



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN SERVICES

REPORT NO.71 MAY 2001

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT SOUTH BRUCE

SECTION 21 BLOCKS 1, 3 AND 4;

AND

TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS ON HAYDON DRIVE

RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that no residential development occur on Block 3 of Section 21 due to the small size of any potential development given the constraints of the site; the environmental value of the central area of the Block; and possible problems with drainage/stormwater and with noise.

The committee recommends that Blocks 1 and 4 of Section 21 be developed for an aged care facility, with traffic access off Jaeger Circuit and with appropriate provision for preserving the environmental significance of the northern end of Block 4. The provision of an aged care facility would meet a need identified by both the Commonwealth and Territory governments, and help redress the current under-supply of aged care units in north Canberra and Belconnen.

The committee recommends that the government urgently consider constructing a four-way intersection of Haydon Drive/Mary Potter Circuit (at its northern end) and a realigned Jaeger Circuit. This would ease current traffic problems and facilitate safer access to Jaeger Circuit for both existing residents of South Bruce and the residents of the proposed aged care facility. As well, it would improve access to Calvary Hospital and smooth the integration of services between the Hospital and the aged care facility.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN SERVICES

The Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Services was established on 28/4/98 to inquire into and report on planning and lease management, road and transport services, infrastructure and asset management and public utilities purchasing, electricity industry and regulation, construction industry policy, parks and forests, private sector employment inspectorate, building services, environment, heritage and municipal services and any other related matter (*resolution of appointment, as amended on 25/11/99, 7/2/00 and 15/2/01*).

Committee members: Mr Harold Hird MLA (Chair), Mr Dave Rugendyke MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr Simon Corbell MLA

Secretary—Mr Rod Power; Office secretary—Ms Judy Moutia; for further information please contact the secretary on ph: 02 6205-0435 or fax: 02 6205-0432 or email: committees@act.gov.au

BACKGROUND

1. Following the inclusion of Block 3 of Section 21 on the government's land release program for 2000-2001, residents of South Bruce contacted the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Services to express their concern. The committee first resolved to obtain a public briefing on the matter and then resolved to institute a formal parliamentary inquiry (see key dates below). This report is the outcome of that inquiry.

KEY DATES

6/2/01: committee resolved to conduct a public hearing in order to be briefed by residents and officials; also, committee asked Minister for Urban Services to delay further action by DUS until after the hearing

30/3/01: first public hearing, attended by representatives of South Bruce Residents' Association and officers of DUS [both PALM and Land&Property]

6/4/01—second public hearing, attended by the manager of the Wildlife Research and Monitoring Unit [Environment ACT]. Also on this day, the committee formally resolved to commence an inquiry into *the proposed development at South Bruce Section 21 Blocks 1,3 and 4: and traffic arrangements on Haydon Drive*

27/4/01—third public hearing, attended by representatives of the Little Company of Mary and Calvary Health Care, and also officers of DUS [PALM]

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT SOUTH BRUCE

2. The proposed development at South Bruce is on three Blocks of Section 21 (at the intersection of Haydon Drive and Belconnen Way). The southernmost Block is Block 3 which comprises 7.4 hectares. To the north of Jaeger Circuit are Blocks 1 and 4 (totalling about 0.5 hectares).¹ The land use policy for Block 3 is residential and for Blocks 1 and 4 is community facility.

Block 3:

3. PALM stated that Block 3 of Section 21 'has been flagged for some form of potential development... for just under 30 years'; in 1986, 'the site was formally designated as suitable for community facilities and/or residential'.² The site 'is located close to the CIT, the Bruce Estate and the community facilities site, where there is a private school just to the north. It is close to the town centre of Belconnen, and it is even closer to the Jamison Group Centre. Importantly, it is near the Calvary Hospital and... it is close to a very pleasant residential area'.³ It is anticipated that 20-35 residences might be built on the site.⁴

¹ Dr Cooper [Director, Territory Planning, PALM] Transcript 27/4/01

² Ibid

³ Dr Cooper, Transcript 30/3/01

⁴ Dr Cooper and Mr Isaacs, Transcript 27/4/01

4. PALM stated that, though ‘the site is bounded by two very busy roads... [these carry] a relatively low percentage of heavy vehicles in the traffic stream... [There] are three ways [to] deal with the noise. One... is set-back distance..., [another is] using design and construction materials... [and another is] using noise mounting or fencing... Development conditions must require that a developer include appropriate noise attenuation features in the design and construction of buildings on that site’.⁵

