



WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Comments for the:

DRAFT DISTRICT STRATEGY WESTON CREEK

Submissions close:

Friday 3 MARCH 2023

<https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/act-planning-review>

Your local voice



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ABOUT WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (WCCC)

Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the **DRAFT DISTRICT STRATEGY and ACT URBAN and HOUSING GUIDES for WESTON CREEK.**

As a Community Council we are committed to advocating and supporting the Weston Creek residents in pursuing the expectations and values that enhance and ensure their safety, well-being, and quality lifestyles. The community of Weston Creek value their unique village atmosphere, garden landscapes, and open green spaces as vital links to physical and mental well-being. Planning and development, climate change, and distribution of amenities and resources are topics of high interest and importance in Weston Creek.

To inform this submission Council has actively engaged in the Planning System Review and Reform Project over a number of years. This has included: participation in stakeholder workshops, hosting information meetings with guest speakers, encouraging an ongoing dialogue in the community via a WCCC online discussion group, meetings with community individuals, businesses and groups, newsletters, meeting with MLAs, and reading and circulating documents.

INTRODUCTION

District Plans that are well developed with extensive community consultation will value and uphold the unique character of the districts of Canberra. Unfortunately, the draft Weston Creek District Strategy circulated has left the community feeling confused and underwhelmed. Further consultation, explanation, and inclusion of new initiatives for Weston Creek could result in an exciting strategy.

Council has heard that residents understand the pressures of housing availability, housing affordability and the impact on the Territory Budget. Residents have provided constructive commentary to development proposals in the area that will successfully provide an increase and variety of housing options in Weston Creek. These consultations demonstrate residents' goodwill to support change and development that is well thought out, of quality, while preserving the garden village character so valued.

Some independent advice to the community about the economic effects at a personal level (drawing on past experience in Canberra or other cities), of increased urban density in the suburbs would be appreciated by residents. Questions have been raised of the potential impacts on existing house values if dual occupancies and multi-story apartments are built in areas where presently there are none.

With the growing Canberra population and the housing options these developments would cater for, it is disappointing that they do not appear to be accurately calibrated in the dwelling delivery for Weston Creek. It is suggested in the Strategy, that the potential housing requirement in the future is around additional 1,300 dwellings. Council is of the opinion that as the smallest of the ACT's nine districts in terms of land area, Weston Creek is already contributing a significant solution to this issue and in a number well above the suggested 1,300 for the area. Including:

- Village Building Company, Fetherston on Heysen Street will have 337 units, with projections for up to 1,000 people. These will cater for the missing middle.
- LDK will have 55 single story two-to-three-bedroom villas, 261 one-to-three-bedroom units, and 11 high care rooms catering for the older population, retirees, and health needs. This caters for whole of life, aging in place living of approximately 643 residents.
- Additionally, a greater mix of densities and uses around the Weston group centre, including shop-top housing, would provide additional dwellings and activate the area.
- The Weston RSPCA site is tagged as a potential key site and change area. Considering this site is on the land release sales program, it could realistically be factored into the housing calculations.

The above estimates show increase in dwellings of around 1,600 before the group centre and RSPCA sites infill are included.

Of further interest is the February 2023 release from the Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate that population data for Weston Creek between June 2021 and June 2060 is going to have a population increase of 1,149 people. Council welcomes the announcement that the ACT Treasury is working in consultation with the Australian National University's school of demography, we trust that this will continue and the estimates are further refined.

Feedback given to Council also seeks clarification of the data, maps, and zones. Further explanation of the urban character types and land use zones would assist understandings and interpretations of desired urban character and future investigation areas. Maps do not have sufficient labelling or overlays to identify specific locations. There also seems to be a gap between the RZ1/2 zones and the T3/4 types. This is causing angst for the community around interpretations of building heights, setbacks, and density.

It is with caution that Council offers comments for the Design Guides as they are currently intentions and have not been written. Further commentary is made in this submission. If Districts are to have areas of mix use, surely it would be reasonable to have industrial and commercial design guides drafted and made available to the community for comment.

It can therefore be reasonably argued that the parks and green spaces in Weston Creek (that appear to have been flagged for future investigation), should be protected as open and green spaces.

It is pleasing to note that *“many of these sites will require further future diligence to determine their suitability and realistic capacity for development, while factoring in other important elements of delivering sustainable neighbourhoods, including contributing to sustainability and active travel (page 106)”*.

