

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
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CANBERRA ACT 2601
e-mail: committees@act.gov.au.

RE *Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 244 – Duffy part* ***Block 2 Section 56 Stromlo Settlement (DV244)***

The Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra is Canberra's peak non-government environment organisation. As an umbrella organisation the Conservation Council represents the interests of community and conservation organisations in the ACT and Australian Capital Region as well as the broader environmental interests of all the citizens of the ACT. The Conservation Council's mission is to achieve the highest quality environment for Canberra and the surrounding region.

The Conservation Council opposes new or extended rural villages in the ACT, based on long standing Council policies. During the public debate surrounding the development of the *Spatial Plan*, the Conservation Council consistently advocated a more compact Canberra for economic, social and environment reasons. The Council welcomed the release of the final *Spatial Plan* and its focus on setting limits to the physical sprawl of Canberra. A contained city will provide the best protection for the environment and be in keeping with the 21st century realities of climate change, the need to conserve habitats and people's preference for liveable cities.

The Conservation Council advocates that the ACT Government should show leadership in creating a compact city by providing rapid and attractive public transport providing real alternatives to the car, and move away from urban sprawl with its poor energy, water, and biodiversity outcomes. Rural villages and rural residential developments are a primary example of urban sprawl and poor greenhouse, energy, transport and biodiversity outcomes.

While the Conservation Council is sympathetic to the desire of some residents to return to their former communities post bushfire, there is little information available in the public realm about the desires of former residents. How many wish to return? What are their views on the various options, including simply rebuilding what was previously there? Could they be financially compensated to take up residence elsewhere?

It is the Conservation Council's belief that the proposed increase in the size of the settlements and the style of housing will drastically change the demographics. This combined with high housing prices and rents, suggests that returning residents are likely to be squeezed out.

Whilst the Conservation Council does not support the expansion of rural villages, if the Government does proceed with the proposal to redevelop Stromlo Village, then there are a number of issues which we hope the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment will consider during its enquiring. These issues include:

- Cat and dog predation and general pet bans or containment.
- Plantings around the village - consistent with local woodland and grassland communities to encourage biodiversity recovery and good fire management principles.
- Plantings in local gardens – also consistent with above principles and to avoid weed problems. Community responsibility to control outbreaks of noxious grasses and herbaceous weeds African Love Grass, Chilean Needle Grass, Serrated Tussock, St. John's Wort, Paterson's Curse, Vipers Bugloss, Thistles, Lamb's Tongue, Mullein, etc. and woody weeds.
- Provision of infrastructure and training to ensure that local landcare/fire management group is established to look after environment and fire prevention.
- Procedures to ensure that dumping and garbage do not add to pollution or nutrient problems.
- Proper provision of government services, especially bus services, education and preschool services. If necessary local rates should cover such services.
- And most importantly, alternatives to the proposed redeveloped villages.

If you would like to discuss these issues further please contact me on 6247 7808 to arrange a convenient time.

Yours sincerely

Trish Harrup
Director

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