5. PALM considers that stormwater can be managed and that the cost of any stormwater management measures can be offset against the eventual sale price of the land.⁶

6. In relation to the environmental value of the central area of the block, PALM ‘would like to have further studies undertaken’, especially in relation to ‘the application of the study information to the potential design outcome’.⁷

Blocks 1 and 4:

7. In relation to development of Blocks 1 and 4 of Section 21, PALM stated that the most northern part of the site ‘is important for maintaining some of the integrity in [the] bushland’ still on site.⁸

8. In relation to locating community facilities on the Blocks, PALM noted that ‘the percentage of our aged population is expected to double in the next decade, from 7.5% to approximately 15%. If the current pattern of dwelling types is maintained, this will generate demand for an additional 400 nursing home beds by the year 2008... [Further,] north Canberra and Belconnen have an emerging under-supply for the aged community’.⁹ On this basis, the government proposes to encourage aged persons’ units, as part of a retirement complex, on Blocks 1 and 4.¹⁰

COMMUNITY COMMENT

Block 3:

9. The concern of some residents of South Bruce is that development of Block 3 of Section 21:

- ❖ will lessen the ‘considerable noise barrier... [provided by] the densely treed area’
- ❖ would add to pollution from motor vehicles in the South Bruce residential area (by removing existing trees)
- ❖ will detrimentally affect ‘the only permanent source of water west of Haydon Drive’;
- ❖ ‘will be grossly intrusive’;¹¹
- ❖ will adversely impact upon ‘a wide range of flora and fauna... [and so the area should be regarded as] an integral part of the Canberra Nature Park’.¹²

⁵ Mr Isaacs [Transport Planning, Infrastructure Planning and Design Section, PALM] Transcript 27/4/01

⁶ Dr Cooper, Transcript 30/3/01, and Mr Chambers [Manager, Infrastructure Planning, PALM], Transcript 27/4/01

⁷ Dr Cooper, Transcript 27/4/01

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Dr Cooper, Transcript 30/3/01

¹⁰ Ms McKinnon (Executive Director, Land and Property) and Mr Johns (Land and Property), Transcript 30/3/01

¹¹ Harry and Irene Bluhm, submission dated 22/1/01

¹² Erica Lejins and Ross Kerr, correspondence dated 21/11/00; and Dr Kwan, correspondence dated 26/11/00

10. The South Bruce Residents' Association considers that Block 3 'should not have been made residential in 1993... [and should] be re-zoned to woodland as a nature park'¹³ for reasons that include the following:

- ❖ it is a valuable woodland eco-system and a valuable mini-wetland¹⁴, as well as being 'an important part of a remnant vegetation corridor'¹⁵
- ❖ 'the current infrastructure is not sufficient to support the developments proposed on the Block'¹⁶
- ❖ PALM failed to obtain an ecological study of the site¹⁷
- ❖ 'there is clearly no demand in Canberra for anything like the amount of residential building blocks that the government plans to release... [and] controversial infill sites such as South Bruce would represents less than 2% of the total assessed supply of building blocks'¹⁸
- ❖ 'the proposed development will result in a substantial loss of amenity for the residents': 'we have little confidence that any development will harmonise with the rest of South Bruce and preserve any of the fine trees in the area'¹⁹; 'the site provides significant amenity to our suburb as open space and through integrating our suburb into its bushland setting'²⁰
- ❖ 'a meeting of our Residents' Association on 19 November [2000], attended by most residents of the suburb, unanimously supported a resolution to have the site included in Canberra Nature Park, as well as the other two adjoining blocks... i.e. Blocks 1 and 4 because they are an essential link towards Black Mountain and Bruce Ridge';²¹
- ❖ 'the noise levels in part of the proposed development will be higher than the established criteria'²²
- ❖ 'there will be an obvious need to make new traffic arrangements where Jaeger Circuit joins Haydon Drive.'²³

11. The Little Company of Mary Health and Aged Care Services would like to see the area of bushland at the corner of Belconnen Way and Haydon Drive 'preserved as much as possible'.²⁴

¹³ Dr Cain, (co-convenor of South Bruce Residents' Association), Transcript 30/3/01. Also see submission by the South Bruce Residents' Association presented on 30/3/01.