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE PLANNING REVIEW AND REFORM

The plans are trying to sound good without committing to much.

Is there anything in planning that will make things easier for people with disability?

Everything feels rushed

Why isn't there an urban heat map included in the District Strategies?

In the case of infill of urban space - what happens in terms of timeframes and consultation?

Planning system has not addressed housing affordability and supply of housing

Has a demographer been used for population projections?

People who have purchased in Weston Creek may not end up with what they thought they had bought.

It was appreciated that the planners came to the November public meeting to give information and answer questions.

My biggest concern is the yellow areas earmarked future investigation areas. Investigation for exactly what?

Residents want Government to listen to what the residents value.

What is the time frame for the potential development sites?

District Strategies have little factual basis, with no substance and little for Weston Creek

For the average citizen, the planning processes are too confusing with too much paper.

What bushfire recommendations are included and what experts were consulted?

What does this mean for existing strata complexes?

What do people value in this area, what needs to be prioritised going into the future?

Ear marking the green spaces for development is not making a sustainable city.

What does investigation mean?

This is an opportunity to influence that change. Chance for renewal and new investment in Weston Creek.

WCCC POSITION ON THE DRAFT PLANNING BILL

Unfortunately, the Planning Review has missed the opportunity for meaningful reform and ploughing ahead with District Strategies and a new Territory Plan (when the fundamentals of the Planning Bill have not been addressed) is a recipe for disaster. For true reform Council suggests that two Acts are required:

- **a Planning Policy Act and**
- **a Planning Administration Act.**

As previously advised, and after extensive community consultation, Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) does not support the draft Planning Bill because:

- Of the many probity and governance risks presented
- Lack of decision-making and assessment criteria
- Vagueness and lack of clarity
- Concerns of potential poor outcomes due to outcomes-focused planning.

Consequently, it appears to Council that the draft District Strategies are premature, and any constructive or innovative thinking has been missed. This has resulted in drafts that are:

- glossy but vague. For example, the unclear and poorly labelled maps included do not allow the community to properly analyse the areas of future development. Maps including overlays with information such as heat island areas would be useful.
- not based on reliable data. There is an over reliance on data from the 2016 census which is pre COVID. Any referred modelling should be attached for full transparency and analysis. Community confidence is low especially with recent incorrect population projections.
- limited rejuvenation of Weston Creek. While Council acknowledges some improvements such as the mention of Brierly Street improvements and intersection upgrades, these have been long promised with limited and/or delayed delivery.

After consultation with the community through public meetings (noting the chief Planner, Ben Ponton attended the November WCCC public meeting), newsletters, and the WCCC website and social media, WCCC offers the following additional comments and suggestions for consideration into the Weston Creek District Strategy.

FURTHER COMMENTS TO THE WESTON CREEK DISTRICT STRATEGY

While each district strategy includes proposed, possible, and potential key development sites and change areas, these are not clearly articulated throughout the strategy. There are significant impacts on residents of any infill, densification and/or urban developments in both their local and adjoining locations. Development plans can completely change the character of an area if not carefully considered. The human impact is huge. Therefore, it is vital that this information is well planned and delivered with authentic community consultation. There is community concern of the lack of transparent information, or any evidence of fresh thinking based on community feedback, to plan for and develop a new invigorated focus for Weston Creek.

DRIVER: BLUE GREEN NETWORK

Of great importance to residents is the special green character of Weston Creek. Any future planning needs to reflect community views and sensitively manage any growth and/change. Prioritising the blue green

connections at the western portion of Rivett and Duffy sounds promising, but what does this actually mean? One would hope that all Weston Creek green spaces would be maintained and enhanced.

It is pleasing that the following initiatives are included in the Weston Creek District Strategy:

- enhance existing open spaces, including walking and cycling connections
- manage bush fire risks
- enhanced canopy coverage

However, it is disappointing that elements of Weston Creek that are highly valued for their unique character, liveability, and community enjoyment, are not explicitly protected in the Strategy, making it a more localised document. Council supports the protection of our green spaces and water ways. WCCC has long advocated for a healthy environment for residents.

