

28.6.2004

The Chairman,
Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee
on Public Works,
Parliament House,
Canberra, 2600

Defence Housing Authority
Proposed Lee Point Development

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached a submission by our community organisation on the Proposed Development of Land at Lee Point in Darwin, for Defence and Private Housing.

PLan: the Planning Action Network, is an incorporated organisation working throughout the Northern Territory for a better living environment. We subscribe to many of the principles being advocated in the Year of the Built Environment which provides for healthy living in a sustainable environment.

Darwin is in the grip of a development rush. We seek balance, with outcomes well planned, and designed appropriately for tropical living. We will work closely with Defence Housing to achieve this objective.

This letter is being emailed (without signature) with a signed mail copy to follow. Immediately.

Yours sincerely,

M A CLINCH-Convener

PLan: the Planning Action Network

Submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Public Works on the Proposed Development of Land at Lee Point, in Darwin, For Defence and Private Housing 28.6.2004

About PLan

1. PLan is an incorporated network of residents committed to a balanced living environment. Since 1998, we have approached government to be involved in the planning of the new suburb at Lee Point. Our local Northern Territory elected member, the Hon. Kon Vatskalis has recently expedited a meeting with DHA staff. We also attended the recent public meeting at Tracy Village Sports and Social Club.

Members have sound local knowledge of this area, as many of us live and own property in the Northern suburbs. We are committed to healthy tropical living. This submission is prepared after discussion with our committee, yesterday.

Responsibility of DHA in the Project

2. We note from DHA's submission that the project is regarded as viable with 725 lots over 77 hectares. DHA remains responsible for

the quality of the whole suburb being developed, and even more essentially so, given that it is a government organisation.

3. The Memorandum of Agreement signed on 10/12/2004 requires that the DHA and the Northern Territory Government:

‘Co-operate and work together in good faith to facilitate and achieve:

- (a) appropriate rezoning of the Property to allow development of the property for residential, commercial, recreational and other uses, and
- (b) design and development of the Property by DHA and any private sector participant(s) in accordance with NTG development criteria, statutes and regulations.’ (Point 14)

Whilst working with other agencies, the DHA remains responsible for the development outcomes in the new suburb.

4. DHA has committed to developing a benchmark suburb for tropical living, with Mr Richard Beare capturing the average family there as having ‘three children, a dog and a trampoline’.

Site Factors

5. We commend DHA for researching the natural aspects of the

the site, including preserving attractive native vegetation, by not baring the surface, but protecting riparian ecology, mitigating drainage impact on Sandy Creek, and providing walks and cycle paths.

We hope that Aboriginal and European heritage values will be properly dealt with in actual fact.

Our Concerns

6. For the sake of prompt brevity, we state our primary concerns thus, with the intent of expanding them at the hearing.

6.1 Size of Lots

DHA is committed at Lee Point to tropical living and energy saving. This relies on cross ventilation, sheltering trees, and varied house orientation not possible on small lots. DHA espouses avoiding the shortcomings of houses close together and narrow streets, seeing instead people 'living outside'. Advice from the community would have avoided these problems at Palmerston.

The normal standard minimum size for detached houses on Darwin, as distinct from Palmerston is (R1)800 square metres.

This is the lot size in the neighbouring Darwin Northern suburbs as set out, pre Self Government, and detailed in the Darwin Town Plan currently in force. Many lots in Darwin are larger.

Recently NT planners, under extreme pressure from developers like Henry and Walker, have introduced a smaller detached house lot size (RO) with a minimum size of 400sm. This has been used in near city developments, but would not be suitable for the DHA market here, because of family size and location. It would make the new suburb a poor neighbour next to existing Northern suburbs, in terms of land values and popularity.

The new RO zoning was used at Parap Grove, and resulted to all but one lot being RO. The result is regimented lines of large houses on small lots, with the uniform physical orientation.

Having completed its Carey Street exercise, DHA wants to avoid developments beyond two storeys. We see the growing family as being happier with more living space, and free access to a garden, and weekend hobby workspace.

CATEGORICALLY, WE REJECT THE NOTION THAT A DHA LEE POINT DEVELOPMENT BASED ON LOTS 600-

700sm COULD ACHIEVE THE OUTCOMES DHA IS PROMISING. IF THIS ADVICE HAS COME FROM LOCAL TOWN PLANNERS, IT IS POOR ADVICE. A DESIRE FOR SMALLER LOTS WOULD SEEM TO BE BASED ON EXPLOITATION AND RETURNS, RATHER THAN WISE PLANNED TROPICAL LIVING FOR SERVICE FAMILIES.

6.2 Use of SU(Specific Use) Zoning

This zoning is generally used to allow the development of larger areas, such as suburbs, where a variety of sub-zones will be required in combination to meet needs.

This tool needs careful policing, because it can lead to a watering down of conditions by developers, asserting urgent market pressure. Exploitation then becomes more dominant than a well planned, and integrated suburb. Bayview can be examined in this context.

