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26 May 2013

Mr Mick Gentleman MLA  
Chair, Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and TAMS  
Office of the ACT Legislative Assembly  
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Dear Mick,

It was a pleasure to meet at Argyle Square earlier this week. Thank you for taking the time and opportunity to do so.

After our conversation I re-checked the earliest publicly available plans for the re-development of the Cooyong Street Urban Renewal Area, DV308.

Just over 3 years ago, in April 2010, the "Indicative Master Plan" by Purdon & Associates proposed 200 units in predominantly 3 and 4 storey buildings on the Reid part of the site. One tower of 10 stories was shown at the junction of Ainslie Avenue and Cooyong Street. The other eight buildings shown on this plan, and covering most of the Reid part of the site, were all 3 or 4 stories high.

This "Indicative Master Plan" formed the basis of the first round of public consultations.

Since then, despite increasing public apprehension about the height and scale of the proposed re-development, each succeeding published version of the plan (in June 2010, September 2011, and the current version) has increased the height and mass of the buildings proposed for the Reid part of the site. Now 386 units in predominantly 10 storey buildings (with one of 15 stories) are proposed for the Reid part of the site.

Two questions need to be asked in relation to the last 3 years:

1. Why did the developer, in the course of these three years, almost double the scale of the proposed redevelopment on the Reid part of the site?
2. Did the planning office of the ACT Government conduct a proper "due diligence" assessment of the proposal of September 2011? Such an assessment would surely have revealed that this proposal contravened

basic principles of urban planning. If the ACT Government planning office did perform such an assessment, why was it seemingly not able to persuade the developer to modify the plans to conform to good practice?

What is to be done now? A key to moving forward with the re-development of this area is to explicitly recognise that it comprises two different sites. The main site, three-quarters of the total land area, is north of Ainslie Avenue, in Braddon. The smaller site, one-quarter of the total land area, is in Reid.

These two sites, one in Braddon the other in Reid, differ in important respects (as I argued in my submission to your Committee, 14 April 2013, pages 4-6). These two sites warrant separate consideration and separate treatment.

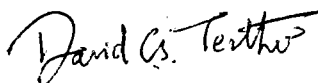
A major failing of the redevelopment proposal to date has been its insistence on treating these two sites, separated by Ainslie Avenue, as a single site. The developer seems to have devised an architectural concept for the main, Braddon site, and then tried to use this as a basis for the much smaller site in Reid.

This approach has produced only mediocre, and highly controversial results. It's time to return to the drawing board and commission new design solutions that take proper account of the different opportunities and constraints that apply to the two sites.

In my view much could be gained if the developer were to seek a different planning consultant for the Reid site. A fresh mind could well produce a more appropriate solution.

I hope that the above observations are useful to you, and I wish you all the best for the conclusion of your Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely,



David Teather

cc Veronica Strkalj,  
Secretary, Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and TAMS,  
Office of the ACT Legislative Assembly

Note: By e-mail, I have forwarded to you a pdf of the "Draft Consultation Report: Section 52 & 57 Braddon, Section 7 Reid" (Department of Housing & Community Services, June 2010). The "Indicative Master Plan - Heights and Areas" of April 2010 appears as Figure 2-1, on page 3 of this Draft Consultation Report.