

Jongsma, Annemieke

From: Committees
Sent: Monday, 18 September 2017 8:39 AM
To: Jongsma, Annemieke
Subject: FW: Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Urban Renewal Inquiry into Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No344 Woden Town Centre [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

-----Original Message-----

From: Georgina Pinkas [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 15 September 2017 4:43 PM
To: Committees
Subject: Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Urban Renewal Inquiry into Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No344 Woden Town Centre

Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal ACT Legislative Assembly

Dear Sir/ Madam

I wish to make a submission to the above Inquiry. I will be providing details of my comments before Monday 18 September and hope that you are able to include my submission in the comments received on the Draft Variation.

The 3 key areas I wish to make comment on are the height of tower buildings and their environmental and social sustainability issues, the introduction of community facilities into Eddison Park and the need to ensure adequate land is available for storm water retention in the southern end of the Woden Valley leading to the best possible naturalisation of Yarralumla Creek. I believe that the Draft Variation has issues of concern in relation to these three points and will provide supporting comment.

Yours faithfully
Georgina Pinkas



A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE	
SUBMISSION NUMBER	14
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Georgina Pinkas - Submission to ACT Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal - Inquiry into draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 344

I wish to raise three issues as follows for the Committee's consideration with respect to DV 344

1. Rezoning of parts of the open space to permit community facilities
2. Introduction of building heights in the centre potentially up to 28 storeys
3. Issues with the need to reserve land for the naturalisation of Yarralumla Creek

1. Rezoning to allow expansion of community facilities zoned land within Arabanoo Park.

My major concern with this proposal is that the Community Facilities Zone objective (d) allows for sites zoned as CFZ to be used for adaptable and affordable housing. Woden Town Centre suffers already from a deficit of land for recreation and community facilities (non residential) use having lost much of the land along Melrose Drive, which was initially recreation land, to commercial development. Such facilities lost include tennis courts, bowling green, basketball centre, pitch and putt and possibly in the future, the formerly municipal pool now privately owned and commercial development permitted on the site. The are proposals to alienate further recreation land by the expansion of the Woden Cemetery.

Woden is the only town centre without a Lake and it suffers from very limited land for sport, recreation and community facilities compared to other town centres. While Arabanoo park is a small area, there should be no possibility that the land could be used for any residential purposes supported or not. We have seen the residential uses made of other land in Canberra zoned CFZ and we do not wish to have any community land used for such purposes in the Town Centre.

I ask that the Committee act to save this land for community use by either recommending that a special amendment to the precinct Code for the proposed CFZ land in Arabanoo Park not permit any type of residential use including Zone objective D or some other appropriate instrument to prevent such use.

2. Introduction of building heights in the Town Centre potentially up to 28 storeys.

Whilst totally supporting the need to have densification in our town centres, there are other smarter and more environmentally sustainable ways to achieve this than by building tall, mainly residential, towers.

Firstly rushing like lemmings into building high rise residential towers without considering if we are meeting the objectives they are meant to deliver is irresponsible. I presume the objectives are to provide a more sustainable town centre in an environmentally beneficial manner. The Master Plan states that “new developments will be environmentally sustainable”. Have we determined that this is the best way to deliver environmentally sustainable living? Taking into account building and operational inputs, some studies have shown that the desirable height for environmentally sustainable buildings is from 6 to 8 storeys. Certainly much of the literature disagrees that high rise towers are as sustainable. Before we adopt this path to what I think is slum building of the future, we might like to do some post occupancy studies on current high rise residential buildings in Town Centres. We need answers to questions about design, relationship to other structures, energy input in construction and operation. what is happening in other high rise dwelling towers compared with low rise densification. We should base our plans on facts not developer driven cant. Where is the proof?

The 2004 Woden Master Plan aimed to have residential development in the town centre on a “ human scale”. It had marker buildings of 12 storeys. Twenty eight storeys is far too excessive from a human scale, environmental and social perspective.

Such towers are not family friendly. Where will the children play in the Town Centre? What are the social impacts on children living in such environments? If the buildings are to be for aged people then there needs to be more than one lift servicing high rise buildings for when one lift breaks down. The safety of residents is also compromised when there are power failures which seems to be more probable. Not able to open windows for cooling and no air conditioning in power failures, no lifts, all pose greater threats in high rise towers.

Residential buildings of such height pose safety concerns for residents from fire. while there are good regulations under the Building Code, all too frequently in Canberra with private certification, the code is not adhered to. Also new building materials are not safety checked at times resulting in the current plethora of buildings with fire risk cladding exposed by ABC’s “Four Corners” program. We need to know what are the merits of living in high rise buildings and socio cultural advantages and disadvantages before we build them willy nilly.

Woden is known for its wind shear. Development proposals previously have been assessed on the wind impact based on weather readings at the airport. This is totally inadequate, Woden's micro climate is significantly different. Reference is made in the Master Plan to the Building Code of Australia in relation to wind shear, however, this does not take account of the interaction with surrounding buildings.

