

# WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- Your Local Voice -

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## Minutes

### November Monthly Meeting

7.45pm 26th November 2003

#### Welcome

Mr Carl, Chairperson, welcomed the committee, residents and guest speakers to the meeting. Mr Carl introduced:

- Mr Tony Bartlett, Director and Mr Gary Rake Business Manager from ACT Forests who would talk on the progress made in planning for the new HQ.
- Andrew Brown from GHD Pty Ltd and Peter Johns from ACT Land Development Agency (LDA) who would talk on the Broadacre Estate Study in Weston.
- Ms Dorte Ekelund Director of Territory Planning in ACT Planning and Land Authority who would talk on the draft Canberra Spatial Plan.

Mr Carl advised that the theme of the meeting was planning and development and the impact on Weston Creek. The Broadacre Estate Study and the options for the location of the new HQ for ACT Forests would put in context the discussion which would follow on the possible impacts of the current draft Canberra Spatial Plan on Weston Creek.

#### Apologies

Senator Gary Humphries, Katy Gallagher MLA, Helen Cross MLA, Tim Janes.

#### ACT Forests

Mr Carl introduced Tony Bartlett Director of ACT Forests and Gary Rake, Business Manager. Mr Bartlett advised that the main issue with planning that involved ACT Forests at present is the location on which to re-build the Headquarters destroyed in the January fires. Mr Bartlett also thanked residents for their patience and understanding during the recent burning of the windrows adjacent to Weston Creek. The meeting was advised that there were no plans for further burn-offs until next autumn.

Gary Rake provided a handout to the attendees which showed the location of the destroyed headquarters, the first option for rebuilding, next to the Defence Force College, and the new proposed location on Cotter Road adjacent to where Weston Creek flowed. Mr Rake advised that the buildings would only use part of the block and restoration and rehabilitation work would

be undertaken. The complex would consist of a Headquarters building, sheds and storage for fire fighting vehicles. Mr Rake asked for any questions.

- Would there be large re-plantings? Yes the replantings would be extensive on 2 sides of the lease.
- Will the entrance be a roundabout? It was planned that a slip lane be used rather than construct a roundabout.
- Could the old wooden Cotter Road Bridge be re-used? There is the possibility to look at various options for traffic management.
- Is there an issue with cyclists using that area? Yes we are aware of the bike path and the issue of cyclists will be covered in the DA (development application) being prepared.
- What will be the timing of the development application? The development application will be subject to all the planning requirements and the full consultation periods will be available and they will not be in the holiday period.
- What about line-of-sight for traffic coming along Cotter Road? The previous entrance was not far long the road and there were not concerns on line of sight of traffic. There is little turning traffic, however line of sight will be considered in the development application.

Mr Carl indicated that there were other speakers for the meeting and if there were no additional questions the meeting would move forward. Mr Carl advised that Tony and Gary would be available at the end of the meeting for further informal questions.

### **Broadacre Estate Study**

Mr Carl called on Andrew Brown of GHD to update residents. Mr Brown advised attendees that this was a short feedback session following their attendance at the previous month's WCCC meeting.

Mr Brown advised that the Study was progressing and many issues were being canvassed. The approach by GHD is to start with the fundamentals of town planning and undertake a baseline assessment of the site. The site is being looked at in terms of its 'fit' in Weston Creek and how this fits with its potential role in the wider Canberra context.

Many adjacent leaseholders had been involved in discussions. These discussions had focussed on what the land is currently zoned as, the need of a large 'land take' for a Broadacre use, the fact the land was currently on the edge of a city and that current and future uses need to be considered.

Some preliminary work had been undertaken on potential uses which fit with the current theme of institutional uses. Several approved uses which had been discounted were agriculture (too small only 9ha) defence (too small only 9ha) or parkland (no demonstrated need).

The aim of the study is to provide recommendations to ACT Land Development Agency who would then consider the issues and make recommendations to ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA).

The predominance of institutional uses would impact on any recommendations; however no decisions or final considerations had been made.

The visual impact of the site was of paramount importance. The height and slope could be constraints because there were great views from the upper part of the site. Conversely the site can be seen from many points around Weston Creek and this important aspect needed to be taken into consideration.

