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31 August 2016

WA 20552

Submission from the Lake Burley Griffin Guardians on Westside Village Works Approval Application for Temporary Structure 1 January 2017- April 2019

Lake Burley Griffin Guardians (the Guardians) thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

We note that there appears to have been no public consultation on the extension of time granted from September 2016 - 1 January 2017.

We have outlined our concerns in three groups with a summary statement in bold italics for each group.

1. The Lake Burley Griffin Guardians overarching concern

1.1 West Basin lakeshore landscape is a component of our nationally significant Lake Burley Griffin area and should be protected and treated with respect to retain the parklands of the lake for present and future generations.

1.2 The Guardians have requested a review of the West Basin development to the ACT Chief Minister, the Chief Executive of the Land Development Agency and the National Capital Authority. The Guardians believe the entire basin requires planning review with considerable community involvement to document what has to be protected, what the public considers desirable and therefore what is possible in the parkland environment. Dealing with the Westside Village as a single component of the totality of the West Basin is a planning failure.

1.3 The Guardians advocate a full and professional review of the development of the West Basin with community involvement to develop a revised masterplan. Until this is a least commenced with a deliberative democracy process, the Guardians cannot support the Westside Village extension.

2. Management and Appearance

2.1 The management of West Basin's Acton Park area has been barely basic with no upgrading or improvements in the last twenty years, as demonstrated by the eyesore of the empty asphalted former futsal pads that have not even had any tree planting to moderate their appearance and their exposed environment since they were abandoned over a decade ago.

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2.2 Visually, Westside Village has the ambience of an abandoned container industrial site. It mars the National Significance of Canberra's lakeside, displaying bins and rubbish as shown in the image below to people travelling along Commonwealth Avenue including visiting dignitaries.



Image 1. Rubbish area with minimal screening from Commonwealth Avenue

2.3 There has been no attempt to screen the area with trees from Commonwealth Avenue. There should be trees in tubs as promoted in the WA 20552 report. The 2 planter boxes near the rubbish bins that could provide some space and height definition contain pansies and onions and are useless.



Image 2. Temporary toilet structures

2.4 The sheet metal corral for the toilets does little to hide their temporary nature and ugliness from Commonwealth Avenue.

2.5 The rubbish bins are overfull with their lids left up. There is no corral round the bins just a high mound of mulch on their eastern side near the bins that could be a fire hazard. The collection of bins and rubbish shown on Image 3 is what one has to pass by when entering from the north side car park.



Image 3. Rubbish area adjacent to a food vendor and alongside the parking area

2.6 The orientation of the Village turns its back on the prime lakeside site it occupies and despite what is claimed in the report, it does not provide any opportunity for the public to celebrate and enjoy Lake Burly Griffin. The public that do celebrate and enjoy the lake complain about the ugly Westside Village. Whereas in other cities there are venues for food outlets that are welcoming, embrace a waterfront are well used and attractive.

2.7 Nearby residents have reported that an alcohol-fuelled crowd at the Village has created excessive disturbing noise that on one occasion carried on until 4 am.

2.8 If the government is serious about exploring uses why not have events such as an extension of Floriade gardens onto the site. Why not reintroduce the paddle boats? Acton Park was always planned as recreation venue why has this not been developed in consultation with community groups?

2.9 We note that some of the activities claimed by the 'Westside Village' have been in place for years, functioning well without requiring the support of a container village. It was reported in the media that \$90,000 has been spent this year on events management. The press also noted that some people thought the Village was a fordetention centre. Stacked planter boxes could help define space and screen mess areas. Graffiti art (now considered passé) is half concealed by bins and other objects. If money had been spent of making the site attractive and welcoming, people would be attracted to the place rather than the Government needing to buy crowds with instant novelties.

2.10 Like many Canberrans, the Guardians accepted the concept of an innovative use as a play space. The temporary layout, the use of containers to delineate space and provide the food outlets is not trendy it is just ugly and its landscape design is abysmal.