Some suggestions for inclusion that would demonstrate Government goodwill and commitment towards Weston Creek (noting that these items have been requested for a significant amount of time) include:

- Protection of **Fetherston Gardens**. There are many active groups in Weston Creek that have contributed to the improved condition of the ACT. Council praises the extensive and tireless work of volunteers who have restored and saved some unique landscapes in the area that would have otherwise been lost forever. These community groups, gardens and projects are valuable sources of expertise, and their work enables that environment and ecosystems to deliver essential services (such as pollination, soil fertility, pest control and erosion control) which may be irreplaceable if lost.
- **The Western Edge Investigation**. Of great concern is any thought of residential development along the western edge. The 9,800-hectare area, known as the 'western edge' is bordered by the Murrumbidgee River and Weston Creek including Chapman, Duffy, and Rivett. Sadly, the news in the State of the Environment Report (released on 19 July 2022) was not good. Council notes that the western edge of Canberra contains a number of high value threatened ecological communities and protected species, particularly but not limited to places such as Bluets' Block. Council notes that both Aboriginal and heritage artifacts are to be found within the Study Area of the Western Edge. Any run-off would pose risks to the river corridor.
- **Managing bush fire risk** needs a higher priority in the Strategy. This is a very serious issue and continues to be a source of stress and trauma for many locals. This element having a medium term (next 10 years) timeframe is not acceptable for the safety and well-being of residents. Council was hopeful that the recommendations given to Government by the Multi Hazard Task Force would have been explicitly listed.
- **Walking and cycling connections** are mentioned but without any actions. Cycle Route C5 off road for bicycles is meant to meet a certain width, but it does not meet these standards. Therefore, it is not safe and needs attention. This maintenance and repair of cycling infrastructure would ensure cyclist safety and enhance cycling in Weston Creek and connections to places of sport and recreation such as Mount Stromlo.
- **Tree canopy**. It has stated that Weston Creek has the highest share of tree canopy, sitting at 25%. However, the climate mitigation advice is 30%. Of concern in the Strategy is the statement:
Most of Weston Creek is relatively cool in hot weather, however Cooleman Court is an urban "heat spot". page 87
- Weston Group Centre is an identified **urban heat island** as identified by the CSIRO. Accordingly designs to Brierly Street should provide greenery and cool spaces.
- In support of residents, Council has requested Weston Block 2 , section 75, (affectionately known as **Coolo Park**) be reverted to its **original, green open space zoning**, then rehabilitated in line with resident's wishes. This could be a successful community partnership. This was a successful campaign

for concerned residents who held grave concerns of a car park adjoining their properties and adding to the heat sink effect.

- Council would also appreciate advice on the future of Bills such as the Urban Forest Bill in relation to the District Strategy.
- Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) would like it noted that, geographically, Weston Creek area has a unique topography. WCCC community consultation has shown us that residents expect access to fresh air, and reliable data to inform their daily activities. An **Air quality monitoring station in Weston Creek** would help maintain a healthy environment allowing the community to be well informed. Monitoring the air quality and sustainability is critical to measure exposure to hazardous substances in the air such as smoke, pollen, and dust in real time. This would allow people to make decisions in their daily routines and improve their quality of life. Establishment of this station would also allow the Bureau of Meteorology to establish a weather monitoring facility. This is an alignment with the plans guiding principle of monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate effectiveness of the plan and would appear to be unavoidable.

WCCC commended the Government for the release of the *Right to a Healthy Environment Discussion Paper* to inform consideration of the introduction of a right to a healthy environment in The Human Rights Act. The natural environment and ecosystems sustain humans and all other living creatures, which rely on the environment for food, clean air, and water as well as raw materials and medicines. The environment is a major underlying determinant of health and how we live.

All of the above recommendations are aligned with this work, and other frameworks, that the Government has developed. Greater attention to these in the District Strategy would be appropriate. At minimum the addition of an appendix and links would be valuable. This is also a suggestion for the Planning Guides.

DRIVER: ECONOMIC ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE CITY

Council welcomes the direction to grow small businesses and employment opportunities in and around the Weston Group Centre. With the future developments on the RSPCA Cotter Road site and the Village Building site on Heysen Street, more, not less, services will be required. It would therefore be economically sensible to include all local shops in the District Strategy, not just the Weston group centre and local shops at Fisher. This revitalisation could be achieved by having a forward-thinking plan for the maintenance of all centres in the district. Council suggests more innovative thinking and the inclusion of such opportunities as:

