

Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

Legislative Assembly of the ACT.

Submission in respect of Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281 – Molonglo and North Weston.

The following comments are provided in the hope that the views of the community will be taken into account before the final decisions are made with regard to the above development.

The Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) has made, and will make, submissions which will reflect the views and opinions expressed at two public meetings the Council convened during the past couple of months. Attendance at each of those meetings exceeded 100 (over 160 at the first) concerned and interested residents. The Council's submissions undoubtedly represent the views gained from these meetings, and therefore **I strongly urge the committee to take heed of the considered submissions. Of particular concern to us all is the retention of our green areas as part of buffer zones, which will provide some recreational and wildlife corridors.**

Having been a resident of Weston for about 35 years, I value the whole area and can understand why the planning authorities want to exploit all available land in the area. However, I believe that the authority should also consider the open-space, uncrowded environment as being the preference over higher-density, higher-revenue options.

I would like to make the following additional comments about just some aspects of the Draft Variation:

1. retain the open land on the hill surrounded by the Cotter Road, the Tuggeranong Parkway, Unwin Place, and Streeton Drive

- do not plan residential blocks around the Orana School, the Baha'i temple and the Sikh site, preserving the openness of the approach into Weston Creek

- I understand the Sikh community was **promised** by the ACT Government that they would NOT be surrounded by houses when they were granted the use of their present site, yet the Draft Plan has provision for 5 houses to be built surrounding the Sikh building with a road to be built on the edge of the block virtually parallel with the Cotter Road/Streeton Drive curve

- **the proposals for residential use on this hill seem to run contrary** to the "Principles for the Development of Molonglo and North Weston Future Urban Area" as described in the Structure Plan Molonglo and North Weston July (?) 2008, of which Para 4.4.14 states "The landscape setting and values of Molonglo and North Weston will be recognised and incorporated into the urban design of the area. **Boundary hills and significant internal ridges within the urban fabric will be excluded from inappropriate development**". Further, Para 4.5.22 under the heading "Landscape and open space principles" states "Development will be planned to respond to the topography of the area by **responding to key features (eg views, vistas, ridges and drainage lines) and minimising the residual impacts of development.**"

- retention of this open space would have **minimal effect** on the overall development plan, as **the number of houses shown in this part of the variation is so insignificant.**

2. eliminate the provision of 250sqm blocks in the Plan

- whereas 20 years ago block sizes were around 650 sqm, (as advised at the last meeting),

this new proposal has provision for block sizes to be as small as 250sqm

- while it may be desirable to provide some lower-cost blocks/houses, in my opinion this size block is way too small and is not consistent with the general layout of the Weston/ Weston Creek suburbs

- if the experience in other newer suburbs is any indicator, such small blocks will mean that houses are built almost to the boundary fences with virtually no space between house and fence, thus eliminating space for gardens, shrubs, or trees, which in turn affects the greening of the areas, resulting in the absence of bird life and insects, and a significant adverse effect on the environment (which would run completely opposite to the government's claims to be green and environmentally friendly, conscious and aware of climate change etc etc).

3. reduce the 4-storey high density provisions to a maximum of 2-storeys

- the Plan presently has provision for 4-storey units along Unwin Place and opposite the Orana School if I recall correctly

- such heavy density housing near the school would increase the congestion near the school, and would be out of place within the general layout and unit heights in other parts of the Weston Creek suburbs, none of which presently have 4 storeys to my knowledge

- further, it has been past practice to locate such higher-density housing in proximity to shops and other community buildings, neither of which will be nearby to these blocks.

4. include provision for light rail connection in the overall plan for the total Molonglo/Belconnen development

- it will be too late and too expensive to make provision for fast, efficient, light rail public transport if it is not considered now, during the planning and development stages.

My other concerns relate to the width of streets, block layout, and the retention of buffer zones around the development of the North Weston and Molonglo suburbs. While Minister Barr has given assurances that the Government has “now incorporated high standards of design of residential neighbourhoods as required under the *Future Urban Areas Residential Subdivision Code*” (his letter to me dated 21 May 2008), it begs the question whether these “high standards” are anywhere near those that were in force when the Weston Creek suburbs were developed originally. Examples of inadequate street widths for instance can be seen in other suburban developments.

Again I would stress that this submission is mainly in support of the representations made to the Weston Creek Community Council by the residents which in turn have been made to the ACT Government and the Planning Authority.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on these aspects of the Plan.

(Mr) R A Shakespear