



## **Update on Newsletter**

### **No. 32**

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The government's plan is to re-develop several sites in Canberra that currently house public tenants. The Community Services Directorate, which is responsible for the re-developments, has been told that no new money will be provided for this work and the future public housing stock will have to be funded from the sale of units at each site. Consequently the government is aiming to maximise its returns from each re-development. It plans to have a mixture of public and private residents at each site with a mix of at least 10% at each location.

The Canberra-wide timetable has yet to be determined.

As part of the consultation process the government has organised workshops where stakeholders can

participate in developing plans for each site.

A large number of people attended a workshop, on 13 October to explore possible configurations of buildings that might be constructed on the Stuart Flats site and on 14 October about thirty people attended a similar workshop to study Gowrie Court.

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### **Gowrie Court**

The Gowrie Court (13,775m<sup>2</sup>) enhancement recommended by the government was from 72 dwellings to 150. The Government has agreed to exclude the wedge shown on the southeast side of the site from the re-development area (it is part of Section 64, the adjacent park including Jerrabomberra Oval), which it had initially proposed should be added to the redevelopment site.

The controlling factor in determining the number of dwellings on the site was the number of cars that could be parked underground. This was limited because the main sewer is aligned NW-SE through the centre of the site and consequently it would not be possible to have one large car park covering the whole site.

The attendees at the workshop favoured much lower heights than the two central six storey buildings proposed by the architects. Because of the site's distance from any local shops (the nearest is ~650-700 m to the Griffith Shops), and its suburban location, it was recommended that the architects

investigate building many more one or two storey town houses rather than one and two bedroom apartments in multistorey buildings as is currently proposed. Attendees felt that such a style of redevelopment would be much more in keeping with the character of the area and would meet a local need for townhouse style dwellings, increasing local choices. The Griffith Narrabundah area already has a plethora of apartments.

RZ5 (maximum height 21.5m, no plot ratio limit) was considered to be unsuitable for the redevelopment and the architects are going to investigate an RZ4 zoning (maximum height 12.5m, plot ratio 80%). The site is currently zoned RZ1, with a maximum height restriction of 2 storeys and 8.5m and a maximum plot ratio of 65%.



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## Stuart Flats

The government's proposal for the Stuart Flats was to combine Section 39 (20,339m<sup>2</sup>) with Section 43 (9,738m<sup>2</sup>) to create a site of total area<sup>1</sup> of 30,077m<sup>2</sup>, and increase the number of dwellings from 146 to 550; including a multi storey block on the 6,518 m<sup>2</sup> Block 5 Section 43 (the Public Open Space on the knoll enclosed by Light St and Evans Cr).

There was a unanimous recommendation that the public open space should be preserved because of:

1. The need for accessible open space in a re-development of this size;
2. The undesirable effect of any multi-storey building overlooking the neighbours; it would be too dominant over the surrounding buildings, and
3. Because of the hardness of the rock, it would be very expensive to build underground car parks and would probably require the use of explosives to level the site - not to be recommended in a residential area.

There was not time to construct a model to accommodate 550 dwellings on Section 39, but the community representatives at the workshop recommended that the number of dwellings on the site should be reduced from 550 to something less than 500.

The government should also investigate the possibility of re-zoning the site to RZ4 – medium density residential.

The maximum height of any building in the RZ4 zone is 12.5m and the maximum plot ratio is 80%, whereas the maximum height in RZ5 is 21.5m and there is no specified maximum plot ratio. Under the existing RZ2 zoning the maximum height is 8.5m and two storeys

and the maximum plot ratio is 65%



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## **Conclusion**

The GNCA representatives considered both workshops to be extremely valuable and we commend the government for embarking on this very thorough and extensive review/consultation process.

The proof will be when the second pudding is produced and we will know the extent to which the government has adopted community opinions.

However, the GNCA is disappointed that the government appears determined to ignore its own planning rules in making decisions in relation to the appropriate zoning of the various sites. While a case could be made that the Stuart Flats should be upgraded from RZ2 zoning because of their proximity to the Manuka Group Centre, and location on the junction of two major roads, Canberra Avenue and Captain Cook Cr, and consequent good transport connections, there appears to be little justification in zoning Gowrie Court as RZ4 or RZ5, remote as it is from shopping, employment opportunities or major transport routes. The site is archetypically suburban.

This issue highlights the conflict of interest that the government has – it either complies with its own planning rules, and has to find more money for public housing, or it ruthlessly dumps its own planning policies to save money, but in so doing undermines the rationale for its planning policies. If it is good enough to bend the rules for the government when

acting in the roles of property developer, why should the same opportunities be denied to other developers?

### **Next Steps**

According to the government representatives at the workshop, the architects will be analysing the outputs and opinions raised at the workshops and prepare revised plans for each site. These are expected to be completed by the end of 2014 and the government hopes to prepare the draft variations in the first half of 2015.

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