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Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal

Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 344: Woden Town Centre: Zone changes and amendments to the Phillip precinct map and code.

Submission
by

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Preamble

The proposed 'recommended' variation 344 to the Phillip Precinct code by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSD) culminates years of uncertainty regarding planning in the Woden town centre since the former planning agency ACT Planning and land authority (ACTPLA) commissioned the 2004 Woden master plan and while some recommendations have been implemented many other recommendations were not.

In the following years since 2004 there were many variations and technical amendments to the Phillip precinct codes, most notably Variation 259 Woden town Centre. This variation saw the removal of the recreation and leisure precinct to the north of Launceston Street limiting protection only to the Philip Oval and the Philip pool (which I will go into detail later). This has led to the removal of public indoor and outdoor sports facilities for High density housing with private use only recreation & leisure facilities.

The review of the 2004 Woden Master plan commenced late 2012 was partly due to an over ambitious residential development plan by the Land Development Agency (LDA) known then as Woden 9. The then planning minister Simon Corbell called for the withdraw of the plans in favour of a new master plan for parts if not all of the town centre. One that improved the Human Scale and liveability of the area.

While 'Human Scale' was discussed during the master plan phase and mentioned in the Final Woden town centre master plan in November 2015. The variation 344 makes no mention of this in favour of high rise development and rewarding developers and building owners. The Woden town centre needs to be more than just a 'High rise suburb' that is proposed in the Variation. There is limited improvement in public spaces and public realm, two important issues in city planning. The former National Capital authority Chief Executive Malcolm Snow now the new City Renewal Authority CEO stated the 'its the public spaces and public realm which make a city'.

The recommended variation is overall disappointing by giving developers and building owners increased building heights in areas a, b and c (density bonusing) by an additional four storeys stating only that the development is close to public transport stations, stops and maintains the building height hierarchy with higher buildings to the centre. This does not include any requirement for the provision of affordable housing or the retention or providing of public open space and community facilities. With this recommendation close to public transport stations and stops all sites contained within the town centre could reasonably be argued will meet this requirement and see building heights allowed up to 16 storeys fronting all side of the commercial precinct in area c. This was not the intention of the master plan.

Increased residential density can be achieved in a number of ways and High rise development is only one of them. High rise development will interrupt the existing views Woden residents currently enjoy to the numerous hills and mountains visible from the Valley. No provision in the Variation to protect views of current Woden residents.

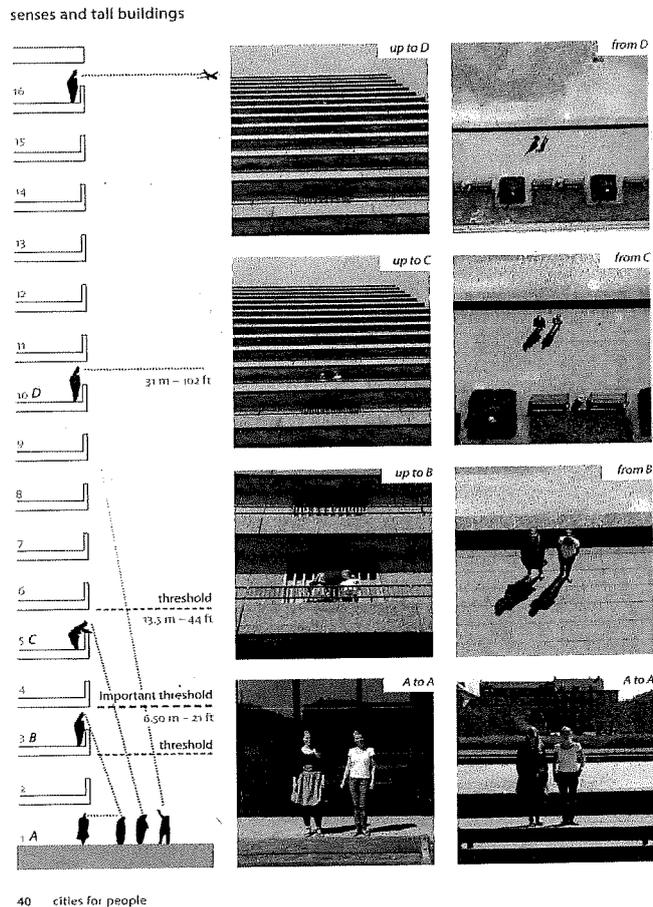
High rise is not that sustainable in terms of energy /water use. A 2011 study conducted by Willoughby City Council in Sydney showed that High rise development uses far more energy and water and produced more CO2 than mid rise, low rise, town house and even single detached dwellings.

