

WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- Your Local Voice -

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Minutes

March Monthly Meeting

7.45pm 24th March 2004

Welcome

Ms Pat McGinn, Interim Chairperson, welcomed the committee, residents and guest speakers to the meeting.

The guest speakers are Andrew Brown from GHD Pty Ltd and Peter Johns from the ACT Land Development Agency who will be providing feedback on the Broadacre Estate Study in Weston. The other guest speaker is Jocelyn Plovitts from the Chief Minister's Department to speak on rural villages as recommended in the report "Opportunities for Non-Urban ACT".

Other business would be after the guest speakers.

Apologies

Senator Gary Humphries, Joe Baker Commissioner for the Environment, Katy Gallagher MLA, Helen Sinclair, David Clinch.

Broadacre Estate Study - Weston

Ms McGinn introduced Andrew Brown. Mr Brown indicated that GHD had delivered to ACT Land Development Agency the draft final report on the Estate Study and this presentation was to provide an overview of the proposed options. There would be a period of one month for public comment on the report. Copies of the report are available at the meeting tonight and also on the WCCC website www.wccc.com.au

The focus is on the 9ha block at the corner of Cotter Road and Streeton Drive however the study did cover a number of other issues which impact on the site. A major concern with the site is traffic flows. The public consultations included attendance at several WCCC meetings in 2003 and direct discussions with a number of stakeholders.

The options considered in the report also covered sub-division design options as well as possible lease conditions which could be imposed on lessees.

Traffic impacts were a major focus of the study. The options continue to have traffic flow only through Unwin Place with engineering solutions to turning and merge lanes. External access to the site appears only to be an issue in peak am and pm time periods.

A possibility is to divide the large block of 9ha into 3 smaller blocks, however Broadacre is by definition for purposes with a large land take and this is so in both the National Capital Plan and the ACT Territory Plan. So this approach may defeat the purpose of the definition of the land. Another option is a smaller 2 ha block and a large 7ha block. The smaller block could be a school, similar to Montessori and the large block could include a number of buildings such as a community centre, kindergarten and church. There would need to be a road into these two blocks, perhaps along the western boundary of the Orana School.

There is also the recommendation that the lease conditions cover adequate carparking and it is recommended that a carpark of 700 spaces be included in any lease arrangements. The carparks would be treed and vegetated and not like shopping centre car parks.

Mr Brown used a series of overheads to illustrate how a large building could be designed to meet the design requirements of the land. Also the report addresses usage time of the possible sites and recommends lease purposes which would balance peak usage on weekdays and weekends as well as the time of the day.

Mr Brown suggested that rather than cover all aspects of the report perhaps questions could focus on concerns.

Q&A

Pat McGinn called for questions.

- When will the school begin, a resident asked? There is no current knowledge of a school being interested in this land. The report identifies that a possible appropriate land use is for a school.
- A resident indicated that given the location of the land, most if not all travel to it would be by car and not changing the intersection of Unwin Place and not re-arranging internal traffic flows to avoid a road through the Orana school seems a grave oversight. Mr Brown advised that traffic car counts were undertaken on numerous occasions. The longest recorded wait was for a 5-minute period. The proposed extensions to turning lanes would reduce these waiting periods significantly. Traffic lights would be more inconvenient to more residents who were not entering the area.
- A resident indicated that another school would generate too much traffic. Mr Brown responded that a school with 200 students with school hour peak traffic flows would not add significantly, however a school with 1000 students would have a much more dramatic effect.
- A resident asked how far up the hill could a building be located? Mr Brown responded indicating that it could be at the top of the hill. However as the view was to all points in Weston Creek, that site can be seen from all points so the building would need to have significant architectural treatment to blend with the topography.

