

Griffith/Narrabundah Community Association Inc.

PO Box 4127 Manuka ACT 2603

Website: www.gnca.org.au

email: info@gnca.org.au

Mr Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Planning
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601
gentleman@act.gov.au

10 September 2014

Follow-up on our meeting of 5 September 2014

Dear Mr Gentleman

I am writing to thank you for meeting with Gary Kent, Leo Dobes and myself last Friday on behalf of the Inner South Canberra Community Council and the Griffith Narrabundah Residents' Association. We very much appreciated the time you were able to spend with us and especially your willingness to give further consideration to issues of concern to residents of inner south Canberra. We have made some follow-up comments from that meeting.

1. Plot ratios and open space

Your question about how we see the character of the inner south developing in fifty years' time was very apt, so we discussed it at some length after the meeting. Like you, we believe that it is not possible to forecast the preferences of future residents. Consequently, we believe it is important to maintain as much domestic greenery as possible in the suburbs to allow future residents a greater range of options in housing choice. While paving may be removed by a new generation of owners in the future, large houses that cover most of a block are unlikely to be reduced in size or demolished.

In any case the Objective (b) for RZ1-Suburban Zone is very clear:

- (a) Protect the character of established single dwelling housing areas by limiting the extent of change that can occur particularly with regard to the original pattern of subdivision and density of dwellings.*

Large Mac-Mansions that cover the whole block in the older suburbs such as Griffith and Narrabundah do not comply with this objective, because they are drastically changing the character of the suburb.

We agree with your underlying philosophy to allow people as much choice as possible in their lifestyle and do not favour more regulation of people's living spaces. However, we see little alternative to amending the existing plot ratio rules to include a requirement for a proportion, say 30 per cent of a block, to remain permeable on land zoned RZ1.

The basic rationale is that blocks without adequate green space affect other people in the neighbourhood, a form of negative externality. Drainage, aquifer replenishment, native wildlife, and a reduction of urban heat island effects would benefit residents in general and would support the government's policies on water management and our response to climate change. Furthermore, large houses do not necessarily increase population density, unless household sizes increase commensurately. We also highlighted the related significant heritage considerations associated with these suburbs, some of which are approaching their centenary.

Because this issue involves technical rules developed to implement the Territory Plan, it might be worthwhile for us to continue discussions with one or some of your officers in the Planning Authority. If you agree with this suggestion, would you be able to provide the contact details of an officer we could talk to?

2. *Dwelling densities*

Density of housing as defined as dwellings per hectare is a reasonable proxy for the population density. This is an important parameter because we need to know the number of people in a precinct to plan for bus routes, school, shops, garbage collection etc.

We proposed that there should be consistency between all ACT planning documents and recommended that the definitions of medium and high density housing be incorporated into the Territory Plan.

We were therefore very pleased that you agreed to examine the current situation where, *Medium and High Density Housing is defined in **The Canberra Spatial Plan*** but not in the ***Territory Plan***.

3. *Omnibus Territory Plan Variation*

In our brief discussion on the *Omnibus Territory Plan Variation*, we commended the government on the consultation process that had been established to enable the government to explain what was being proposed and provided opportunities for members of the community to express their opinions and obtain more information.

We noted that this process is still proceeding and we are continuing to have dialogue with government officers.

Many thanks for your time and interest in these issues.

Yours sincerely



David Denham
Secretary