Respected Sydney Architect Professor Kerry Clare who in 2010 won the Gold medal of architecture from the Australian institute of architects stated recently that 'High-rise living has a number of drawbacks including social isolation and diminished public realm amenity.' 'Current high-rise building practices in Australia make for poor environmental performance and reduced liveability.' 'Living in a high-rise building radically reduced the sort of chance encounters that lower-rise dwellings ensured were inevitable, as residents were on the street more often.' 'Tall buildings also created large shadows, wind tunnels and poor environmental conditions which in turn made activities such as jogging or cycling "much less enjoyable creating less amenity, life and activity.'

Jan Gehl respected Danish architect and urban planner stated the high rise residential development is a lazy way to increase density. In his book cities for building he argues *low rise buildings are in keeping with the human horizontal sensory apparatus but high buildings are not.* Contact between building and the street is possible from the lowest five floors, contact with the city quickly dissipates above the five floor. The idea being those living above six, seven storeys lose the connection to the ground level and stay up in their buildings rather than interact with activities at the ground level.

Building Heights

The master-plan and variations have made no explanatory reference to a surveyor measurement of building height and in the final variation these 'marker' sites would have been missed by the wider community or confused the community as most of the document refers to building heights in the number of storeys.



40 cities for people *Senses and Scale, Cities for people - Jan Gehl 2010*

RL (Reduced Level) a distance recorded as a Height Above or Below the DATUM. This height is in metres. AHD – Australian Height Datum is a theoretical reference surface (datum) for altitude measurement in Australia. In 1971 the mean sea level for 1966-1968 was assigned the value of zero on the Australian Height Datum at thirty tide gauges around the coast of the Australian continent. The resulting datum surface, has been termed the Australian Height Datum (AHD) and was adopted as the datum to which all vertical control for mapping (and other surveying functions) is to be referred.

Recommendation : Building Height will be expressed in both storeys and equivalent AHD. An explanatory note of what RL-- AHD is and the overall maximum building height should be no higher than RL 645 AHD for buildings in the centre and blocks adjacent to the Transport corridor (Callam Street)

The Variation states two measures of Building heights for three 'marker building sites', one in the number of storeys and the other two sites is in survey measurement. The two sites using the survey measurement of RL 670 AHD and RL 640 AHD respectively are in area east of Callum street formerly known as Woden Green. The development started as a Joint venture between the LDA and the Hindmarsh group before the LDA sold its stake in the venture in 2013. There were plans for two high rise sites, but would have needed a plan variation for these sites to go ahead. The current plans for these sites now, is that Hindmarsh is selling or have sold Block 13 – Section 81 and has plans for townhouses on Block 19 – Section 15.

Rezoning parts of Woden East from RZ4 to RZ5 includes Block 26 – section 158 an area that already has townhouses under construction meaning that the need for rezoning to RZ5 has lapsed.

Recommendation : Element 2 Buildings – Rules 2.1 Building heights . Remove Criteria C13 A marker building in section 81 is permitted up to RL 670AHD

Recommendation : RC3 – Callam Street/Athllon Drive Corridor. Element 4 Buildings . . Remove Criteria C38 A marker building is permitted up to RL648AHD where development complies with all of the following .. Also remove area from RZ4 to RZ5 in figure 3

The other marker building site the Woden Tradies has been afforded increased building height up to 24 storeys. Though it is not clear whether this site also gains an extra 4 storeys to 28 because as this site is located in area c and could be argued, meets the criteria again for being close to public transport stops and stations. The Tradies site has had 3 development applications approved for the site plus a deconcessionalised lease.