- Why has there been no mention of aged care accommodation? Mr Brown replied that the report discounted residential uses on a Broadacre land use. Residential did not fit with the Broadacre concept and no other residential uses are in the area.
- Why is there a recommendation for intensive use? The report identifies possible options for which the land can be used. It does not recommend specific activities. To use or not use the land is a government decision. The decision needs to be based on the best use of the land for Broadacre.
- Why build another school after so many schools are closing in Weston Creek? The report does not recommend a school but indicates that the land is suitable for that type of purpose.
- The northern area, if turned into one lease is very large, who could afford to take up such a lease and develop it according to the concept plans shown tonight? The use of the land comes back to the definition of Broadacre, i.e. a large land take. If the land was divided into three there would be 3ha 3ha and 3.5ha – in the report it is considered that these are not suitable for Broadacre uses.
- With that large lease there could be one huge ugly church? The lease and development conditions imposed would prevent that. There needs to be respect for the topography of the landscape and the existing nature of the buildings in the area.
- Where are the students for the new school? If a school were to go in the area the catchment of the school would be all of Canberra. Weston Creek is very central to the geography of Canberra. Orana School and Montessori schools in Weston Creek have students from all over Canberra.
- A resident asked about getting out of Dixon Drive onto Streeton Drive. It is blocked by cars waiting to dart across to go up Unwin Place. Mr Brown advised that it was considered that the extended turning lanes would remove the problem. The resident replied very much doubting that this minor work would fix a major problem.
- A resident asked of the key reasons for not considering aged care in Broadacre? Mr Brown indicated that distance to shops; size of the roads on two sides, topography of the site and aged care is a form of residential land use. Also the ACT Land Development Agency is looking for other sites for aged care. Other leases such as the AFP lease and the CIT lease may become available in a few years.

Ms McGinn indicated that there were no other sites of this size in Weston Creek and that this may be a lost opportunity for Weston Creek residents. The meeting was advised that the WCCC had lobbied for this study to consider all potential uses of the site even if this involved a lease purpose change. This has apparently not been taken into account in the study. Also there are other aged care facilities near busy roads [St Andrews] and on slopes [Jindalee].

- A resident asked of the concern that the site was visible from everywhere in Weston Creek and why not leave it alone? Mr Brown advised that it was a decision of Government as to the use of the site, or to leave it.

- A resident voiced concern, that no matter what goes there, there would be no large billboards or neon signs? Mr Brown advised that the lease development and control conditions would certainly control and prevent such signs. There would be no Macdonald's arches.

Mr Brown also added that the land on the opposite side of Cotter Road, near the Defence roundabout was being considered for a variety of uses, this is the land opposite RSPCA and this would be the subject of future work.

- Would the proposed road access on the site be for Blocks 1 and 2 only? Yes, studies have indicated that people will take the most direct route. Hickey Court would generally service the top blocks and the new road the lower blocks. In addition the blocks would need to supply their own on-site carparks.

Ms McGinn called an end to questions and thanked Mr Brown and Mr Johns. She advised that the report is available at the meeting tonight and arrangements will be made to access it from the WCCC website. In addition the WCCC will be making a submission within the time period of one month in addition to asking the question, where are the large aged care sites in Weston Creek and why was lease change not part of the study?

A resident commented that retirement villages are struggling financially and there was no need for more and there should be support for a well-established church which is more viable to have the land. The audience erupted countering that there were not enough places in aged care, the price to buy in was extortionist and greater supply would help balance supply and demand.

Jocelyn Plovitts – Rural Villages

Ms McGinn welcomed Jocelyn Plovitts from the Chief Minister's Dept to discuss with residents the concept of rural villages, as was a recommendation in the report "Shaping our Territory – Opportunities for Non-Urban ACT".

Ms Plovitts advised the meeting that there were 5 areas of interest in non-urban ACT. These are the International Arboretum, Stromlo Observatory and the 3 rural villages of Pierces Creek, Uriarra and Stromlo village. The current focus is on the 3 rural villages.

At present concept plans are being used to assist in the public consultations. Sustainability issues are at the forefront. These are people, place and prosperity which align with social, environmental and economic sustainability.