There is an issue with slope, however landscape can mitigate slope impacts and increase the potential range of uses. Computer graphics can be used to visualise potential treatments. Mr Brown used several visual aids to demonstrate options to attendees.

Mr Brown then addressed the issue of traffic flow which he indicated was raised in all discussions which had been conducted. A major morning peak hour constraint is a right turn from Streeton Dr into Unwin Pl and then from Unwin Pl right into Streeton Dr. Traffic data revealed 5 minor accidents in 5 years which have been reported and 2 of these in peak hour. Other accidents of minor nature may not have been reported. However traffic delay times and queuing were of major concern

A possible treatment could be full or partial traffic lights at Streeton Dr / Unwin Pl and Dixon Dr / Streeton Dr. This would probably involve several cycles of lights to clear traffic flows. The treatment of these two intersections may be a pivotal issue in traffic management. Another issue is the internal road layout. There is the possibility of a re-aligned road to minimise disruption to an existing school.

The Study is at the stage of putting together the collected data and the potential costs of servicing the land. The report will be provided to LDA to inform them to assist in a decision making process.

In summary, on 'Broadacre' land, the planning rules will apply, visual amenity is of importance, internal and external traffic flows are important and well as pedestrian traffic. The work and cost to service the land will also be a critical consideration by the LDA.

Mr Carl thanked Mr Brown for the presentation and reminded residents that the Land Development Agency and GHD were involving the community much earlier than was required by the planning regulations. It was good to see a proactive approach and early involvement of the community. The study report from GHD to the Land Development Agency would go through all the normal consultation processes and it was expected that this would not happen in the school break and we would see the process continue in February next year.

### **Draft Canberra Spatial Plan**

Mr Carl welcomed Dorte Ekelund, Director of Territory Planning at ACT Planning and Land Authority back to the WCCC.

Ms Ekelund indicated that she would not recount all the background work which has been undertaken to bring the draft Canberra Spatial Plan to its current form. There are a number of

publications setting out the challenges and issues which need to be addressed in the future planning of Canberra. The main focus will be on how the options being considered impact on Weston Creek and the Stromlo area.

The challenge for Canberra is to manage growth and change. The original plan was the Griffin Plan and this was replaced by the Y-Plan in 1967. The Y-Plan, if continued, could accommodate 1 million people. It would extend to the north-west to Gooromon-Jeir and the north-east to Sutton.

The current future planning work had been in progress for approximately 18 months and predated the January 2003 bushfires. The bushfires refocused options and brought other considerations into the debate.

If the Y-Plan continues it uses a lot of open spaces and has a heavy demand on resources, land, transport, electricity, sewerage and water supply. The current work is technical assessments and looking at policy options to accommodate growth.

Addressing the issues of concern to Weston Creek needs to be in the context of what is happening in Canberra and the south-east region in general. Sutton, Googong and Tralee are being assessed by Queanbeyan and the surrounding shires as potential residential areas. A major concern is that, although with no control and little influence, Canberra will bear the brunt of the planning impacts if these areas become residential.

Within our own borders we can supply residences and have greater autonomy in planning. This would focus the options on the Molonglo Valley and Kowen. The growth of Canberra is expected to move from 320,000 to 390,000 in 25 years. If Queanbeyan is included in the district this would be 430,000. With added population pressure from Sydney and the Illawarra region the numbers could be higher and it could be 500,000 in 30 years. Added to this is that household size is going down, so more residences are needed in a given population size.

The current draft of the Spatial Plan is looking at broad options, possibilities and scenarios – it is not a detailed planning document. The scenarios are looking at enlivening areas, increasing surveillance and increasing options so that people can walk and ride to work to reduce traffic pressure.

The current draft Spatial Plan does impact on Gungahlin, especially north Gungahlin and the Kinleyside area. There are substantial boxgum areas of nature conservation which are being considered and had not been taken into account in the original historical projection of Gungahlin at 100,000 people. It is very unlikely that Gungahlin will reach 100,000 people as a number of areas previously considered in that district will not be developed.

The current preference is to have a ‘contained’ approach which avoids the need to provide road infrastructure, water, sewerage and electricity to large tracts. Currently 75% of jobs are in the ‘centres’ and a concept is to contain growth within 7.5kms of the City Centre.