The most recent DA in 2013 included building heights of 24 and 22 storeys but had to be reduced in height because of the overshadowing of the nearby Bellerive retirement village in Lyons. Initially EPSDD had suggested heights be lowered to 12 and 15 storeys but the architects successfully argued for a reduced height of 19 and 17 storeys with the overshadowing reduced enough to satisfy the EPSDD though not the residents of Bellerive. Now it is acceptable to go back up to 24 storeys for some reason? There is no need for a marker building on this site and 12 storeys will be in-keeping with the surrounding developments of Sorrell (10 storeys) and Trilogy (12 storeys) along with Discovery House and the new Siruis Building.

Recommendation: Element 2 Buildings – Rules 2.1 Building heights : remove Criteria C11 where the asterisk relates to Figure 2 of one higher building up to 24 storeys.....

Public space open space.

Another disappointing outcome of the Variation is that public space from Arabanoo Park will be rezoned for community facilities CFZ. This was another LDA proposal some years ago that has been included in the variation. Why take open space from the park when there is ample space around Callam offices (Block 29 section 80) mainly carparks that could be used for more community facilities including more carparking spaces.

Recommendation: Remove Community facilities zone (CFZ) from Arabanoo park (Block 36 Section 80) Rezone Block 29 , section 80 area directly east of Callam offices for CFZ

Recommendation : Additional public space to be created . Areas along Yarralumla creek to be

retained and enhanced for public open space to improve urban amenity. Block 15 - Section 15, Block 12 – Section 81, Block 31 – Section 80 rezoned from CZ1 to PRZ1 Urban open space, Block 8 Section 79 and area between Athllon Drive and Yarralumla creek currently subject to rezoning.

Further Public spaces :

Recommendation : Element 2 Buildings – Rule 22 Remove(b) and add (Block 1 , Section 7) a new public park between Bowes Street and proposed new road/ walkway in figure 4. The area can still include carparking under the public park/space.

Recommendation: Element 2 Buildings - New rule Block 1 – Section 181 rezoned from CZ2 to PRZ1 – public open space.

Recommendation : Element 2 Buildings – New Rule Block 2 – Section 180 Any redevelopment of site to establish one quarter of site for Public urban open space. PRZ1.

Sporting and Recreation facilities. - Phillip Pool and Ice Skating Rink.

The variation makes mention to the site Block 2 – section 22 that: Rules 1.6

Development complies with all of the following:

- a) provides or retains an ice skating rink suitable for national ice hockey competition
- b) provides or retains a 50–metre public pool with direct public address to Irvine Street
- c) development for other uses involves redevelopment of the pool as an indoor facility.

The Phillip Pool was an ACT Government owned public pool which was privately operated by a tenant on the site. Two rounds of changes through approved variations 226 and 259 for which was supposed to improve or enhance the opportunities for private investment, but failed to eventuate. Then in 2008 , rightly or wrongly the then ACT Planning minister and Chief of Planning allowed the granting of a 99 yr lease to the current tenant of the site (Glencora Pty Ltd) without community consultation. This was also to help opportunities for private investment , but almost a decade on and this still hasn't happen.

Last year before the ACT Election the ACT Government announced if returned that they would seek expressions of interest and feasibility study into a new ice rink for the ACT to be built in Canberra's south. So what does that mean for the viability of the Phillip site. It is clear from statement he current lessee has made an in a submission to the Draft Variation through a planning consultant that company has no intention to make the Phillip pool an indoor facility. Recent planning studies on the provision of an indoor pool for Woden has recommended a new facility be built in a new location in the Woden town centre . I tend to agree and recommend that no requirement be made to retain a 50m pool or ice rink for block 2 Section22.

The ACT Government is currently intending to start an new indoor multi-purpose sports facility feasibility study for Woden . This must include a new indoor pool at a minimum of 25 m ideally 50m.

Recommendation : Remove rule 1.6 Additional development – Phillip pool and Ice skating centre R8 . Remove area A from Figure 1.

Final Overall Recommendation for Planning and Urban Renewal Committee into DV344 Woden town centre . Recommend a review of Woden master plan and DV344 by Gehl Architects for a Public space public life study similar to the Wollongong Council City Report. Or review by Rob Adams Director of City Design at the City of Melbourne.