6.3 Provision of Primary School

DHA has told us that it does not intend to provide a school for the suburb. It appears that they were told by the NT Government that no school was necessary, since each of the neighbouring suburbs has a primary school. However, this is not true, as the Tiwi Primary School no longer exists. Children from Tiwi now cross a major road to Nakara Primary School.

TO SAY THE LEAST, THE COMMUNITY IS AMAZED AND DISAPPOINTED THAT DHA THINKS NO PRIMARY SCHOOL IS NECESSARY. ITS ROLE IS MUCH MORE THAN TURNING OUT BUILDING LOTS. DHA'S OWN ESTIMATION (725X3 = 2173 CHILDREN), MAKES A SCHOOL IS ESSENTIAL.

A SCHOOL IS PART OF ANY SUBURBAN COMMUNITY. CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO WALK TO SCHOOL.

DHA IS COMMITTED TO AN INTEGRATED SUBURB FOR THE BENEFIT OF ITS FAMILIES. NOT HAVING A SCHOOL AND/OR BUSING PUPILS IS INCONSISTENT WITH THIS .

A primary school within walking distance is better for families. It would help spouses with partners away to feel part of a community, and less isolated, and for children to belong to the suburb where they live.

Not having a primary school, including a preschool, in the new Lee Point suburb would amount to land exploitation, and the short-changing of service families by an agency whose prime role is serving their needs. This prospect is even more serious considering possible Stage 2 across Lee Point Road.

Bayview is still denied a school, with children bused across the busy Tiger Brennan Drive. A school site was originally specified in the SU, but was progressively moved in favour of residential development, and now is said to be in Stage 2. Defence Housing has greater obligation to the residents of this suburb than a private developer.

6.4 Community Facilities

In most Darwin suburbs, as in Canberra, the school forms the centre of the community. It is co-located with the oval, and central service facilities.

RESIDENTS OF THE LEE POINT SUBURB CANNOT BE DENIED BASIC COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES. THESE MIGHT INCLUDE GENERAL 'CORNER' SHOP TO WHICH PEOPLE CAN WALK DAILY, A CHEMIST AND DOCTOR'S SURGERY, A COMMUNITY CENTRE WITH ACTIVITIES TAKING MOTHERS OUT OF THE HOUSE, TO MEET OTHERS AND DAY CARE FACILITIES.

750 lots without any facilities, cannot be called a planned suburb. It is DHA's responsibility to provide a planned and integrated suburb, not just a maximum number of lots.

6.5 Parklands

DHA can benefit from the facilities of Tracy Village Sports and Social Club nearby. However, these are no substitute for new public facilities. A new population of over 2000 people will need places for their own relaxation, recreation and team games. A standard percentage of the estate must be set aside for open space, regardless of the proximity of the coastal reserve. Carey Street has very little recreation space for three towers of units, and even this was created by eliminating a planned public promenade.

6.6 Walkways and Cycle Ways

Walkways and cycle ways facilitate health exercise, and allow children to move about away from traffic. Walkways are part of the pattern of Darwin's Northern suburbs.

6.7 Roadwidths and Car Spaces

Narrow roads such as in Fairway Waters should be avoided. Provision should be made for double garages, and off street parking for trailer boats.

6.8 New Traffic Patterns

Residents of Tiwi have raised concerns about the impact of traffic on back streets adjoining the new suburb. Through traffic should not 'ratrun', but be directed to major routes.

6.9 Casuarina Coastal Reserve

This is the major Darwin reserve in terms of usage. Those who walk in this reserve, and/or share in landcare work, seek assurances from DHA that it will not be adversely affected. Brinkin Forest estate at the corner of Rocklands Drive and Trower Road has had an adverse effect on the reserve, because of poorly planned drainage, and the lack of a buffer zone separating it from the estate. This costs the community.

The community would be pleased if DHA could help consolidate the Casuarina Reserve at Lee Point/Buffalo Creek with adjoining Commonwealth land.

6.10 Transport Services

DHA should review its image of how close this suburb is to Casuarina Square. As people have been waiting many years for bus routes in suburbs like Alawa, it should not be assumed that a bus service would promptly become available for those without cars. The walking distance is long enough in the hot sun, the rain, or at night.

SUMMARY

- 7.1 DHA's role remains one of care for service personnel. It is telling the public that it wants to create a benchmark suburb here. It cannot abrogate that responsibility for standards to either the Northern Territory Government, or a Joint Venture Partner.
- 7.2 Consultation with the wider Northern suburbs community is important in the successful completion of this project.
- 7.3 Lots must be large enough for sustainable tropical living for families., and certainly no less than 800sm.
- 7.4 Incoming residents should not be shortchanged over facilities, or lack of a school at the community's centre.
- 7.5 Success will come from the completion of an integrated self sustaining suburb, and not just maximum lots.
- 7.6 The new suburb must blend with the Northern suburbs community. Quality features for tropical living and energy saving are important. Lesser standards will win the ire of residents in nearby suburbs such as Woodleigh Gardens, and lower resale values. A well designed suburb, with character, is needed for sustainable success.

Yours sincerely,

M A CLINCH

Convener - PLan

