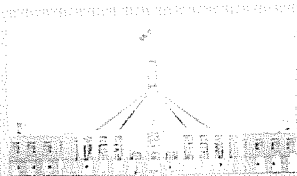




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Mick Gentleman
Chair
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA
ACT 2601

Dear Mr Gentleman

Submission relating to Draft Variation 281- North Weston

I am writing to convey the grave concerns expressed by the members of the Sikh community about the effect of the proposed land development in the vicinity of the Sikh Cultural Centre and Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) being built in North Weston.

I acknowledge the consultations that the ACTPLA has had with the Canberra Sikh Association (CSA) and other stakeholders in the North Weston land development proposals. While the government has agreed to create a buffer zone between the CSA block and the proposed new residential development south of Cotter Road, the proposed buffer zone is not large enough to mitigate the impact of the new housing development on the CSA activities. Further discussions with the Executive Committee of the CSA and the members of the community have revealed strong sentiments against the close proximity of the proposed houses in view of the anticipated objections of the house owners of the CSA activities some of which, particularly the cultural functions, could be fairly noisy.

It should be noted that the CSA was forced to give up the previously allocated block of land for the development of a Sikh centre in Mawson mainly due to the strong objections from the Mawson community regarding the apprehended level of noise, increased traffic, crowds of visitors, "strange religious ceremonies, etc, that could affect the quality of life of the Mawson residents.

When the CSA agreed to purchase the North Weston block in place of the Mawson



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block, there was no proposal of any residential development in the surrounding area. The siting of the Gurdwara and other buildings on the land was done on the assumption that there would be no residential buildings around the block. The new proposals of the ACTPLA regarding land use in the area clearly violate the principle of fairness that should always be applied when any changes in land use are contemplated, so that the interests of the existing landholders are not compromised in any way.

The CSA is thankful to the ACTPLA for agreeing to retain part of the ridge adjacent to the Baha'i centre and overlooking the CSA block as open public space, but the revised plan still shows a road going around the CSA block to the part of the ridge in question. Since the ACTPLA has dropped the idea of building houses on this space, there is no point in building a road leading to it. The CSA views the proposed development of this road as a matter of serious concern as it would lead to the CSA block being enclosed by roads on all sides, and would also leave the possibility of future rezoning of the land, leaving the Sikh community in a state of anxiety and uncertainty.

Additionally, there appears to be a high-pressure water main running on the site where the proposed road between the Baha'i and Sikh Centre sites is located. Constructing a road on this site could cause untold damage and incur additional costs to our development.

It should also be noted that the Sikh community has grown significantly in the last few years. The rate of growth in community numbers is expected to be even higher in the coming years. The Government should therefore show some foresight in planning land development around the CSA block and leave some open space for possible further development of the Sikh Centre, as well as the Baha'i Centre.

The CSA therefore submits that blocks 7 and 13 should be retained as open public space. We understand that the Baha'i community is interested in purchasing a part of the ridge (block 13) adjacent to its current centre and develop it as a public park. The Sikh community strongly supports the Baha'i proposal.

Yours sincerely

Dr Indar Pal Singh Kang
Dr Indar Pal Singh Kang
President

Canberra Sikh Association

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19 June 2008