



Inner South Canberra Community Council

Minister Chris Steel
Minister for Planning
ACT Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra, ACT 2601

Dear Minister

Development planning for North Curtin

The Inner South Canberra Community Council sends you this open letter to express support for the concerns expressed to you by the Curtin Residents' Association about your proposed "North Curtin" development plans. The proposed development will affect residents represented by our member groups, in particular the Deakin and Yarralumla Residents' Associations.

We do not believe plans for this development should be rushed because of the impending ACT elections and urge you instead to pause the process until the incoming Government has been able to assess the matter carefully and develop a fully considered plan for this new neighbourhood and its impact on adjacent suburbs.

The proposals you have made public lack sufficient detail on a number of important issues to enable informed consultation, and they raise serious concerns in a number of key areas:

- by predetermining the housing outcome of 1300 dwellings, you appear to be ruling out adequate green space in what will be a highly concentrated housing precinct, unless building heights are to be considerably more elevated than so far disclosed.
- The provision of social facilities, including shops, seems to have been dismissed as a marginal consideration, to be slotted in at a later stage.
- Local schools are at capacity, and no provision for extra school capacity is evident in your plans. Consequently, current local residents fear a blow out in class sizes.
- Much of this new suburb will be distant from the tram, even if it is eventually built, and existing bus routes. Road access will add to local congestion. Residents in Yarralumla and Deakin, already facing years of disruption from tramway construction, need reassurance about how road access will be achieved for the new suburb without further clogging up the road network:

- The new high-rise neighbourhood will add to the heat island effect, which will become a major concern to the city as global warming intensifies. The plans so far released show no recognition of this major issue.
- We are concerned that this development may set an undesirable precedent for the West Deakin playing fields, and projects under way in the Inner South such as the East Lake 'urban renewal' area.
- A part of this land apparently lies under the 100-year flood plain level. What precautions can and should be put in place to protect the prospective new population and their dwellings against a repeat of the inundation of 26 January 1971, in which seven people lost their lives?

Much as local people will regret the loss of the beautiful open aspect of the horse paddocks, we accept that the use of this area for housing has long been on the cards. Well planned, it can play a valuable part in meeting Canberra's future housing needs. But we urge you and your colleagues not to rush into a plan which could too easily lead to a cramped and unlovely problem suburb of the future.

A more sensible path forward would be to adopt a holistic precinct planning approach, such as the Government is conducting at the Kingston Arts Project. Rather than a predetermined housing outcome, we should be joining you in a collaborative exercise to plan the new precinct around open space and community facilities. These vital features of a successful suburb should not be left to be dealt with as residual issues from a predetermined housing target. To enable a more sensible process to be designed, the process you have launched should now be paused until after the ACT election, on a "caretaker government" basis.

Finally, I also convey our concern about the Yoursay survey on this matter, which is formatted to skew the results towards support for the Government's proposal. It will not give you an accurate reflection of the community's views.

This open letter will be released to the media tomorrow at 9am.

Yours sincerely



Colin Walters
Chair
Inner South Canberra Community Council
20 May 2024