



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment,
Planning, Transport and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment

Submission number: 048

Submitter: Voices of West Belconnen

Date authorised for publication: 1 May 2025

Submission into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment The Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services resolves to inquire into and report on Petition 002-25, Hawker Village shops redevelopment

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the proposed redevelopment of the Hawker Village Shops by Woolworths.

Voices of West Belconnen understands the proposal involves land currently owned by Woolworths, including the existing supermarket site, as well as the building that previously housed the TAB, post office, and bakery. We also note that the existing playground would be removed under this proposal.

Although the exact footprint of the development is unclear, it appears that approximately half of Hawker Village would be redeveloped, while the remaining half would remain untouched. This risks creating a jarring ‘old vs new’ contrast, similar to what has occurred in Dickson.

We understand this is a significant redevelopment that includes:

- **Public land potentially being sold directly** – specifically, the central courtyard area including the playground. The rationale and community benefit behind a direct sale of this land remain unclear.
- **The large carpark adjacent to Springvale Drive**, beside the supermarket. It would be helpful to understand how many parking spaces currently exist, and how many will be included in the new development.
- **Sections of roadways** around and between the supermarket, the carpark, and the lower-level Hawker Place extension near the existing apartment block.

Our Key Concerns:

1. Parking and Accessibility

- The current surface-level parking, with well-designed pedestrian crossings, is essential for community access—particularly for those with mobility challenges.
- While basement parking has benefits, there should be a mix that retains some surface-level parking for short visits.

2. Impact on Existing Businesses

- Excavation for basement parking could severely impact businesses not part of the redevelopment. It is unclear how this will be managed.

3. Loss of Community Space

- The central courtyard and playground are vital community assets. This space is safe, sunlit, wind-protected, and heavily used—particularly by older residents during the day.
- Relocating this space near Springvale Drive compromises its accessibility, safety, and amenity, especially due to increased wind exposure and loss of northerly sunlight.

4. **Support for a Full-Line Supermarket**

- We support the upgrade from a Woolworths Metro to a full-line store.

5. **Concerns Around Shop-Top Housing**

- While the ACT Government is following European-style urban planning, the execution in Canberra has often lacked cohesion. In Europe (e.g., Munich), shop-top housing is part of a well-planned, integrated village environment with schools, public transport, green spaces, and a true sense of community.
- By contrast, Canberra examples such as the Dickson Coles development feel disconnected and poorly integrated.
- Good shop-top development requires holistic planning—not just a shopping centre with apartments on top, but a thoughtfully designed precinct like Casey or Grace.
- Any development should aim to foster a cohesive village atmosphere that supports both existing and new residents, rather than standing out as a ‘sore thumb’.

6. **Commercial Viability of Shop Tops**

- Many shop-top developments in Canberra have failed to attract viable businesses. The Cirrus complex in Belconnen is a prime example, with empty ground-floor shops despite its prominent location.
- The inquiry should investigate how many new shop-top commercial spaces remain vacant, how long they’ve been empty, and whether Canberra’s market can sustain more.

7. **Building Height and Overshadowing**

- Hawker currently has few buildings taller than 2-3 storeys. Taller developments could overshadow public spaces and reduce their amenity.

In Summary:

Hawker Village has immense potential. But to realise it, redevelopment must be undertaken with community, context, and character at heart—not just commercial considerations.

We urge the ACT Government and Woolworths to:

- Consider a development that enhances community cohesion and village character.
- Balance the need for housing with thoughtful planning and sufficient public amenities.
- Learn from past missteps in Dickson, where redevelopment created division between old and new areas with little regard for overall integration.
- Conduct **genuine**, not tokenistic, community consultation. This includes recognising that many older residents are not online and would benefit from physical models of the proposed development displayed in community hubs.

Let's build a Hawker Village that reflects the heart of the community—something any of us would be proud to live in or visit.

Voices of West Belconnen

16 April 2025