¹⁴ Mr Robertson, Transcript 30/3/01

¹⁵ Mr Bluhm, Transcript 30/3/01

¹⁶ Mr Dunstone, Transcript 30/3/01

¹⁷ Ms Lejins, Transcript 30/3/01

¹⁸ Mr Lamond, Transcript 30/3/01

¹⁹ Mr Ducker, Transcript 30/3/01

²⁰ Mr Dickson (Convenor, South Bruce Residents' Association), correspondence [undated] received in the Committee Office on 13/2/01

²¹ Mr Ducker, op cit

²² Ditto

²³ Ditto

²⁴ Mr Butt (National Chief Executive Officer) Transcript 27/4/01

Blocks 1 and 4:

12. The South Bruce Residents' Association considers that Block 4 'is a vital east-west corridor between the Bruce Ridge and Gossan Hill in the Canberra Nature Park system... [and so should] be designated permanently as Canberra Nature Park... [It is] a species-rich zone of more than 70 identified local native plant species [and] at least 60 species of birds... [and] serves as habitat for kangaroos, wallaby, echidna, birds, lizards, snakes, frogs, butterflies (12 species) and many others'.²⁵ Further, Block 4 'serves as a human corridor to commuters, students, hikers, athletes, joggers, walkers, naturalists and residents'.²⁶

13. The South Bruce Residents' Association 'has no objection to a... community facility such as a nursing home/hostel on Block 1... assuming the development is not too large and is in keeping with the nature of the suburb. The Association strongly rejects proposals which extend the size of any development into Block 4. Sixty residential units in addition to a nursing home/hostel could not be accommodated on the site except in a high-density setting. This would be both incompatible with the low density of the existing South Bruce development and the bushland site. A marked increase in the number of residential dwellings would also exacerbate traffic problems currently experienced by residents entering and existing Jaeger Circuit... We query whether the co-location of a retirement village with the nursing home/hostel facility is essential on either social or economic grounds'.²⁷

14. The Little Company of Mary Health and Aged Care Services and Calvary Health Care ACT is interested in providing aged care services on Blocks 1 and 4 of Section 21, Bruce. Such a development would complement the services available at Calvary Hospital and build on the organisation's national and local expertise. Being a not-for-profit organisation, Calvary's resources are put 'directly back into the community'.²⁸

15. Calvary Health Care stated that the Commonwealth government recently allocated a further 76 funded places for the ACT, 'which would fit in very well with the concept of the aged care facility for this site'.²⁹ Calvary would like to utilise the 'wonderful bushland environment' to build a facility 'that exceeds the 2008 certification standards'—it would be 'low density and low rise'. Its size would be 80-bed 'ageing in place facility, about 50 beds being for the frail aged people'. Further, 'the care facility would be complemented by a range of villas on [level] sites that provide 24-hour call monitoring'; and it is hoped to provide 'carer respite for people who look after a loved one who just need a break or providing for people who have a partner or spouse in the Calvary services opposite'.³⁰ The proposed development would have 'a wonderful synergy with the meals, the grounds, maintenance and security and the existing infrastructure... at Calvary... [which includes the] medical centre with specialists, physiotherapy, pathology, X-ray facilities, pastoral care, specialist nursing and rehabilitation services'.³¹

²⁵ Submission dated 14/5/01 p.1

²⁶ Ibid p.2

²⁷ Ibid pp.3-4

²⁸ Mr Butt, op cit

²⁹ Ditto

³⁰ Mr Crowley (Chief Executive Officer of Little Company of Mary Aged Care, Dalton Gardens), Transcript 27/4/01

³¹ Ditto

TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS ON HAYDON DRIVE

16. The South Bruce Residents' Association drew attention to the 'traffic problems currently experienced by residents entering and existing Jaeger Circuit' and expressed concern about additional traffic flows associated with any development on Block 4 [see above]. Also, the South Bruce Residents' Association 'submits that the traffic will in fact progressively increase on Haydon Drive due to additional housing developments such as in the Fern Hill area, the proposed multi-storey development on Battye Street and further into the future, the development of the extensive land of the Belconnen Naval Station'.³²

17. In relation to whether Jaeger Circuit should be aligned with Mary Potter Circuit and Haydon Drive, the Association considers that this may not be necessary 'if the proposals to place residents on any of the three blocks did not proceed, but if they do proceed, the Association 'would prefer this re-alignment to take place on the Calvary side of Haydon Drive'.³³

18. Calvary Health Care is concerned about the 'very dangerous' traffic situation at the intersections of Haydon Drive and Mary Potter Circuit, and noted that 22 accidents have been reported to police in the past two years including five accidents in the past three months. Further, Calvary is 'getting pressure from all the stakeholders—the community, patients, relatives, staff and doctors—about [the risk of] traffic accidents'.³⁴ Calvary stated that 'about 1500 people a day currently come to Calvary'.³⁵