- **Revitalise all local shops.** An action plan for all local shops, including reviews and maintenance plans. This could be on a rotating basis and included in the annual Territory Budget
- **Raise the profile of the Fisher shops** upgrade with community consultation. This is also an opportunity to future proof the district by including e-charging stations, e-scooter drop off zones, incorporate solar panels on awnings over car parking bays, install water tanks and green gardens
- Economic growth will not be achieved if **cost of living pressures** are not addressed. Anecdotally, home business has increase but is not mentioned in the Strategy. To support these local businesses the **IT networks need to be upgraded and maintained** with **faster internet access**.
- Deliver on the long awaited **Brierly Street upgrade**. A short-term timeframe (next 5 years) is not promising when this project should have already been completed. If the timeframe however refers to new and future consultation and improvements not currently proposed, then it is welcomed. The next instalment needs to start with plans to further enhance the area by relocating the Woolworths loading dock, improve lighting to connecting underpasses, beautify the playground area with shade, seating, and meeting spaces.

- With projected population and economic growth, employees and consumers will require easy access to the group centre. A **multi-story carpark** has been flagged since the Master Plan and should be constructed. This would also bring customers to the Weston group centre and be good for business
- **Cotter Road/RSPCA** site precinct could include shops and small businesses as a mixed-use development. This would provide employment opportunities closer to home. Opportunities for innovation precincts could also be considered for this development.
- There are missed opportunities for the ACT to be viewed as a **Regional Hub**. For example, the travel to Tumut from Weston Creek could be improved with a direct road link allowing quicker travel encouraging tourism and partnerships.
- Building on the cluster of health and medical, education, and sports could be enhanced in the Strategy for Weston Creek.
- Weston Creek accounts for a small share of the ACT's jobs at around 2%. The health and education category make up the largest share at 38%.
- Whilst residents are clear on maintaining the village atmosphere of their surrounds, there are opportunities for investigation in health and education to develop them as training and centres of excellence, particularly on the existing sites such as in the vet in Holder.
- By improving the facilities of sport and communication, the area could be an attraction for sports competitions as well as a centre for health and well-being in the ACT. Consultation with the sporting and recreation groups of Weston Creek with a view to build an indoor sporting facility in Weston Creek is recommended. Additionally,
 - Upgrade Arawang netball courts
 - Provide female change rooms and repair the general access to Rivett oval
 - Provide ongoing and regular maintenance of Weston Creek ovals, including Holder oval, with increased lighting provision
- Timely review of the current use and purposes of ex-Government buildings as a means of identifying community need and business opportunities.

DRIVER: STRATEGIC MOVEMENT TO SUPPORT CITY GROWTH

Centre, Woden, and Molonglo Valley. However, being a longer-term timeframe (20+ years), this does not give any room for excitement.

ACT Government's core areas of responsibility include: public transport, roads and active travel roads and suburban and municipal services. Effective road systems reduce road trauma and improve economic and social impacts. This is vital in the recovery period after COVID-19 and would also allow all people to move easily within the neighbourhood and make connections with other people, work, places, and services easily and safely.

Council notes that Weston Creek has been listed as a major stakeholder for the **light rail project**. Council would appreciate active and ongoing consultation with the Project Team to ensure the best possible outcomes for the residents of Weston Creek during the light rail planning and construction phases.

Upgrades to widen pavements and provide greater separation between cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles on the Cotter Road is welcomed. It is also noted that upgrades to Streeton Drive are being planned and being designed to improve safety for pedestrians, bike riders and drivers at key intersections at Heysen Street in the north and Namatjira in the south. Gruner Street also needs attention.

Although Weston Creek does have a rapid bus connection to the City Centre, the connections within Weston Creek are very poor. It is also disappointing that no major new strategic public transport projects are currently flagged for Weston Creek. To encourage strategic movement around the districts from Weston Creek it is suggested that:

- The most pressing need is the **entire Streeton Drive corridor. Road design, reconstruction, maintenance, and consideration for all road/transport users** (including cars, pedestrians, and cyclists) is a high priority. We believe that there is potential to leverage additional funds from the Commonwealth Road Safety Black Spot Scheme to fund these specific examples of intersections needing urgent attention (as was recently announced for the Brierly Street and Hindmarsh Drive intersection).
- **Mulley Street and Streeton Drive** is dangerous, particularly at school drop off and pick up. This intersection needs better line of site. The narrowing of lanes in this area has confused drivers. Two car lanes and a dedicated bicycle route is needed here, especially to encourage different transport access to the village centre. This needs to be included in the initiatives.
- **Hilder Street and Streeton Drive** is another pinch point. We have received feedback the 80km speed limit is too high for traffic in this area and a 60km limit has been requested here.
- Reducing the **road speeds** on arterial and suburban roads in Weston Creek would go a long way to improving the liveability requirement with respect to safety, pollution, and noise. Council notes that road limits around shops, schools, child-care, religious and medical/aged care are being reviewed and we look forward to the report. Through-suburb vehicle access should be restricted to discourage “rat running”.
- Council understands that the **parking code** is being updated and will align with the new Territory Plan. This should address many concerns around road parking, cycle lanes, visibility, street character, bus and private vehicle use.
- **Increase the park and ride** facilities, for example at Duffy interchange

