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ACTPLA
Application Secretariat

Submission regarding DA200915605 for the Australian Heritage Village

To whom it may concern.

The North Canberra Community Council (NCCC) requests that the development application DA200915605 regarding residential development at the former Australian Heritage Village site in North Canberra be rejected for the following reasons:

- (1) **Process:** NCCC understands that in 2001, the lessee of the site was granted a 99-year lease for an annual fee of 0.05AUD. In 2003, McCann Property and Planning was seeking a variation to the territory plan with regard to residential development on the site via a Cultural Heritage Assessment study, published in September 2004. In 2004, Village Building Co. commissioned a Vegetation Assessment and Tree Survey published in June 2004, a Flora and Fauna Study, undertaken on one day in August 2004 and one day in October 2004, published in October 2004. In September 2004, McCann Property and Planning commissioned a study on Fire Hazards on the site and a report on Traffic and Parking that was published in December 2004. In October 2007 Village Building Co. presented the North Watson Heritage Village Affordable Housing Planning Study and ACTPLA presented a Draft Variation to the Territory Plan (No. 261, Australian Heritage Village, Watson) proposing a change in land use from Entertainment, Accommodation and Leisure to Residential. Over 300 submissions to this Draft Variation resulted in minor heading and reformatting changes without any consideration of major concerns, before it was submitted to the Minister for Planning (according to letter by Garrick Calnan, Manager Development Policy, ACTPLA, dated 6 June 2008 addressed to W. Pix, Friends of Mt Majura Parkcare Group Coordinator).

NCCC notes that this sequence of events is interesting, that at some stage this land appears to have changed owners for an unknown amount of money in anticipation of a change in land use and that submissions to the Draft Variation to the Territory Plan had no substantial effect on the final decision to change land use.

- (2) **Traffic:** Residential development at the former Australian Heritage Village site will add to the already unacceptable traffic problems in North Canberra. NCCC, together with Hackett Community Association (HCA) and Watson Community Association (WCA) has over many years now attempted to draw attention to and to find solutions for increasing traffic problems caused by developments in North Watson and in Gungahlin. These problems include rat-running through suburbs, traffic jams at peak commuting hours and increasingly dangerous road crossings for school children. Many hours of volunteer time have been spent in writing submissions to Development Applications (which were ignored), to conduct traffic studies (which were eventually repeated by ACT Roads with no perceptible consequences), to organize public discussion forums with Tony Gill (which are always pleasant and never lead to anything) and to brief politicians, including Chief Minister Jon Stanhope (resulting in reference to further pleasant meetings with Tony Gill). The basic line of argument has always been that existing

roads would be able to meet future traffic demands. This is patently untrue and nothing whatsoever has happened to alleviate traffic problems in North Canberra suburbs that have arisen due to developments such as the one proposed here.

NCCC requests that no further developments in North Watson should be allowed to go ahead, until comprehensive and sustainable public transport has been implemented before new dwellings are being constructed and are being sold to home buyers. The only viable option in our view is to develop park and ride facilities somewhere in the area of EPIC.

- (3) **Mt Majura Nature Reserve:** The proposed development is another example of the creeping destruction of endangered grassy woodland habitats in the ACT. Not only would it destroy valuable habitat on site, but it would also affect the adjacent nature reserve by generating a 'hard-edge' between residential development and the nature reserve. NCCC understands that the adjacent nature reserve is already being used as a buffer zone with fire hazard reduction measures that actually should take place on site being shifted into the nature reserve. The same appears to be true for current or future storm water containment measures. NCCC considers this piece-meal reduction and fragmentation of endangered ecological communities completely unacceptable and definitely at odds with the recommendations of the recent Plan for Managing the Natural Resources of the ACT document called 'Bush Capital Legacy' by the ACT Natural Resource Management Council which '*urges the whole community to use the plan as a focus to achieve the natural resource management targets it sets out*' (page iv). Moreover, NCCC together with Hackett Community Association (HCA), Friends of Mt Majura Parkcare Group (FoMM) and the Watson Woodland Working Group (WWWG) has pointed out on numerous occasions, including in meetings with the Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, that the Mt Majura Nature Reserve and surrounding areas are subject to increasing and unsustainable pressure by a multitude of users. At the same time, management of the Reserve is chronically understaffed and underfunded. Walking tracks and signage are in desperate need of repair; enforcement of rules and policing of inappropriate use and vandalism is practically absent.

NCCC requests that this particular development application be rejected because (a) it not only threatens to destroy endangered habitat on site, but also (b) would encroach on the already fragmented nature reserve and (c) would threaten to increase recreational use of the nature reserve in a situation in which the ACT government land managers of the nature reserve struggle to meet the minimal requirements of appropriate management of natural resources.

Yours sincerely,



Jochen Zeil
Chair, North Canberra Community Council
25 October 2009