

Some Comments on the Acton Peninsula Precinct Draft Structure Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Structural Plan for the Acton Peninsula Precinct. The main problem I have is that the aims do not appear to be consistent in what is being proposed. For example, the Acton Peninsula Partners state:

“It is a place which promotes the accessibility and exchange of ideas, a blending of uses and promotes the activation of public spaces, all underpinned by development which stimulates economic investment and growth”

And the top two outcomes are:

“The objectives for Acton Peninsula will achieve the following outcomes: –

- 1. Re-launch the peninsula Precinct by defining its place within the city as a venue for international museum, cultural and educational and research facilities; and***
- 2. Create a new place within Canberra to be defined by a unique, recognisable and marketable character;”***

A commendable set of goals, which would be appropriate for a national institution or a convention centre. Instead, when one examines the details in The Plan a very different picture emerges. It appears that most of the peninsula that is not currently developed will be occupied by apartments and mixed-use buildings and the Public Realm will be severely degraded.

On the western side of West Basin for example, the public realm by the Lake Burley Griffin will be reduced to a narrow pathway similar to what exists now along the Kingston Foreshore, where green space and views have been replaced by concrete pathways and little or no shade or shelter. There needs to be a wide green space along the LBG foreshore.

The statement in the Foreword makes several unsupported assertions about the character of the present site. For this statement to have any credibility it needs to explain why *“the public spaces are not of a standard commensurate with their significance”*; in what ways are the *“surrounding views underutilised?”* (how has the NCA measured how many people are using the views and which views is it talking about?) and in what way is *“the sense of arrival into the peninsula visually compromised?”* The surprise of the sudden view of The Museum when you turn the corner to enter the car park is a big plus and not a detractor.

The picture on the front of the Structure Plan document shows the wonderful tree-lined lake near the National Museum of Australia. The trees and open space in this part of the peninsula will be effectively replaced by blocks of apartments. We are observing a relentless concretisation of the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin and the result is a degrading of the natural public realm. This process started along the Kingston Foreshore and has continued in a piecemeal way ever since.

There are some wonderful natural vistas along The Lake and these should be maintained until a plan for the whole lake is adopted.

Before the planning for the Acton Peninsula proceeds any further a Master Plan for the whole of the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin should be developed. At present the foreshore development appears to be *ad hoc*.

I was amazed that the Plan even suggests that jetties and landing areas at Springbank are being proposed, presumably to encourage increased access to the island. The best plan is to leave the island well alone so that local wild life can call it their home.

Can you imagine what will happen to the island with uncontrolled access? Rubbish will accumulate on and around the island, wild parties on summer evenings will degrade the natural environment and all fauna and flora are likely to be exterminated or degraded. The island should not be disturbed!

I therefore make the following recommendations:

R.1 The planning details provided in The Plan should be aligned with the aspirational principles and outcomes.

R.2 The Plan should make clear why “*the public spaces are not of a standard commensurate with their significance*”; in what ways are the “*surrounding views underutilised?*” and in what way is *the sense of arrival into the peninsula visually compromised?*”

R.3 Before the planning for the Acton Peninsula goes any further there needs to be a Master Plan for the whole of the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin. At present the whole development process round LBG appears to be *ad hoc*.

R.4 The proposal to build jetties and/or landing facilities on Springbank Island should be abandoned.



David Denham
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