Other issues and their impacts not considered in the Strategy include:

- Uber air
- Drones
- The developments at Stromlo Forest Park will have consequences for Weston Creek. A safe cycle/pedestrian connection is needed. It is predicted that this need will increase with the introduction of paid parking at Stromlo Forest Park as people chose to park in nearby suburbs. To support families with rising cost of living expenses it is suggested that a fee free period of ½ - 1 hour be introduced to allow drop off and pick up arrangements rather than the existing ones proposed.

DRIVER: SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

- A regular comment to Council in feedback is that the **maps included are not detailed** enough for informed comment. For example, Figure 36 highlights proposed, possible and potential change areas and future investigation areas in Weston Creek District. Labelling of streets would assist the reader in understanding the locations. Overlays such as location of local parks, tree canopy coverage and heat islands would also inform decision making.
- Making projections for future housing demand based on just the census appears flawed. **Other data** is needed with expert analysis. In the absence of any independent, qualified demographer and/or actuary advice it is problematic to be making such important planning decisions. Far more sophisticated modelling is required.

- Important to the Territory is **housing affordability, whole of life housing and the missing middle options**. To this end, Council is proud of the extensive community engagement it organised and participated in for the Village Building Company Development on Heysen Street. This consultation has resulted in plans with a range of typologies, townhouses, and apartments. This development shows a range of housing options in style and affordability. Council looks forward to its completion. Of interest, is the omission of this development in the Strategy.

Similarly, Council engaged with the LDK development process following comments provided by community members. This has resulted in adjustments that will improve the development for the community such as light pollution. Again, this demonstrates a community commitment to **arrange of housing options**. In this instance being retirement, health, and aged care living.

- There is some confusion regarding **zoning and building heights** within the community. Clarification on these points would be useful, particularly building heights for the Weston group centre area, densification around local shops and the Cotter Road development proposal. These have great potential if done well. Of importance however is managing this growth around the group centre while maintaining the garden feel and preserving the backyards in the suburbs.
- Council is not opposed to development when it is transparent, well planned and executed, and of benefit to the residents and community. There are areas around Cooleman Court that urgently need attention. For example, the lease variation to remove the concessional status from the crown lease for the **Weston Raiders Club** could be a great opportunity for rejuvenation. This however needs to be in consultation with the community and with careful consideration of the community needs for meeting spaces. As this DA has already been lodged, it was envisaged that it would be included in the District Strategy.
- **Green spaces, community gardens** are valued to residents, particularly as Weston Creek has been identified by the CSIRO as an urban heat island. It is hoped that extensive consultation will be organised for any future development. Constant feedback has been for the **Western Edge** to be maintained as is.
- Important factors for sustainable neighbourhoods include contributing to sustainability outcomes and active travel. Weston Creek is well known for its community gardens and green character. Missing from the Weston Creek initiatives are specific **actions for healthy land and food**. It is important that **farming land** is not lost as result of ill planned development. **The reform must include land use for food and sustainable livelihoods for farmers.**

During the last few years, a significant number of citizens and their families have been planting vegetables, fruits, nuts, and other plants to supplement their household diets and improve their sense of well-being. Most participants in such pursuits have commented that the local soils have insufficient nutrients, have been severely compacted and have required significant work to support good growth.

Soil degradation and invasive weed growth are significant issues now. For example, African Love Grass is prolific and is resulting in significant impacts on the land and to animal food resources. Without a whole of Territory response, the African Love Grass infestation will further degrade the land. Measures could include approaches to stop further degradation, while also improving and maintaining soil quality, as well as “unlocking” those otherwise under-utilised pockets of Territory land seen in most suburbs.