2.11 Guardians encourage a thoughtful review of the potential for community use of the site. In particular we encourage the space being developed for public events, concerts, family outings and open grass playing areas. We appreciate that vendors need some security but the Government is providing an unsustainable insecure environment with only a 2 and half year future.

2.12 The Guardians appreciate that the Village is popular with visitors with the events such as *Jepz* attracting large crowds and the food outlets are also popular. However, a food outlet complex should be a well-developed, community based, solution to the long term use of the West Basin. It is a disgrace to have this Village mess on display for Canberra's Floriade festival.

2.13 The venue has no aesthetic or environmental advantages. Its messy arrangement and its ugliness mars the national significance in this important site as shown on the images above taken on 28 August at 1pm. The Guardians do not support the continuation of this temporary stop gap instead of a well planned usage solution.

3. The true intention for this area

3.1 The Commonwealth and ACT Governments are pushing for the West Basin to be alienated for private apartment and business development. In the 20552 Works Approval report, the ACT Government's vision is to spend money to 'revitalise' the area to 'trial different approaches to attract people to play and live'. The Government appears to ignore that fact that people are happily recreating and enjoying the existing West Basin parkland as they have done for years.

3.2 Some examples of urban renewal projects in Canberra over the last 10 years that have been supported on the grounds of enriching vibrancy, now demonstrate failure of delivery as promised. Examples are Commonwealth Place and Kingston Foreshore. It is clear there needs to be a review and accounting for funds spent to 'revitalise' areas of Canberra and the question asked— do they provide sustainable enrichment?

3.3 Westside Village could be in any location in Canberra but its purpose is to gain support for the proposed West Basin Waterfront that is planned to alienate lake land for the future urban residential and business development. It is likely that the current and future vendors and concessionaires have no knowledge of the intention to construct a building estate with no public parking areas in West Basin. The information stands, run regularly by the Guardians, have demonstrated that almost all the members of the public —regular walkers and picnickers who we have spoken to, have no knowledge of the proposed West Basin building estate and are very distressed about the proposal.

3.4 The establishment of a range of attractive food outlets to support proposed community use of the site, including occasional crowd attracting events such as open air concerts, festivals and special events are part of our proposed West Basin Charter (attached to this submission) that outlines principles for conservation, protection and low-level recreation development.

3.5 Lake Burley Griffin Guardians support the use of this site for the purposes initially envisaged that is public parkland with low key recreation activities.

The Guardians support food outlets if they are attractive with a good design style and a low profile.

The Guardians do not support the temporary extension proposed for Westside Village, particularly as it could have further extensions.

The Guardians call for a thorough and comprehensive review of West Basin planning and development.



Juliet Ramsay
Convenor, on behalf of Lake Burley Griffin Guardians



The West Basin Charter prepared by Lake Burley Griffin Guardians' 18 August 2016

The Charter is a living document and will be upgraded regularly with new ideas and information.

The following principles are recommended for the conservation, protection and low-level recreation development of West Basin, its landscape and lake waters.

