

**JOINT SUBMISSION TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

FROM

**THE BAHAI COMMUNITY
THE SIKH COMMUNITY
ORANA SCHOOL
THE WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**DRAFT VARIATION TO THE TERRITORY PLAN No. 281
MOLONGLO AND NORTH WESTON**

The following is a submission relating to the Planning and Environment Committee's consideration of Draft Variation 281 - Molonglo and North Weston. The submission is made jointly by the Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC), Orana School, Canberra Baha'i Community, and Canberra Sikh Association.

We made a joint submission on this matter to ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) in November 2007, of which the Committee has a copy. We request that Committee members read it, because it is pertinent to our present submission.

Recent Developments

In April 2008 ACTPLA released a revised version of Draft Variation 281, and a summary of the submissions received during the consultation period. These documents indicated that the submissions we made in November 2007 had been rejected by ACTPLA without further consultation. The lack of further consultation offended the wider Weston Creek Community.

Subsequently, following community protests, there have been a number of meetings between ourselves, Minister Barr, and ACTPLA. We have also met with the National Capital Authority (NCA) in relation to the changes of land use that must be approved by the Commonwealth before residential development can progress.

On 4th June 2008 ACTPLA presented its revised development proposals to the Weston Creek Community at a well-attended public meeting. The revised proposals addressed some Community concerns, but in our opinion the development proposals still have significant defects.

These defects and our proposals for rectification are presented below.

Our Requests

In meetings and discussions with the residents of the suburbs of Weston Creek and the people associated with the Orana School and Bahai and Sikh communities we have found that there is a diversity of views, with some arguing for no further urban consolidation and others seeking maximum urban consolidation.

Irrespective of the merits of these diverse views, we have found that the majority of people believe that the development proposed by ACTPLA in the North Weston area (to the south of the Cotter road), should be greatly moderated. Our initial submission reflected this, and it is still our position.

Also, we do not subscribe to the argument that for every block of land that is not developed, there is a need to squeeze in another block elsewhere in this area to take its place. Our past and current submission in relation to North Weston focuses only on that land which is to the south of the Cotter road. The amount of land in contention is not significant compared to the overall plans for the Molonglo development.

The Ridge to the east of the Baha'i Centre, Orana School and the CIT

In our original submission we recommended that residential development should not be allowed along the ridge. We noted that the ridge is an important recreational area for the residents of Weston, and it is also an area containing significant trees and wildlife. This ridge facility is not close to shopping and other community facilities, and is therefore not suitable for most institutional purposes. The number of residential blocks slated for the ridge is insignificant when compared to the overall Molonglo development.

During the consultation process the ACT government agreed that the ridge area to the east of the Baha'i Centre and Orana School should not be designated for residential use. Instead, the revised drawings prepared by ACTPLA indicate that the existing "Broadacre" zoning will be retained. This zoning will allow the ridge area to be developed for a variety of institutional uses. This is not acceptable to the leaseholders in the north Weston area, or the WCCC, or the majority of the thousands of people that these organisations directly represent. The ridge area should be classified as Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces.

Further south, the ridge land to the east of the horticultural facilities is earmarked for residential purposes. This land, which forms part of the ridge and provides access to the total ridge area, should also be retained as Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces.

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has consulted with us in preparing the most recent version of Draft Amendment No 63 to the National Capital Plan. We understand that NCA has recommended that the ridge area described above should be categorised as Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces. That recommendation is supported by all of the parties to this submission.

We request that the Standing Committee recommends that the ridge area remains permanently undeveloped, as Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces.

The CIT Arboretum

During the consultation process the ACT government agreed that the CIT Arboretum should be permanently retained as public open space. However the revised plans issued by ACTPLA at the June 2008 community meeting show that only parts of the Arboretum and associated mature/rare plantings are to be retained. Those parts were selected without community participation, despite the interest expressed by the Community

We request that the Standing Committee recommends that the whole of the Arboretum and its associated mature/rare plantings be retained, with appropriate public access. The actual boundaries require further consultation with expert horticulturists, the CIT horticulture staff who planted the trees, and members of the community.

Buffer Zones around Existing Properties

In our November 2007 submission we sought to have effective buffer zones at the interface between the existing properties and the proposed new dwellings, to preserve the amenity of the properties of both the existing lessees and the occupants of the new residences. In support of this view we drew attention to the strong community opposition to the building of the Sikh Centre close to houses in Mawson, which resulted in the allocation of the present site for the Sikh centre.

During the consultation process ACTPLA have agreed to provide small (18 meter) buffer zones around the properties of existing landholders. We consider that these buffer zones are not wide enough, especially around the Sikh Community Centre, which is on a small block of land and designed with large glass areas to take account of an open space concept – rather than an urban environment.

The ACTPLA plans show that the elevated area between the Sikh and Baha'i centres (block 13/83) will be developed as residential space. We understand that part of that block may now be offered for sale to the Baha'i community. We entirely support the sale of land to the Baha'i.

Further, the buffer zone at the interface between the Sikh Community land and the proposed residential properties south of Cotter Road (block 14/83) is only 18 metres wide. This is inadequate, especially in view of the very strong community objections to the 2001 Sikh development proposal to build a temple close to houses in Mawson.

We recommend to the Standing Committee :

- The sale of part of Block 13/83 to the Baha'i Community
- That any of Block 13/83 which is not sold to the Baha'i Community be retained permanently as "Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces"
- That block 14/83 between the Sikh lease and the Cotter road be retained permanently as "Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces"

Height of Residential Buildings

The detailed proposals released by ACTPLA at the June 2008 community meeting indicate that much of the proposed housing will be high density. Some of the blocks will be very small, and some blocks will have four story buildings. ACTPLA has since advised that the percentage of small blocks will be small, and that they will add an element of diversity.

The residents of Weston Creek who attended that meeting were strongly opposed to such high density development. It has not been adequately explained to the Community why there is a need for a relatively small number of 3 and 4 story residences in this low amenity area (in terms of shops and general community facilities). The 3 and 4 story buildings are likely to introduce privacy and shade issues with no substantive benefit. We find it curious that the proposition of 3 and 4 story residences was only recently drawn to the attention of the parties to this submission.

The community members present at the recent public meeting offered the opinion that many of the streets and new housing blocks in North Weston are not solar oriented and that the orientation of the blocks should be arranged, as far as is practical, to minimise environmental impact and maximise thermal efficiency.

We recommend to the Standing Committee that:

- There be no 3 and 4 story developments in North Weston.
- That solar orientation be taken into account in the north Weston development.

Signed

For the Bahai Community.

Jamshid Hatami (for the Secretary)

For the Sikh Community.

I.P.S.Kankg. (President)

For Orana School.

Greg Roche (Chair, Orana School Board)

For the Weston Creek Community Council.

Tim Dalton (Chairman WCCC)

Date 23rd June 2008