Council also suggests Government needs to actively encourage verge and laneway plantings to support a thriving and resilient environment. There needs to be open collaboration with all stakeholders. This

includes the home gardener, community garden and groups maintaining open spaces. These ecosystems are crucial for biodiversity of plants, seed harvesting, healthy propagation, and habitats for pollinators.

- **Active streets and women's safety.** Weston Creek Community Council has consulted with the community via surveys and by hosting a forum on Monday 24 October 2022, specifically on women's safety. Actions that have been suggested for Government consideration in the Weston Creek area include: ❖ Revitalise Weston Creek, making it more vibrant and attractive with good lighting and well-maintained suburbs including footpaths ❖ Invest in better community recreation facilities and services ❖ Improve the sporting facilities ❖ Improve public transport, providing safer travel ❖ A police presence in Weston Creek ❖ Activate the shopping areas.
- Additionally on the *Women's Health Matters Canberra Safety Map*, areas in Weston Creek have been reported as unsafe for women. **Safety for women** is an important issue for Canberra as a safe, liveable, and active travel city. Council requests **improvements in pathways, lighting, and visibility** in such areas as bus stops.

These need to be adequately addressed through the infrastructure pathways.

- *Page 107 "Development precincts to demonstrate and achieve improved tree canopy cover, permeability and urban heat outcomes when compared to similar previous precincts".*
 - This needs clarification as to improvements and comparisons to what
 - Will the Urban Forest Bill still be enforced or superseded?
- *Page 107 "All development precincts to provide the infrastructure needed to deliver zero carbon transition, with additional precinct-based initiatives to also be encouraged"*
 - It is vital that planning and development have an environmental and human impact focus with open transparency on the Government's plans and processes, for example:
 - Development of lithium battery re-use/waste management plan
 - Government considers the large-scale implementation of neighbourhood of EV charging points taking advantage of the existing public street lighting infrastructure
- The Design Guides need to be available for comment before activation to ensure they capture community expectations as well as quality and best usage. See comments on these guides in dedicated comments section.

"... this in turn will inform changes to the Territory Plan and planning controls." (Page 106).

INCLUSIVE CENTRES AND COMMUNITIES

- It is suggested that the district has a high-level of accessibility to facilities due to proximity to nearby facilities in Woden. However, this is not the case with the decrease of sports facilities in Woden. Investment is definitely needed for these services.

There is considerable pressure on the facilities in Weston Creek as they are shared its facilities with other districts. With the densification in Weston Creek, in the Fetherston, RSPCA and LDK developments, there will be a **need for increase of and expanded access to facilities and Weston Creek**. This is before any consideration to infill around the Weston group centre. Pressures include:

- Accessibility to these services is not just for the older demographic. Concerns that need to be attended to in Weston Creek include:
 - Parking spaces on Brierly Street do not meet Disability Standards
 - Safe visibility is compromised due to overcrowding of the southern car park
 - Steep ramp to the back entrance of the group centre is dangerous
 - Family friendly parks and playgrounds. For instance, young families that live in Weston Creek are advising that they meet in other districts with better facilities. The playground at the Weston group centre could be renovated to meet these requirements
 - Meeting spaces for community groups are at capacity. Molonglo is experiencing similar pressure. A community hub is well overdue to meet need

- A fundamental human right is the ability to be and feel safe. The timely response of relevant authorities when a safety incident occurs has significant impacts on the perceptions of the community. Unfortunately, over a period-of-time, Council has been advised of resident disappointments in this area. Careful consideration to the following needs to be addressed:
 - **Improved policing.** Council continues to ask for a greater and more visible presence of police in the area and a better police response rate to citizen reports. With the growing ACT population, we believe a new police station is required for the Weston Creek/Molonglo area. Although the Police Services Model sounds promising, there remains a perception that people do not feel safe in the area. In the interim we suggest a **shopfront style police point of contact** in one of the currently empty spaces at Coleman Court. For the community, this would be a positive sign of good will, build positive partnerships with police and the community, and increase trust and confidence of the government. This could be a trial to evaluate what may be effective and could also collect valuable information.