Any work in the three villages will not impact on ACT ratepayers. The expansion of the villages by the sale of blocks is to cover the cost of the public housing re-build. A consideration is that NSW may capture 60% of possible residents looking for a rural lifestyle but the ACT would need to supply schools and hospitals and collect no rates. Therefore housing in non-urban ACT would mean some contribution to the cost of supplying these services.

The three villages have history based on forestry and some aboriginal elements and all pre-date Canberra. Each site is known to be fire prone and abatement zones would need to be carefully considered.

Pierces Creek near Cotter has one remaining house; it has 2 routes in and out and needs significant fire abatement treatment. Uriarra village was already considering expansion some years ago to keep the school open so residents have had time to consider an increase in size. Stromlo village is the closest to suburbs and would probably not have such a sustainability regime of on-site water collection and sewerage treatment as housing could be connected to existing infrastructure in the area.

The concept plans give a basis of discussion but these could be changed by engineers. The aim would be to have treed main streets and not have too many intersections onto Cotter Road. Each village would have different type of trees and high value trees in the villages are being managed to save them. Also each village would have a bushfire management unit in them, and in addition, each would have an open space for helicopter landing. There would be water sensitive urban road design such as swale drains and grass verges.

Q&A

Ms McGinn asked for questions for Jocelyn Plovitts.

- Access to Warragamba Drive from the Stromlo village is needed. This has been looked at but such definite links to the suburb would reduce the 'village' concept. There are walking tracks and some of these are wide enough to take a vehicle in an emergency.
- When will the plans be available for the public? The Government will be going through all the necessary planning stages and there is no definite timeline. In addition consultation on any potential changes to the National Capital Plan needs to be taken into account.
- How definite are the plans? There is a plan to deal with the revitalisation of the villages, but the approach will be subject to public consultation. The drawings are concept plans not engineering drawings.
- If a self-funding model is to be used why not have 5 villages, 2 new ones and build the 3 existing villages as they were? The basic services can be provided from the 3 villages and it is not intended to build more villages, just expand the current 3 to pay for the costs.
- Could I own one of these blocks or are they for ACT Housing only? At present they are all ACT Housing with a variety of clients. The aim is to avoid making the villages an enclave and the revitalisation is looking at a mix of 50/50 public / private housing.
- At Pierces Creek where the infrastructure is very old will new services be provided or will it need to be self-contained? Each house in Pierces Creek and Uriarra will need to be fully self-contained. Potable water and grey water will need to be managed on site as well as drinking water supply. Pierces Creek and Uriarra will have a pond feature to deal with runoff and to attract water birds.
- Will the National Capital Authority need to be involved? Not in Stromlo, but yes for the other 2 villages. Uriarra has Draft Amendment 34 with the Commonwealth Minister for final approval as this was started some years ago. Pierces Creek has not started with the NCA. Stromlo is zoned residential but there are no leases.

- What will happen to the Commonwealth land around Stromlo Village? It will remain as open space buffer.
- How will the ACT Government manage the recommendation of the McLeod report of open buffers when the Stromlo Village will create a direct link between the suburbs of Weston Creek and the inevitable suburbs of the Molonglo Valley which will front Cotter Road? The landscape buffer between Duffy and Stromlo is lost but will be replanted; the direct connection of suburbs is another issue which needs further consideration.
- What will be the extra land take from expanding the villages and what will be the size of the blocks on land? The plans are only at the concept stage and detailed calculations have not been made.
- Is it an aim to get residents back? Yes there have been significant consultations with people of the villages however the timeline is not known.

A resident of Pierces Creek commented that the villages were not viable at the old size and they could not be rebuilt if they were to funded entirely by the ACT Government, therefore a different model of funding is needed for rebuilding to be undertaken.