The opportunity to add up to 4 further storeys if the buildings are innovative and or provide a range of community benefits. There are no criteria for innovation that would compensate for further loss of amenity by adding more storeys. I have seen developments requiring innovation to get the extra approval and there is no written assessment of the innovation. I am not at all confident that there is any benefit from the extra storeys and ask that this provision at least be recommended for removal. So called community benefits are often fraught when included in developer driven proposals. Community benefits should be based on community need, not developers' aspirations for 4 more storeys.

The Lovett Tower can be seen from many other points than those mentioned in the Variation. It sticks up weirdly above the trees and hills from views in Weston, Belconnen and other places. To have a seemingly randomly scattered range of similarly high buildings would look even odder. I was told by one of the original NCDC planners for the town centre that the Lovett Tower was meant to be the centre of the town in the manner of a church tower with buildings reducing in height from the centre. Certainly this is the traditional visual approach. While central height massing is understandable, the need to have marker buildings equally as high as stated in the Master Plan "to help visitors find their way to and around the centre" is a ridiculous reason. Transport links will do that as they currently do. The visual impact of Sky Plaza will not be softened by another tall building across the road from it standing out above all the other buildings.

Rather than randomly approving individual tower blocks, with little or no assessment of the impact of such towers on neighbouring buildings or ground level environment, if we are allowing such development, then impacts on adjacent buildings and ground level spaces must be part of the assessment mandatory criteria.

In summary the benefits of tall residential towers are questioned and there are insufficient studies to show that they are the best way to provide for residential densification on an environmentally sustainable basis. In a paper entitled "How tall is a sustainable building?" to the world congress of Architects in 2008, Ronald Rovers evidenced that there were some suggestions that tall buildings were not a sufficient advantage in land use and electricity consumption rises with higher skylines. He states the real performance of these buildings is yet to be measured. Replacement of existing low rise buildings with high rise buildings increases the stress on the urban fabric leaving issues to be resolved and funded by the public purse. He concludes that Paris a very efficient way of land use and a highly socially

integrated way of living. He claims that tall buildings from a resource point of view are not very efficient.

For the reasons outlined above I seek the Committee's recommendation that the additional height of the tallest buildings in the Town Centre up to 28 storeys be declined and the tallest buildings remain in the core not as marker buildings sprouting up at the extremities of the centre. At a minimum no additional storeys for innovation or community be permitted.

3. Need to reserve land along Athlon Drive for the naturalisation of Yarralumla Creek

One of the objectives for the Athlon Drive Precinct in the Woden Master Plan was for "improvements to Yarralumla Creek, potentially to include a wetland, improve water quality, provide recreation and to mitigate against flooding."

This has been a long term objective for Woden Valley with initially intention to have the Woden Green development (Corner of Hindmarsh and Callum) contain retention ponds enabling attractive settings from a visual, recreational and environmental perspective and allow for the Yarralumla drain to become a natural waterway.

Unfortunately engineering studies showed that storm water needed to be retained at the head of the valley, as when storm water reached the town centre it was too strong for the ponds proposed at Woden Green. So Woden Green took up the whole site and the opportunity was lost again.

While supporting the densification of residential land along Athlon Drive, I believe it is essential to first undertake the proposed water retention plans and works prior to releasing land for development. We would not want to have to lose yet another opportunity to naturalise the creek by insufficient land being available at the Athlon Drive end of the valley and be in the same situation as happened at Woden Green ie lost a very important opportunity. While studies have been undertaken and some land reserved, this work is only indicative and more or different land may be needed. For this reason I do not support land release until appropriate water retention works are undertaken along Athlon Drive.

I ask that the Committee recommends that this part of the Variation not proceed until such work is undertaken. Alternatively that the Committee recommends that an overlay be put on the variation restricting the land release until the work is undertaken.

4. Additional Point

It is not clear to me if the proposal to have residential development next to the oval is part of this Variation as it seems it was there previously. I want to stress that the two uses are totally incompatible a major sports venue and residential use. The complaints from Bruce residents should demonstrate this and they are further away from their stadium. The land adjacent to the oval at Phillip should be recreation community facilities or high rise car parking.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. My views are based on being a resident of Woden for over 40 years, a current property owner in Woden, an employee of the Commonwealth and then ACT Government managing various aspects of Sport, Heritage and Culture in the ACT for 25 years, 3 years working in the Planning Authority, working as policy adviser to the Minister for Planning in the ACT for 7 years and being planning officer for the Woden valley Community Council for several years making many submission on planning and development proposals.

I have very sadly witnessed the erosion of Woden Town Centre and its amenity over the years since it was first established. I have seen how community and municipal facilities have been leased and converted into private ownership and redeveloped to commercial facilities over the years. I am aghast when I walk across the Town Square to see what a dump it has become. I hope you take my comments seriously as unfortunately I still care very much about the tragedy of Woden. I hope you do too.

I am happy to discuss any of my comments and can be contacted on 62863040.

Yours Faithfully

Georgina Pinkas