SUMMARY of COMMENTS for the WESTON CREEK DISTRICT STRATEGY

Please read this brief summary in conjunction with the comments and recommendations provided in this submission. Recommendations include:

- ❖ Council suggests that two Acts are required: a Planning Policy Act and a Planning Administration Act.
- ❖ Improve and extend the Weston Creek initiatives to positively rejuvenate and activate the district
- ❖ Provide detailed maps which include street names, names of green spaces, and overlays such as urban heat island areas
- ❖ Provide explicit links to other frameworks, Bills such as the Urban Forest Bill and the Human Rights Bill
- ❖ Clarify the relationship between and specifics of the residential zones and urban character types and explain their implementation
- ❖ Provide more detailed, cross-referenced data to inform the documents
- ❖ Engage expert independent advisory services on ACT demographics

BLUE GREEN NETWORK:

- ❖ Protect Fetherston Gardens and enhance the area for the many volunteers by providing toilets
- ❖ Re-zone *Coolo Park* to open green space and then rehabilitated in line with resident's wishes.
- ❖ Protect the Western Edge by not developing the land
- ❖ Include the recommendations given of the Multi Hazard Task Force to managing bush fire risk
- ❖ Maintain and repair of walking and cycling infrastructure and connections
- ❖ Install an air quality monitoring station(s) in Weston Creek

ECONOMIC ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- ❖ Revitalise all local shops with a clear action plan linked to the ACT Budget
- ❖ Provide an innovative Fisher shops upgrade
- ❖ Address cost of living pressures
- ❖ Improve internet access
- ❖ Activate the Cooleman Court area with a multi-story car park and deliver and extend the Brierly Street upgrade
- ❖ Consult with community about the possible options for the Cotter Road/RSPCA site including mixed use development, housing, or an innovative business hub
- ❖ Investigate the districts as a tourist destination including environmental tourism
- ❖ Include overlays and information for the ACT as a regional hub. For Weston Creek this would include links to Tumut NSW
- ❖ Investigate economic opportunities for the medical and education centres, example as training centres
- ❖ Enhance and extend employer grants to support volunteer groups
- ❖ Improve the facilities of sport and communication and build a new indoor sports centre in Weston Creek

STRATEGIC MOVEMENT TO SUPPORT CITY GROWTH

- ❖ Reduce the timeframes for the proposed initiatives for Weston Creek
- ❖ Increase the park and ride locations
- ❖ Improve road safety including road maintenance and road networks
- ❖ Improve bus connections within Weston Creek and to locations such as Stromlo Forest Park
- ❖ Provision of a strategic transport route to Tumut NSW

SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

- ❖ Better detailed maps and overlays are required
- ❖ Sensitive responses to housing needs with retention of single dwelling houses and backyards in the local suburbs
- ❖ Expert independent data should be obtained to inform decision making and projections
- ❖ Decision advice on the Raiders Club Weston is requested
- ❖ Design Guides need to be circulated to the community for consultation
- ❖ Zoning and building heights need clarification
- ❖ Green spaces, Coolo Park and the Western Edge need to be protected
- ❖ The reform must include land use for food and sustainable livelihoods for farmers
- ❖ Make explicit links to the Food and Fibre Strategy
- ❖ Activate footpaths and underpasses in Weston Creek with lighting to ensure safe travel
- ❖ Invest in better services and facilities including recreation and sporting facilities
- ❖ Design Guides need to be available for comment before activation

INCLUSIVE CENTRES AND COMMUNITIES

- ❖ Construction of a contemporary meeting place
- ❖ Increased community and recreational facilities including a large indoor sports centre
- ❖ Improved policing presence
- ❖ Strengthen the cross-district network of community facilities with consideration of demand and existing provision across Weston Creek, Woden, and Molonglo Valley districts

COMMENTS FOR THE INTENDED ACT URBAN DESIGN GUIDE AND THE ACT HOUSING DESIGN GUIDE

In response to the ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project. For consultation: Explanation of Intended Effects, WCCC offers the following comments for:

- **ACT Urban Design Guide**
- **Act Housing Design Guide**

INTRODUCTION

Precinct designed development done well will provide affordability, variety, and quality. Successful outcomes focussed planning requires planning, design and assessment criteria based on accurate data.

Design guides will be valuable in achieving these goals. It is however difficult to comment when these guides have not been published. It is important that these criteria be protected in the Planning Act.

Instruments that Council suggests being reconsidered for inclusion in the Act, include a:

- **Charter** to guide public participation in the preparation and amendment of designated policies, strategies, and schemes, including mandatory requirements:
 - Actions that must be included in any engagement plans
 - A set of principles which guide engagement
 - Performance outcomes you would see from successful engagement.
 - Types of measures for measuring performance.
- **Planning and Design Code** that:
 - sets out a comprehensive set of policies, rules and classifications which may be selected and applied
 - provides for other matters envisaged by the Act, and regulations made under the Act.

