

Submission to Standing Committee for Planning and Environment

Draft variation to the Territory Plan No. 261 Part Blocks 2 and 3 and Block 5 - Section 75 - Watson ACT Changes to Commercial CZ6 Leisure and Accommodation Zone

I am responding to ACTPA's Report on Consultation on Draft Variation No 261. This document provides inadequate and incorrect responses, and raises more questions than it answers, it is misleading and shows that ACTPLA have already made their decision on the fate of the Australian Village site.

Standard Letter Comments

A. Standard Letter Comments



1. Retain and re-open Clancy's

Response: The tourism and entertainment activities on the site have proved to be not commercially viable over a long period.

This is incorrect; Clancy's had a turnover of \$1M per year and would still be operating today but for the owners putting them on a month by month lease. Many prospective tenants have tried to negotiate with the owners to reopen Clancy's and other buildings on the site for restaurants, arts, crafts and were refused or offered month to month leases.

The owners/developers have deliberately run down the Village and are being rewarded by the ACT Government by giving them a parcel of land (at ACT ratepayers expense) and changing the zoning so they can develop the site for so called affordable housing, what a joke. Where is the transparency that Government departments are supposed to work to?

2. Retain the mill-pond

Response: A pond to control storm water runoff rate and quality is intended to be incorporated in the future development.

It is blatantly obvious that ACTPLA staff have not even bothered to visit the site and see the mill-pond which is the most authentic example in Australia and the other beautiful buildings. The Mill-Pond is one of a kind and should be kept for the education of school children and also adults, I know I was amazed when I saw it for the first time.

Doesn't Canberra want any history for upcoming generations to see?



3. Preserve other beautiful buildings at Heritage Village

Response: The existing buildings on the site are of modern construction and have no heritage significance. They are not considered to have any particular architectural merit that would warrant their preservation.

Again it just shows from this statement they have not visited the Village which is a replica nineteenth Century Australian Village. I was speaking to some tourists who were from Mauritius and they couldn't believe the buildings were going to be destroyed and were bringing their family from Sydney to see the buildings before destruction takes place.

Mr Barr has a very strong case of '***conflict of interest***' between 'Tourism and Land Planning' especially when even the tourists can see the potential for tourism on the Village site.

4. Development should not be allowed until sewerage, road capacity, school and recreational amenities issues have been addressed and rectified

Response: Sewerage, road capacity, school and recreational amenity provision has been addressed in the planning study reports that support the draft variation.

All these studies were conducted by the **developer in 2004** and are well and truly out of date.

Consideration needs to be taken on the high increase of traffic coming from Gungahlin up Antill Street and through Watson, Dickson, Downer, Ainslie and Hackett.

How can a decision be made by the Committee on the Draft Variation 261, when the information is so out of date or not even started.

8. Concern about process where buildings are left to rot so that the owners can claim the tourist facility would require refurbishment to operate as originally intended and then redevelop the site with Government support.

Response: The lessee has been negotiating with the ACT Government over the past few years to enable the redevelopment of the site for a commercially viable solution which will also provide community benefit via affordable housing.

Can the ACT Government guarantee that the community will benefit via affordable housing. , In a document obtained under FOI provisions Neil Savery, Chief Planning Executive, ACTPL says “It is also worth noting the difficulty in defining and setting parameters on ‘affordable housing’ provision. This may impact on the price that the proponent would be willing to pay for the additional land and generate comparatively lower revenue”

The lessee has not allowed more than month by month leases on any building for more than 4 years, meaning that potential tenants can not justify their start up and investment costs in a business on the site. The notion that this site is not viable is incorrect; it has been the owner/developer who has obstructed the site from being commercially viable. Why was the property not resumed by the ACT Government for lack of maintenance, which is a condition of their lease?



The site has huge potential for community use as the photo above shows the Music Market being held on the grounds.

One year a New Year’s Eve Party was held and the organisers anticipated 25,000 and 62,000 showed up.

Christmas parties could be reinstated AFP, ABS would hold their Christmas parties for staff and family on the grounds.

John Farnham released his Whispering Jack album on the stage at the Village, the stage still stands in the paddock.

Numerous other concerts have been held successfully at the Village, and could be again if the Village is retained for its original zoning.



ACT for Trees, Keith Storey – advises that the edge of the Limestone Plain runs through the area under consideration for rezoning. The Limestone Plain starts at the natural forest edge and had no trees until Canberra was established. The slopes of Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie, which included the yellow box/red gum/grassy woodland, had a fairly distinct line between natural Australian landscapes (i.e., trees and plains). This area is of significance as the transition line.

The yellow box/red box/ grassy woodland are listed as an endangered eco-system. This is not an insignificant matter. This needs to be dealt with, with urgency, by an Environmental Impact Study.

Advice from ACT for Trees has outlined that the edge of the Limestone Plain is defined by the yellow box and red gum tree line. This is a geographical division, a geographical change from the bush to the city. This really is an “edge of town” issue, not a political use of language. I want this recognized as something that needs to be included in research that should be completed before this development, or rezoning, is passed and implemented.

Antill Street has no residential development to the north at present and should be kept that way and retained as a green zone and a buffer to Mt Majura.

I feel that the Committee should look at the issues raised by the community. The Fauna and Flora, traffic, sewerage, school and noise studies undertaken by the developers are out of date and incomplete. The Committee should put the proposal to the Draft Variation 261 on hold until proper studies are carried out by the appropriate departments, not the developer who benefits by not carrying out adequate studies on the different subjects of contention.

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