The timeline currently being considered for commencing residential development in the Molonglo Valley is 2006 however this could be optimistic as the agreement of the Commonwealth would be needed as well as the National Capital Authority (NCA). The NCA would need to change the National Capital Plan. There would be at least 2 or 3 detailed public consultation processes.

The suggestion of a second development front in addition to Gungahlin has been a major discussion issue since this draft Spatial Plan was released.

The recent work with the OECD on strategic visions for cities has shown the need for vibrancy in a city centre for that city to survive and grow. It also emphasised the importance of town centres and group centres.

The issue of employment location is of concern as most is in Belconnen, the City and south central Canberra. Since self-government there has been little if any control or influence on where jobs are located.

In terms of landscape settings the Molonglo River corridor and green open spaces are an important aspect of the 'bush capital'. The non-urban ACT study has not yet been responded to by Government and it has raised a few issues which will need to be dealt with.

The fire-abatement zone which is a recommendation of the McLeod Report will need careful consideration in managing the land interface between the Molonglo River Corridor and the urban edge.

The current draft Spatial Plan envisages 500 additional residences in Weston Creek and this low level of intensification would have little physical change in Weston Creek. Other issues which have been raised and are being considered are transport corridors into the area in the Molonglo Valley from either Weston Creek or Belconnen, light pollution impact on the Mt Stromlo observatory, the demographics for older persons and the adaptability of housing for an ageing community. An additional issue which is being addressed is declaring some areas fire-prone which will invoke special building conditions to meet a higher fire risk.

There is an on-going consultation process for the issues to be brought out and debated for the final Spatial Plan document. The current consultation period is 3 Nov to 17 Dec. The Spatial Plan is a framework to guide approaches and options for growth. There will be the need to assess and review what is happening and formal reviews will be held each 5 years.

## **Q&A**

Mr Carl called for questions

- 2006 is a long time to wait before something is started; can we get some action on rehabilitation now? We are working with land managers and seeding and replanting is happening where these are able, such as ridgelines and water courses. This is important time to tackle the concern as Woden and Weston Creek have the worst stormwater pollution in Canberra as no retention or passive treatment processes are in place.
- Can we get a simple map of the planned development areas? No it is not possible as there is no detail; the plan is looking at potential areas for consideration and looking at options.
- There are sensitivities about where you plan to put houses! We have not gone down to the detail. Detailed assessment will be part of the future work based on feedback and consultation with the community.

- When was the ‘preferred direction’ decision made and by whom? It was not pre-determined. The preferred direction is a mix of infill, green fields development and the use of land which has less environmental attributes and is close to the city.
- Some areas of the ACT are ecologically degraded even though they have a high number of trees. How much planning is happening in these areas? We do have a dilemma in Canberra of being the ‘bush capital’ and we are aware of the risks for bushfire and how this impacts on the community. The McLeod report was very firm on not replanting high fuel load species. In the western part of the city, especially Weston Creek, there is a need to re-think the treatment of the urban edge. Pine plantations will not be planted where they were and the government has no option but to look to different approaches and different species. An example would be to avoid crown canopy plantings. It will be difficult for land managers and residents to agree on the level of risk.

Tony Bartlett from ACT Forests added that in conversations with Deek, pines should be grown to provide shade for running; however no commercial pine plantations will be planted near the town – urban forest interface. However urban development needs to support the amenity of recreation.

- Gungahlin residents preferred Gungahlin to be finished first, why is there a perceived imperative to build in Molonglo – when will the listening start? The historical development potential of Gungahlin was 100,000 people and there are concerns on some areas for example Kinleyside and areas in north Gungahlin adjacent to nature conservation areas. In addition the location and management of the fire abatement zone will impact on available land. The potential of Gungahlin could be reached at 70,000 people.
- How will the fire abatement zone be managed, will it be locked up and not grazed It will be a tinderbox especially on the steep slopes on the Murrumbidgee incline? Grazing land is our main defence from fires from the north and the west as it has a low fuel load. How it is managed is up to the land managers and rural lessees. One of the main land management objectives will be to lower the fuel load. An example nearby is Coleman Ridge where ACT Environment are considering grazing rights to keep the grass down to lower the fuel load. Land management is a compromise and different process and practices will be used in different areas.
- The Gungahlin Community Council is opposed to the opening of the Molonglo area as second development front as Canberra cannot provide the resources and services to Gungahlin so why open a second development Front? That is a decision of the elected representatives of the ACT Legislative Assembly. That said we continually modify and update plans and options to take into account the constraints mentioned earlier and aim to take responsible approaches based on available information.
- When will the re-planting of Warragamba Ave occur? Mr Carl responded indicating that the work had started today and the final CUPP’s report is available. It is a large electronic document with maps and photos, if people would like a copy please send an email to the WCCC. It is not yet on the ACT Government website.
- When will it be legislated for people to act on eradicating Patterson’s Curse? Mr Bartlett responded indicating that he was not aware of any effort to legislate to manage