- 1 West Basin's landscape is an integral component of the parkland character surrounding Lake Burley Griffin that must be kept. The parkland belongs to the Australian people. It is a major feature of national significance that contributes to the critical setting of the lake that is the heart of the nation. It is an inter-generational responsibility to the Nation that this parkland be conserved.
- 2 Vistas across West Basin to the mountain ranges beyond from City Hill and the glimpse vistas from Commonwealth Avenue are highly valued by the community and visitors and should be retained and enhanced. The Water Axis vista experienced from the western area of the basin is a major original Griffin design feature to and from Black Mountain (believed to be known at one time as the nature vista) that should be protected and enhanced.
- 3 West Basin should remain mostly traffic free but more accessible from Civic by walkers and cyclists. The lakeshore is not a convenient traffic route to anywhere - it is virtually a remnant in its natural state and a logical extension of Commonwealth Park.
- 4 West Basin's great value and potential is to provide outdoor recreation space to Civic where there is very little available. This value should not be destroyed by an apartment building estate.
- 5 West Basin's land area should receive remedial landscape treatment to restore its natural, restful character and connect the green canopy of Commonwealth Park on the other side of Commonwealth Avenue to the National Museum and on its western side link to the vegetation of Black Mountain.
- 6 Although respecting the inherent and fundamental importance of Griffin's 3 lake basins, their edge configuration was modified from the Griffin plan due to technical, topographic and hydrological reasons. West Basin's water edge and lake-bed configuration should remain as constructed in the 1960s with the naturalistic landscape style of that era.
- 7 Low-key developments to encourage the arts such as ad hoc theatres and performance areas should be encouraged. No developments higher than 2 storeys should be allowed and developments reliant on large parking areas are not appropriate. Recreation or fun features for young people should be encouraged such as the pop up village that should have high design parameters and not turn their back on the lake.
- 8 Any building structures including small picnic pavilions should be of a high design quality that will last well into the future and also be environmentally sensitive.
- 9 All land in the area must remain as government owned and not be parcelled out to commercial interests.

- 10** West Basin landscape can assist in the amelioration of global warming with large canopy trees and grasslands. It provides a predominantly natural environmental respite. The installation of a 50% photovoltaic canopy over Parkes Way should be considered to minimise its visual 'concrete' dominance, reduce the heat absorption, create shade, reduce the noise, and extend the visual walking linkage between Civic and the northern lake shoreline. Anti-noise mounding alongside Parks Way is suggested.
- 11** Community involvement in planning such as a comprehensive public participation procedure for decision-making on West Basin should be convened.
- 12** Encourage the Commonwealth and ACT Governments to undertake a design competition for a master plan for Acton Park, West Basin to cover:
- .1 The conservation of vistas that is a concern strongly expressed by the public. A vista analysis is required to identify and protect vistas particularly; from City Hill and parts of Commonwealth Avenue across to the mountain ranges and along the *water axis*.
 - .2 An aesthetic analysis to understand aspects of beauty that may include light, sounds, smells, shades and shadows, water edge details, wildlife, natural patterns.
 - .3 A heritage analysis (that would include the 2 points above) covering Identification of heritage features in the basin, including how the basin and parklands contribute to the national significance of the greater lake environment and Canberra's urban form. Heritage features and other character features that are considered important in the analyses should be protected.
 - .4 A site analysis that identifies key character features of the basin as appreciated by users and the public that should be protected and enhanced. Key features include the sense of place that West Basin offers; a place to be away from the hurly burly of the city, an essential asset for any city and; the environmental aspects, particularly the reduction of the heat island effect inherent in high density development.
 - .5 The desired use and future use for the park should be identified and defined including new features/amenities needed such as a café, a children's park, a gathering area for young people, perhaps a skate board park, for whom the amenities are intended and their design parameters. All new features should be of high quality design and respect the identified heritage values and other important qualities identified.
 - .6 Identification of low-key recreation and fun features that are needed and for whom they are intended.
 - .7 A survey of the existing tree character, in what form should it continue and consideration of how much grass and meadow areas are desirable.
 - .8 A survey of the existing wildlife and their needs should be considered and enhanced.
 - .9 An analysis of the circulation through the park to Commonwealth Park, to the National Museum, to Civic and the needs of pedestrians, joggers, cyclist, electric people movers etc. and recommendations for improvement.
 - .10 Recommendation for improved accessibility of the West Basin and consideration of a new pedestrian bridging of Parkes Way—particularly of a stylish design to attract people.
 - .11 Recommendation for some parking to suit use and needs.
 - .12 Identification of space areas for markets, art exhibitions, art performances and other events.

- .13 Consideration of appropriate and minimal cultural buildings with strict design parameters on scale, form and material.
- .14 identification of basic upgrading and ongoing maintenance required particularly for water runoff.

Lake Burley Griffin Guardians 18.8.2016