With reference to the South Australian Planning Act, it is recommended that the following **principles of good planning** be explicitly stated in the ACT's Planning Act:

- policy frameworks should be based around long-term priorities, be ecologically sound, and seek to promote equity between present and future generations
- policy frameworks should be informed by monitoring, benchmarking, and evaluation programs
- the encroachment of urban areas on areas of rural, landscape or environmental significance is to be avoided

With reference to the South Australian Planning Act, it is recommended that the following **high quality design principles** be explicitly stated in the ACT's Planning Act:

- development should be designed to reflect local setting and context, to have a distinctive identity that responds to the existing character of its locality, and to strike a balance between built form, infrastructure, and public realm
- built form should be durable, designed to be adaptive (including in relation to the reuse of buildings or parts of buildings) and compatible with relevant public realm
- public realm should be designed to be used, accessible, and appropriately landscaped and vegetated
- built form and the public realm should be designed to be inclusive and accessible to people with differing needs and capabilities
- the Territory should be planned and designed and developed to:
 - be well-connected in ways that facilitate the safe, secure, and effective movement of people within and through them
 - to support active and healthy lifestyles and to cater for a diverse range of cultural and social activities

- to be sustainable with focus on achieving energy efficient urban environments that address the implications of climate change

WCCC COMMENTS AGAINST THE GUIDES with a request for Government response

- ❖ Are the guides measurable and based on accurate data?
- ❖ (Page 11) Will there be building codes for disability and ageing as well as gender specific design?
- ❖ (Page 13) Can the broader centre, hierarchy policy framework, and broader principles be clarified? What are they?
- ❖ (Page 13) What current frameworks and Bills will remain? For example, the Living Infrastructure, Urban Forest Bill, and Human Rights Bill. An appendix, links or pull-down boxes in a living document would be useful.
- ❖ (Page 19) With mitigation of the built form impacts to adjacent public spaces, guidance and controls and building heights and setbacks – what will they be? Can the maps and zones A, B, C, D be developed with greater detail?
- ❖ Clarification is also required around the six urban character zones and transect thinking. If the land use zones are not being replaced, how will they be used and enforced. What will be the compliance and appeal and processes?
- ❖ (Page 19) Public art is specifically listed. It is suggested that parks, open spaces are also listed by name. Protection of parks with extended sensitive urban design is valued.
- ❖ (Page 20) More climate change mitigation based on the impacts of the human condition is desired.
- ❖ Are design guides and decisions based on data. If so, what?
- ❖ Can building fire regulations be included so that green walls and rooflines are compliant?
- ❖ (Page 23) With the impacts of urban infill, how will this be done and look like? How will current issues with Das be addresses and finalised?
- ❖ (Page 24) In reducing the urban heat island effect, will responses be clear for resident concerns. For example: the *Coolo Park* request for re-zoning.
- ❖ Pleasing to see provisions for: outlook and a visual connection, residents to live comfortably, natural ventilation, open spaces that connect to the home. These need protection in the Planning Act
- ❖ (Page 27) regarding zone policies in the Territory Plan, clearer maps are needed
- ❖ (Page 27) Where is the standard for obtaining approvals? There are concerns for timeliness, builder holding costs, and deliverable quality.
- ❖ (Page 28) The Guides sit outside the Territory Plan. Reference in the Territory Plan gives the Guides statutory weight. Can their protection in the Planning Act be considered?
- ❖ (Page 29) Where are the guidelines for the commercial and industrial areas?
- ❖ Questions remain about compliance and enforcement. What will be the procedure and the consequences?
- ❖ There are compliance provisions in District Strategies and Zone Policies. Technical Specifications for compliance are in the Act. The Territory Plan specifies the level of compliance required. Bur what is the complaints process?

CONCLUSION

As a priority, Weston Creek Community Council has broadened the areas and fields of its community consultation to best express the views of a wide range of groups. We believe that our consistent and ongoing consultation with the community through our surveys, public meetings (which are also available digitally), social media presence, newsletters and projects have proven to be valuable avenues of people being able to have their say, be listened to and be involved in decision making. We reiterate our open invitation to Government Ministers to address the Weston Creek Community Council at public meetings.

Yours sincerely

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