Patterson's Curse or weeds on private property but ACT Forests is well aware of the major problem and has submitted a request to Government for funds to begin an eradication program on ACT Forest controlled land.

- What is the future for Weston Creek given that Molonglo and Stromlo development appears to be a foregone conclusion and Gungahlin objects to the second front? Weston Creek has not lost its spirit and given the numbers here tonight there is still an enormous amount of interest and concern in the future planning of Weston Creek and the surrounding land. There is potential to develop in Weston Creek an additional 500 residences, well placed, perhaps near a commercial area, would add vibrancy to a group centre.
- What was the consultation on Deek's Run and where it should be located? There was not consensus on where it should be located. There were many comments on the need for substantial recreation areas. In addition Narrabundah Hill behind Duffy will not be developed.
- It is possible to have access to the submissions on the Spatial Plan; will there be a cross-index like in the Non-Urban ACT study? Yes a cross index and list of submissions can be provided.
- What will be the impact of future development in the surrounding NSW on the ACT? A compact city is a more sustainable city with or without a boundary. We cannot control what happens in NSW, however we are well aware of the importance of water supply and the ACT have control over water supply in NSW.
- The community is wanting – wanting to re-establish the social objective of a community, how will this plan help? This is a broad-brush planning approach and does not address the social fabric of a community. The Spatial Plan is silent on social issues and it may not be the right process of vehicle for social re-building. Mr Carl added that the old community does not exist and we are rebuilding a new community. It is disappointing a lot of residents that we are not going back to what was before. Perhaps a  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the fire-damaged blocks will be sold to new residents. If half rebuild we are re-building in a completely different atmosphere from the past. We need to make this a welcoming, caring and socially active community that everyone enjoys living in.
- It is disappointing that the concerns of many have been overlooked and rarely taken into account in this pre-determined plan. The ultimate number of dwellings needed in the next 25 years would be about 8,000 and these could be accommodated without opening up the Molonglo area. It appears the preferred option is not based on economics but on financial return, these are two completely different ways of measurement. Fundamentally the plan is anti-environment as it focuses the majority of activity on green fields. There is no solid rationale for the 'preferred direction' in this so called plan? The plan is not just based on financials; there will be much debate and an example is DV200 the draft variation which took 3 years. Issues which need to be considered are that the community is getting older, houses are getting bigger and fewer people are in each residence. With no Kowen or no Stromlo we are not getting what is optimal. We also need to consider what is sustainable; the option may be negative growth. The income from land sales funds healthcare, transport and education. Rates, land profit and GST income are all part of the economics.

- I don't believe you have answered the question, nor do you have the answer.
- What impact can the Commonwealth have on this processes planned by the ACT Government? They are here tonight, listening although not commenting. There is currently no designated urban area in the Molonglo Valley, not in the National Capital Plan. There would need to be a change in the Territory Plan, the Metropolitan Plan and the National Capital Plan. All would take some considerable time.

Mr Carl called an end to the questions as there seemed to be no end in sight to the issues being raised. Mr Carl thanked the guest speakers and advised attendees that the speakers would be available after the meeting for informal questions.

Mr Carl wished all the best of the season and that this was the last regular monthly meeting for this year and the council can always be contacted through the phone or email. Mr Carl called for any other business. As there was none forthcoming Mr Carl closed the meeting and thanked residents for their attendance.

Meeting closed 10.10pm  
Next Regular Meeting  
Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 2004