

The Executive Director
ACT Planning & Land Authority
PO Box 1908
Canberra ACT 2601

**Comments on behalf of the Gungahlin Community Council Inc.
Re: The Draft Canberra Spatial Plan**



***Gungahlin
Community
Council Inc.***

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Please find attached the comments from the Gungahlin Community Council Inc. relating to The Draft Canberra Spatial Plan.

Should you require more information, please contact me on: (H) 6242 9444, (M) 041 7272 019 or email info@gcc.asn.au

Yours sincerely

Ian Ruecroft
17th December 2003

Gungahlin Community Council's comments re: **The Draft Canberra Spatial Plan**



Introduction

The Gungahlin Community Council Inc. (GCC) is a not for profit organisation, with a particular interest in matters associated with the Gungahlin district. The GCC constitution identifies the district of Gungahlin as the area bounded by the Federal and Barton Highways, the NSW border and the township of Hall.

The objective of the Council is:

To preserve and improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental well being of
Gungahlin and the Gungahlin Community.

To achieve these objectives the Council undertakes to:

- consult with members of the Gungahlin community;
- represent the Gungahlin community, and lobby authorities on the community's behalf;
- provide a non-political environment where members of the community can express their aspirations, concerns and suggestions;
- provide a public forum where members of the community can obtain information, support and opportunities to network with others;
- advise, support and/ or assist any organisation with compatible objectives to those that have been adopted by the Council;
- liaise with members of the public, legislators, officials and community representatives; and
- to provide appropriate information and opinions on matters relevant to the Gungahlin community.

The GCC has participated in the development of the Draft Spatial Plan (DSP) and has been represented at many of the working group opportunities, available during the consultation process. The Council supports the underpinning need for a Spatial Plan for the ACT; as we consider that there has been a long established need to develop planning guidelines for the ACT's long-term development. The GCC believes that the year 2032 is a realistic scope for planning consideration.

The GCC reserves the right to make further comments should it identify additional issues of concern over the coming weeks and, in particular, any issues of importance that it identifies in relation to the Gungahlin district.



1. General

The GCC supports the proposal that population growth should be concentrated within the ACT borders, with compatible growth external to the ACT being sensitive to sound planning principals and equitable resourcing of infrastructure requirements. There is also a need to consider the Territory's options in relation to the area and location of Commonwealth land within the ACT borders. Compared with other states and territories, the ACT has an inequitable ratio of land held by the Commonwealth. The impact of development of that land has the potential to undermine quality development principals and siphon infrastructure resources from the Territory.

Recommendation

1a) That the ACT Government explores all available options, in an effort to acquire ownership and control of lands within the ACT boundaries, in an effort to exercise quality planning principals, development and social balance.

2. Development in Molonglo and Kowen

The GCC has not fully considered the likely impact for local communities relating to the proposed developments in the districts of Molonglo and Kowen. There is a need for extensive research and community consultation prior to general planning for these areas. The integration of Weston Creek into the Molonglo district must be considered, in consultation with the existing community, with an aim of delivering development that provides the district with facilities and services comparable to other districts with similar populations.

The GCC has concerns that there could be an intention of developing these areas in a way that will not provide them with reasonable community facilities and services or local employment opportunities. We suggest that the DSP needs to include a commitment to provide all ACT districts of significant population (i.e. more than 30,000 residents) with equitable facilities and local employment opportunities. Proposed developments that create districts that are substantially clusters of dormitory suburbs, will have a negative impact on ACT road networks and social balance.

Development in Molonglo and Kowen will need to be released in a manner that will not negatively impact on development in other ACT districts, including Gungahlin. Although there are advantages in releasing land that offers choices for ACT residents, it is crucial to establish the population triggers that identify stages of development in different districts. These population triggers must be linked to land release programs, to ensure that proposed developments actually deliver reasonable amenity for residents. There is a real risk that patchwork development (in Gungahlin, Molonglo and Kowen) will not deliver residents, of these newer districts, with a standard of services and facilities that is available to other districts.

