

Deakin Residents Association Inc.
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Senator Louise Pratt
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
email: jscncet@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Pratt,

Submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the Allocation of Land to Diplomatic Missions in the Australian Capital Territory

I am writing to you on behalf of the Deakin Residents' Association Inc. (the DRA) in relation to the abovementioned Inquiry.

The DRA objects are as follows:

“to enhance the residential, suburban, social and environmental qualities of Deakin, consistent with garden city planning principles, through participation in, community discussion on and input to planning and land management in the ACT as it impacts on Deakin residents, including through advocacy to the ACT and Commonwealth Governments, and advocacy to and representation before tribunals and courts”

I am providing you with a copy of the attached letter dated 11 October 2011 from the DRA to the National Capital Authority. That letter provided comments during an earlier consultation process.

The attached letter primarily addresses points 2, 3 and 4 of the terms of reference of the current inquiry, viz.:

- Forecast levels of demand and supply;
- The suitability of current property types and other options to meet the different needs of diplomatic missions; and
- Options for locations of future diplomatic estates.

As you will see from the attachment, the key concerns of the DRA are:

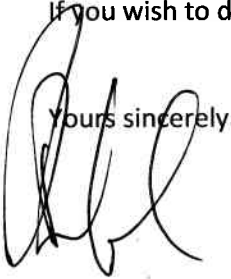
- It is essential that enough space is identified to meet all likely future needs in this current exercise, so that this problem is fully resolved and not left to future generations to address

again. The NCA should undertake a full and complete audit of all sites currently allocated, to ensure that obligations by diplomatic missions are fulfilled, and/or the sites returned for re-allocation. Following this, to the extent that additional space is required in the future for emerging diplomatic missions, then this should be met by those diplomatic missions through the private market (some missions already adopt this option)

- In giving expression to the diplomatic estates, it is critical that Canberra's garden city character must be preserved and/or enhanced – adherence to the National Capital Plan and to the Territory Plan is critical, with building and other standards not compromised
- Adequate and appropriate attention must be given to minimise the effects of parking and traffic on the community within which the diplomatic estates are placed.

If you wish to discuss this matter I can be contacted on 041 226 0501.

Yours sincerely



Peter Wurfel
President
Deakin Residents' Association Inc.

1st February 2013



**Deakin
Residents Association**

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ACT 2600

Mr Gary Rake
Chief Executive
National Capital Authority
GPO Box 373
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Rake

Consultation – New Diplomatic Estate

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has sought comments with respect to a proposed new diplomatic estate which provides three clear alternative locations, and invites suggestions for other possible locations.

In particular comments have been invited on “what are the most important things for the NCA to consider in assessing the suitability of these locations”.

Regrettably, there is little information on the National Capital Authority website - or elsewhere - to enable a fully informed response to be provided with respect to the suitability of any of the options provided, why these have emerged as likely contenders, or to offer an alternative.

Nevertheless, the Deakin Residents Association (DRA) provides the following comments.

How much space is needed?

While noting that you are seeking further options, we are wondering how the three sites were initially selected for consideration.

It is not clear that any one of the sites will be adequate to meet the expected need – for example, the land to the south-west of Stirling Ridge is somewhat smaller, while the land adjacent to the Federal Golf Club has an unusual shape, creating restrictions to building opportunities, while the old Canberra Brickworks site is the largest – and in the absence of any other considerations appears to be more appropriate in size.

We assume that you have undertaken some modelling with respect to the likely remaining number of diplomatic sites that will be needed into the future, and the likely space requirements. It would be useful to have further information so that we can assess suitability of the proposed sites, and/or whether there are other appropriate areas within Deakin and its precincts that could be considered.

It is essential that enough space is identified to meet all likely future needs in this current exercise, so that this problem is fully resolved and not left to future generations to address again.

What will the built form of the expected diplomatic missions be?

Based on past and current experience it is likely that new buildings will be an expression of cultures and nationalities that are represented through them, and some could be significant in scale.

In addition to meeting relevant statutory building requirements, buildings proposed for the new diplomatic missions must be located where there will be minimal impact to the skyline, and where a high standard of landscape and streetscape design is achieved.

In the absence of appropriate topographical and other information it is not known which of the three proposed sites would be suitable, although Stirling Ridge could be problematical.

How will the garden city character of Canberra be maintained/enhanced?

Irrespective of which site is chosen, it is critical Canberra's garden city characteristics must be preserved and/or enhanced.

Streetscapes are a vital element of this, including tree planting, green verges, and private green space.

Contributing further to this is the need for sufficient setbacks – especially given the possible scale and design of buildings.

It is critical therefore that suitable building zones be identified, that these are immutable, and that adherence to these zones is enforced.

What environmental issues exist with respect to each site?

Much of the areas under consideration can be considered as greenfields. It is therefore critical that an environmental assessment be undertaken with respect to each site.

If this has already been done, what was the result?

If it has not already been done, then there is little point in putting forward options for consideration at this stage where there might be barriers to implementation.

How will access/egress and traffic generally be managed?

Motor vehicle traffic flows need to be addressed. Prima facie, the diplomatic missions would not be significant generators of traffic flows, and their needs would not be dissimilar to the general population with respect to pedestrian, cycle and public transport needs.

However, there is a tendency for special events – such as fund raising, and national days - to generate enormous parking needs, with substantial adverse impact to the public generally.

Without knowing the specific diplomatic missions which are in prospect, it is also probable that at least some of the diplomatic missions will, from time to time, be the subject of security threats and security measures which would not otherwise be required.

Whichever site is chosen needs to have the capability to address all of these issues, while at the same time minimising any impact to residents in close proximity who would be entitled to enjoyment of their residential amenity.

Adherence to the National Capital Plan and the Territory Plan

Recent experience with respect to Adelaide Avenue (as a major processional route) is that NCA (in conjunction with the ACT Planning and Land Authority) allows too much flexibility in interpretation of its Development Control Plan with respect to Adelaide Avenue.

It is essential that standards are not lowered, and/or that "flexible" interpretation of statutory or other requirements not be taken to meet expedient or other needs.

Canberra Brickworks

The Canberra Brickworks site has been under active consideration for some time for residential development. For this reason alone, and in the absence of any other consideration, this site would appear to be more appropriate for the siting of diplomatic missions than the other two sites (or any other "greenfields" sites which may later be put forward).

What steps has NCA taken with the ACT Government to ensure that, if this becomes the preferred site, it is capable of being implemented there, and that alternative uses have not already been decided?

Future steps

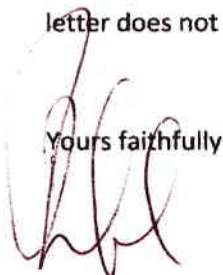
We would like to know how the final decision on location will be taken, and what the steps will be which lead up to that.

For example we would like to be advised what the next stages of community engagement will be, following receipt of public comments on 14th October and their assessment, and when that is likely to occur.

Importantly, we would like to be advised how the NCA will involve DRA (and other community groups and members of the community more generally) in this next stage.

We also note that a number of Deakin residents have posted comments on the NCA website, and this letter does not purport to replace those comments.

Yours faithfully



Peter Wurfel
Co-convenor

11 October 2011