- Does Stromlo need extra houses being so close to Holder and Duffy? Although it was close it was isolated and screened from urban areas. Residents did not consider themselves part of the suburbs.
- Could the 20 houses proposed in Stromlo grow to 40, 50 100 – could the complete area be covered in houses with an amendment from the Legislative Assembly? That is not being considered at this time.
- When is the final report on the sustainability of the 3 villages due? The process needs to follow statutory regulations and the timeline is not fixed.
- Why can't former residents be moved back now to their homes? This will take time; the history of these areas is that there were no leases, no formal boundaries. Some have tried to purchase their house and could not because there was no lease. The house re-building program, because of ACT Government insurance practises, needs to rely on selling private blocks.

Ms McGinn called an end to questions and thanked Jocelyn Plovitts and George Tomlins. She advised that the consultations are continuing and comments can be made to Jocelyn in the Chief Minister's Department.

Any other Business

Ms McGinn called for other business from the audience.

Re-planting non-residential verges

Trish Frei raised concerns on the types of plants being used on the non-residential verge of Eucumbene Drive in Duffy. Eucalypts are being re-planted and these are not the most appropriate trees given that large numbers of eucalypts were removed from Oakey Hill because they are a fire hazard. There has been no consultation with people in the street and no empathy with fire victims. Ms Frei had indicated that contact with Canberra Urban Parks and Places had not resolved the situation.

New road at the end of Hindmarsh Drive

Ms Frei advised the meeting that there was a new road being constructed to join at the end of Hindmarsh Drive from the equestrian centre. When she rang ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) they knew nothing. ACT Roads advised it was not them and they had no knowledge. The road is being built on NCA land.

Mr Halberg, from the equestrian centre was in the audience and responded to the concerns. The NCA and PALM agreed to the new driveway to several years ago and it has taken 3 years for the application to be approved. This moves the existing inadequate driveway off Kathner Street in Chapman and connects it to a road described by the NCA as a highway, although ACTPLA consider it an arterial road. There will be some changes to the steel guard railing but the traffic islands will not be changed.

Ms Frei repeated her concern that horse floats negotiating the corner will be at considerable risk and on many times, too many times, she has assisted crash victims on the corner and adding a new driveway with vehicles towing horse floats is exceedingly dangerous. Better consideration of the design needs to be undertaken.

To calm the proceeding Ms McGinn agreed to contact ACT Roads, ACTPLA and NCA to facilitate the flow on information and to ascertain if the NCA approval meets ACTPLA road design specifications.

Phoenix Association meeting at Narrabundah Hill, Duffy - 7th March

Mr Carl raised concerns on the press coverage of *The Canberra Times* on Monday 8th March 2004 of the issues raised by the Phoenix Association and the inaccurate claims made by Phoenix and repeated in the newspaper. These issues related to the Non-Urban Study, the Canberra Spatial Plan, housing in the Molonglo Valley, replanting the fire affected suburbs, bushfire abatement zones and neighbourhood plans in Duffy. The general approach had been that no one was consulted and there was no time to answer the consultations and Duffy residents wanted all the old residents to return. Mr Carl indicted that CERG (Community and Expert Reference Group) who were assisting the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce and the WCCC had gone to extraordinary lengths to involve the community in the re-building efforts.

The WCCC has even placed on the website a document outlining the concerns raised and the actions which have been undertaken. It may be a case of the Executive of the Phoenix Association not keeping up with the rate of information flow and response times. Mr Carl suggested that the hundreds of residents who had attended regular and special WCCC meetings throughout 2003 should be angry and disappointed at what a few are doing to discredit a remarkable re-building process.

Spatial Plan

Ms McGinn advised the meeting that the WCCC was preparing a response to the Spatial Plan and focussing on the serious issue of the gross over estimation of population projections for the ACT and the need for new greenfield land development sites. A number have questioned the Government's basis of the projections. The Molonglo Valley may well be a wasteland for a considerable number of years.

Ms McGinn called for further business. As there was none forthcoming Ms McGinn closed the meeting and thanked residents for their attendance.

Meeting closed 9.45 PM
Next Regular Meeting
Wednesday 28th April 2004