19. In relation to the traffic implications of the proposed aged care facility, Calvary Hospital stated that 'traffic movements [would be] minimal [and] certainly do not coincide with peak periods of traffic'.³⁶

20. PALM acknowledged that 'the existing intersection has some problems during peak periods... If the site were to be developed, particularly the community facility site to the north, we would be looking at a probable realignment of Jaeger Circuit to match up with the northern edge of Mary Potter [Circuit]... [We would then] consider positive control, essentially traffic signals, at that intersection. that would provide safe access to the hospital as well as safe access for pedestrians crossing from any community facility that might be there and, of course, from the residential precinct at South Bruce'.³⁷

21. In relation to increased traffic from the preposed residential development on Block 3 of Section 21, PALM stated that 'it is not going to add very much to the overall traffic flow on Jaeger Circuit. But the combination of some development [on this site]... and a community facility to the north would be enough to have us look carefully at the intersection with Mary Potter, making that a four-way with signal control'.³⁸

³² Submission dated 14/5/01 Block 3/21 p.2

³³ Ibid p.3

³⁴ Mr Cusack (Chief Executive Officer, Calvary Health Care ACT), Transcript 27/4/01

³⁵ Mr Butt, Transcript 27/4/01

³⁶ Mr Crowley, Transcript 27/4/01

³⁷ Mr Isaacs, Transcript 27/4/01

³⁸ Ibid

22. In relation to traffic movements into the proposed aged care facilities, PALM considers that traffic access 'would be better off Jaeger Circuit... [than off] Haydon Drive [which] is a major arterial road, and we would prefer to keep the number of entry and egress points to a minimum'.³⁹

CONCLUSION

23. The committee appreciates the manner in which detailed information has been made available to the committee by all parties involved in the inquiry: residents of South Bruce, representatives of Calvary Hospital, and government officials. Also, the committee thanks the Minister for Urban Services for agreeing to defer work on the government's proposal until after this inquiry is completed.

24. The inquiry itself demonstrates the role of the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Services in facilitating access to members of the Assembly by Canberra citizens concerned about matters which, in other states, might be viewed as specifically involving local government.

25. In relation to the government's land release program which would see residential development occur on Block 3 of Section 21, the committee acknowledges the depth of feeling among South Bruce residents about the effect of such development upon their existing amenity. Also, the committee acknowledges the 'willingness [of the South Bruce Residents' Association] to help enhance the wetland as well as conserving the area generally'.⁴⁰

26. On balance, the committee considers that the proposed residential development on Block 3 should not go ahead for at least three reasons: the small size of any development given the constraints of the site; the environmental value of the central area of the Block; and possible problems with drainage/stormwater and with noise.

27. In relation to the proposed development on Blocks 1 and 4 of Section 21, the committee respects the view of South Bruce residents that these Blocks should be incorporated (with Block 3) into an environmental buffer zone/link to the existing reserves at Gossan Hill and Black Mountain. However, the committee considers that the key area of environmental significance is the northern portion of Block 4 which can be preserved by a sensitively planned development of the Block. In view of the past use of both Blocks for community purposes, the committee is not averse to a renewal of such usage on *both* Blocks. Further, in view of the current under-supply of facilities for the aged in the north Canberra/Belconnen area, the committee supports the use of both Blocks for a low-density aged care facility. The committee notes the attraction of integrating such a facility into the existing services at Calvary Hospital, for this would increase the diversity and range of services able to be provided.

28. Turning to the traffic implications of this decision, the committee considers that the development of an aged care facility with access onto Jaeger Circuit provides the opportunity to address traffic problems on Haydon Drive, especially at the intersections of Jaeger and Mary Potter Circuits. The committee considers that, if Jaeger Circuit was re-aligned to meet Haydon Drive opposite the northern end of Mary Potter Circuit at a signalised intersection, then all users of roads in the vicinity would benefit, including South Bruce residents (who would have a

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Submission dated 14/5/01 Block 3/21 p.2

safer entry onto Haydon Drive), Calvary Hospital users (who also would have a safer entry and exit to/from the), ACTION buses, and the general motorist using Haydon Drive.

29. The committee's conclusions (above) form the basis for the three recommendations at the head of this report.

Mr Hird MLA
Chair

29 May 2001