Recommendation

2a) That extensive research and community consultation take place prior to general planning for the districts of Molonglo and Kowen, with the objective of providing these communities with quality planning and development outcomes.

2b) Development in Molonglo and Kowen should be developed in a manner that will not negatively impact on other ACT districts, including Gungahlin.

2c) That population triggers be established and linked to land release programs and community facilities; to ensure that proposed developments actually deliver reasonable amenity to residents of newly established communities.



3. Employment

The GCC supports the principle of development that is based on the Town Centre development model, with Civic and the Parliamentary Triangle being the main areas of employment. This model provides each community with reasonable amenity and community identity; it also reduces the need for extensive travel for employment related purposes. Local employment eases traffic congestion and the associated negative environmental impact, whilst reducing the costs associated with road construction, improvement and maintenance. Information contained within the DSP indicates that there is an intention to make Woden and Belconnen into “super” Town Centres, at the expense of Gungahlin and Tuggeranong; this proposal is neither equitable or practical.

The GCC has been vocal in expressing the opinion that Gungahlin and Mitchell are disadvantaged areas in relation to employment opportunities. Planners have hidden behind the rouse that employment in the Mitchell provides Gungahlin residents with equitable employment opportunities. The fact that is that, in the time that 27,00 people have shifted into Gungahlin, Mitchell’s employment base has not expanded. In fact, the Mitchell employment base has contracted, with several significant employers, relocating, decreasing the size of their workforce or ceasing operation in the area. eg The National Archives, Totalcare, The Brickworks.

Although there have been a number of government departments which could have been located in the Gungahlin and Mitchell areas, these opportunities have been lost due to political and industrial pressures. Development at the Airport has also undermined possible employment opportunities for Gungahlin, with the DSP giving recognition and endorsement for continuing growth in this area. Although there are advantages in considering how and why the Airport has been so successful in attracting employment, during a time when Gungahlin and Mitchell have been virtually stagnant; continuing development at the Airport is not beneficial to the ACT community or in the interests of sound planning principals. It also has the potential to siphon infrastructure resources from the Territory, without returning revenue to the ACT community.

The DSP states, “Existing Centres, including Civic, will be the focus of employment”, whilst identifying several districts for continuing specialist employment nurturing i.e. the reference to the east-west corridor on page 52. The DSP is an example of the big getting bigger and the disadvantaged being overlooked. Although the GCC recognizes that short-term fixes will not produce a sustainable outcomes; to date there has not been any indication that longer-term solution are being seriously considered for Gungahlin or Mitchell. Although the issue of employment, in Gungahlin and Mitchell, was raised numerous times during the consultation process, the GCC has been unable to find any reference to proposed actions related to this issue. The reference on page 54 identifies the issue, without offering any real concern, options or possible solutions for the problem.

In previous consultation, relating to the Gungahlin Town Centre, the issue of employment was discussed at length. It was generally agreed that the lack of a local employment base inhibits the development of the Gungahlin Town Centre and the viability of retail expansion. Several options were discussed and it was generally agreed that there was a desperate need to initially focus efforts to develop strategies for the Gungahlin Town Centre. Since those consultations took place, there has been no proposal to progress this issue any further. This issue was also raised in the DSP consultation but has not been identified in the DSP document.

The GCC believes that there is a need to identify Gungahlin, Mitchell and Tuggeranong as disadvantaged areas (in relation to employment) and to commit resources into planning and implementing initiatives that will provide these areas with equitable employment opportunities, commensurate to their respective residential populations.

The initial focus of these actions should be concentrated on the Gungahlin and Mitchell district.



Recommendation

3a) That the principle of development based on the Town Centre development model (with Civic and the Parliamentary Triangle being the main areas of employment) be identified as a sustainable model for the ACT; with Town Centres, in all districts being treated equitably in relation to community facilities, services and employment opportunities.

3b) That Gungahlin, Mitchell and Tuggeranong should be identified as disadvantaged areas (in relation to employment) requiring the commitment of resources to plan and implement initiatives that will provide these areas with equitable employment opportunities. This should include the establishment of population triggers linking development, incentives and other initiatives with the creation of full time employment opportunities.

