. I have no doubts that the basketball stadium in the vicinity will disappear and the pitch and put golf course has doom and gloom hovering over it. This seems to be out of step with the proposed influx of several thousand people into the Woden Town Centre to live.

The social impact of this for the future is our concern. Councils view firstly is do we really need to have so many high rise apartments in one Town Centre in Canberra.

There are other ways to increase density. If we are to go down this path of the need for higher density in apartments then this mix needs to change to encourage more than singles or couples living in these buildings to make them sustainable and a community.

Of course we are happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have on these additional comments.

Yours Sincerely,

Tom Anderson
Chair
Weston Creek Community Council