3c) That resources be committed to exploring options, community consultation and the development of strategies to overcome the stagnation of employment in the Gungahlin Town Centre and Mitchell area; including the establishment of milestones for monitoring progress.

3d) That a study should be conducted into establishing how the Airport has been so successful in attracting employment, during a time when Gungahlin, Mitchell and Tuggeranong have been virtually stagnant.

4. Road networks

The GCC supports the principle of development that is based on the Town Centre development, thus minimizing the need for extensive additional road networks. The GCC considers that the Gungahlin Drive extension is required for Gungahlin residents. We note that there is no suggestion in the DSP that the need for this road should be reviewed.

The GCC is of the belief that, unless there is a significant commitment to establishing a viable employment base and visionary public transport initiatives, in the Gungahlin and Mitchell district, there will be a need for additional road networks. The construction of Monash Drive will be required to provide Gungahlin residents access to Civic, Barton and Russell. Public transport initiatives will assist in delaying the construction of the road, but it is unlikely to remove the need for the road in the longer-term, unless reasonable numbers of local employment opportunities exist.

The GCC considers that one, relatively low cost option for delaying the construction of Monash Drive, may be to construct the section of Monash Drive between Madigan St (Hackett) and the intersection of Limestone and Ainslie Avenues. This road would be for public transport use only and could be coupled to a bus lane along Phillip Ave/ Flemington Rd; it would require the duplication of Phillip Ave, from Antill St to Madigan St (Hackett). This public transport corridor could provide reasonable traveling times between Civic and Gungahlin, whilst relieving congestion along Northbourne Ave.

Recommendation

4a) That resources be committed to investigating the viability of the construction of a public transport corridor between Madigan St (Hackett) and the intersection of Limestone and Ainslie Avenues. This public transport corridor could provide reasonable traveling times between Gungahlin, Civic, Barton and Russell, whilst relieving congestion along Northbourne Ave.

5. Public transport

The GCC supports proposals for public transport to be more central to transport solutions. However, we are concerned that there appears to be a "band aid" mentality in relation to this subject. The ACT needs to abandon our "small town" public transport thinking and move toward becoming a public transport "city".



The Council considers that the only way to avoid the need to construct Monash Drive is the establishment of a high quality light rail public transport system that offers an attractive alternative to the private motor vehicle. However, we do not wish rule out the exploration of other alternatives, including a high quality ACT bus way network (including a Monash Drive bus way).

The GCC supports the vision of a light rail network linking all Town Centres and areas of significant employment. The light rail network should be designed to be compatible and complementary to the existing (and future) ACT bus service. The first stage of the light rail network should be the route from Civic to Gungahlin. This route should follow Northbourne Avenue before turning into Flemington Road and proceeding to the Gungahlin Town Centre.

The logic for this proposal is:

- 1) The growth of Gungahlin is the greatest of any area in the ACT and therefore should be identified as an area that can benefit most, from the provision of light rail services.
- 2) The benefits for attracting employment and investment to Gungahlin and the probable impact on commercial and residential development that will be generated by commitment to the light rail link from Civic to Gungahlin.
- 3) The economic benefit to the Territory would be significant along route, due to the increased revenue received from land sales adjacent to the corridor (as a result of the commitment to light rail). This economic benefit will not be available to the Territory after the land is sold to developers. eg the sale of commercial blocks along Flemington Road.
- 4) The light rail option, for Civic to Gungahlin, would generate considerable cost savings, which can be achieved by avoiding the construction of roads that would be required to deliver equitable transport corridors for Gungahlin residents ie. The construction of Monash Drive.
- 5) The light rail link from Civic to Gungahlin is the least expensive route and is the most necessary of all the Town Centres, at this stage of the ACT's development
- 6) A realistic time frame for the construction of a light rail link from Civic to Gungahlin would be three years; which will coincide with land sale opportunities, population growth, revenue availability and community expectations.
- 7) Opportunities exist for the development of the EPIC car parking areas as an extensive park and ride facility that forms a hub for a car, bus and light rail interchange and service facility.

The GCC recognizes that attracting people to use public transport is a complicated exercise. We recognized that there is very little chance of attracting people who are supplied with a company car or work in an area that is difficult to get to by public transport. Others have considerations such as childcare pickup, schooling, sporting and social commitments that make public transport fairly unattractive.

Although there are many things that make people decide to use public transport, there are some basic factors that cause people to consider it in preference to purchasing a vehicle or running a second car.



Items that attract	Items that cause consideration
Favorable travel time	Difficult traffic conditions
Attractive fare structure	Shortage of available parking
Convenience of stations	Company and/ or Government incentives
Frequency and reliability of service	Environmental concerns
Passenger comfort at stations and in travel	Increases in the cost of car ownership, petrol or parking

Gungahlin is at a stage where public transport could have a huge influence for purchasers of future homes. At this time there are very few homes within easy walking distance of Flemington Road. In fifteen years there will be 15,000 to 30,000 people living within easy walking distance of Flemington Road. Light rail offers an opportunity for quality development focused around public transport hubs and sustainable commuter patronage.

Recommendation

5a) That resources be committed to establishing an accurate costing for the construction, maintenance and operation of a high quality public transport network, linking all Town Centres and districts of significant employment. The vision of an ACT light rail network should be the preferred model, unless preferable alternatives are proven to deliver superior outcomes and long-term public transport benefits.

5b) That construction of a light rail link from Civic to Gungahlin should be constructed over the next three years, with land sales along the route delayed until commitment to the project has been confirmed.

5c) That development around public transport hubs should be identified as a separate development charge, with the revenue from this source being used exclusively for light rail construction and expansion.

6. Community and Education facilities

The DSP identifies the need for adequate and appropriate community services to be provided and maintained. This includes remaining consistent with guidelines for catchments and appropriate location of schools, colleges, child care centres, health facilities and other community services.

The GCC endorses this principal of planning and development; however we feel that there is a need for the DSP to identify the population and/ or timeframes that trigger the construction and location of these facilities. An example of failure to provide adequate facilities is the provision of Years 11 and 12 in the Gungahlin government school system. It is also apparent by the chronic shortage of childcare places in the Gungahlin district.

In the DSP consultation, the GCC raised the issue that provision of community services and facilities also provides the community with recognition and endorsement. The failure to provide services and facilities, at an appropriate time, undermines the community’s faith in the district and generates friction between communities.

Recommendation

6a) That resources be committed to establishing population triggers for the provision of adequate and appropriate community services.

6b) That adequate and appropriate community services be provided consistent with the guidelines for catchments, in relation to appropriate location of schools, colleges, child care centres, health facilities and other community services.



7. Comments related to the DSP document and consultation

The GCC supports the need for the Spatial Plan for the ACT. The DSP is a step in the right direction but fails to deliver real solutions to difficult problems. The document contains considerable detail in some instances but inconclusive statements in other sections. There also appears to be inconsistency in the way that information is collected, assessed and presented.

Members of the GCC participated in many of the consultation workshops and we are extremely disappointed that most of the issues raised by our representatives have been ignored. The document has failed to provide recognition of the issues that will impact on Gungahlin's future development and social character.

It is difficult to identify one comment that offers Gungahlin residents confidence that our future development will provide us with community facilities and services, or employment opportunities comparable to other ACT communities. We would hope that the final document corrects this situation.

Recommendation

7a) That the DSP be amended to provide recognition of the issues that will impact on Gungahlin's future development and social character; including the identification of how Gungahlin will be provided with community facilities, services and employment opportunities, comparable to other ACT communities.

7b) That the DSP should be amended to identify each district of significant population (i.e. more than 30,000 residents). Each district should have a profile developed to provide information relating to the current and projected: residential population; growth predictions; growth restrictions; full-time job equivalents; community services and facilities; development staging and sequencing; transport facilities and needs; infrastructure and infrastructure needs; district focus, specialization and/ or opportunity; environmental issues; long-term and short-term development plan, etc.