

Woden High-Rise Residential Tower Survey

Summary

In December 2010 the Woden Valley Community Council (WVCC) received a presentation by the Hindmarsh–Land Development Agency joint venture on the proposal to construct a 35 storey residential tower and possibly four neighbouring towers of around 20 storeys on the Woden Green site (east of the Woden Town Centre). To determine the views of Woden residents to the proposal, the WVCC conducted a survey between 5 February and 25 March 2011. The survey questionnaire was sent to those on the WVCC email list and was available on the WVCC website. As well, hard copies were made available at the Woden Community Service and the Woden Library. A copy of the survey questionnaire can be found as background on the WVCC website at <http://www.wvcc.org.au/wvcc/index.php/woden/residential-towers-in-woden-green-1#more89>

A total of 55 responses were received. Further comments on high-rise development in Woden can be made on the WVCC website.

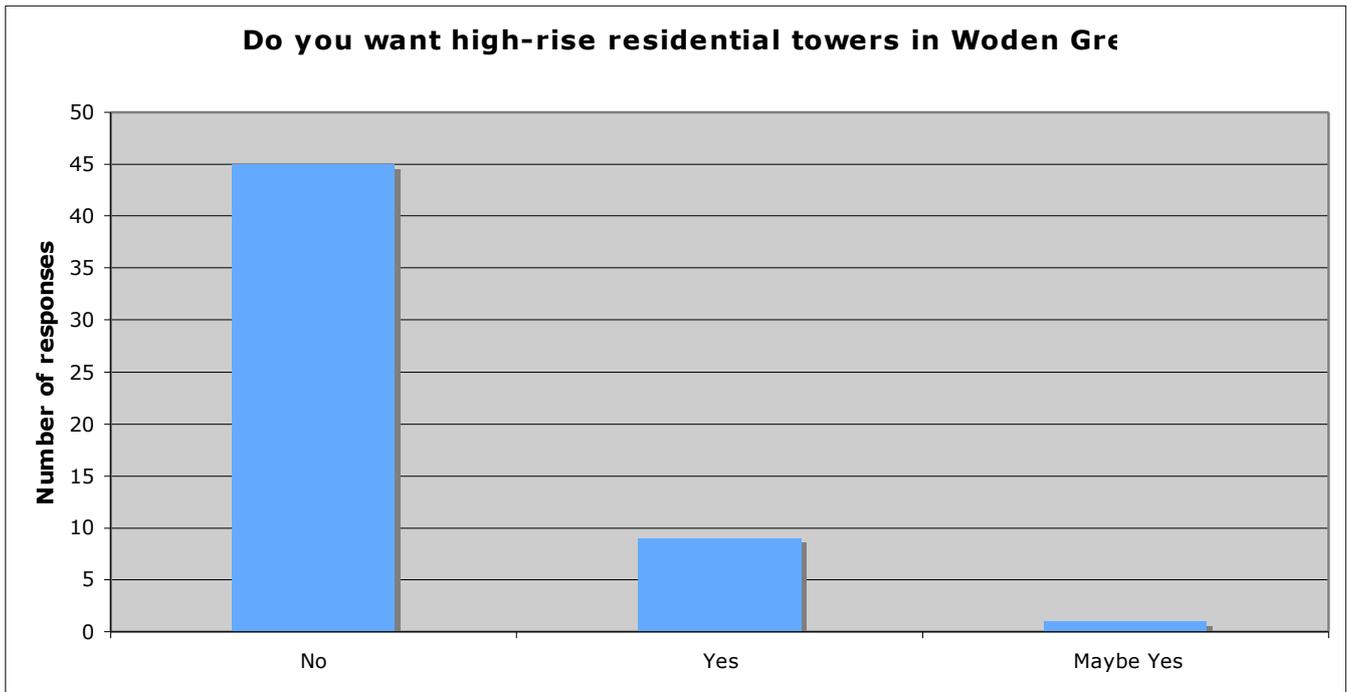
The respondents gave multiple answers to questions providing many reasons for their views. The answers generally reflected common concerns. Often the same reason was given under different questions. We have tried to reflect most of the views expressed under each question in the following summary by listing the generic issue and then noting the number of respondents (in brackets) who raised a view under that issue. Comments made under each issue are illustrative of the points raised and not necessarily made by each respondent counted against that issue. We believe this analysis captures the number of people who raised each issue.

Question 1 in the survey: 'Do you want high-rise residential towers in Woden Green?

No—45; Yes—9; and Maybe Yes—1

As Graph 2 indicates, respondents had different ideas about what constitutes high-rise. Of the 9 who supported high-rise, 4 considered high-rise to be 15 or less storeys.

Graph 1



Reasons for supporting high-rise residential towers

The two main reasons people supported high-rise were to be close to amenities; and limiting urban sprawl and Greenfield development. Some hoped it would stop further development in existing suburbs and some hoped it would bring better facilities to the Woden Town Centre. Better use of existing facilities and a stimulus for better facilities were also reasons why people favoured greater density around town centres.

Summary of reasons given:

- high-rise would be close to amenities—jobs, restaurants, shops and bus interchange/ routes—greater development might lead to new facilities eg. new shops, restaurants, Aldi (5)
- high-rise limits urban sprawl—more preferable in town centres than in the suburbs—limits Greenfield development (3); and
- need to increase higher density living close to district centres and bus routes—get in early to make sure development is right (3)

The following reasons were each given by only one person:

- support high-rise if well-designed and sited—no need for a car—good use of space and attractive to many—hopefully leads to better public transport and results in a more diverse community.

Reasons for opposing high-rise residential towers

The main reasons given for opposing high-rise residential towers were their inappropriate scale and character compared with the surrounding area; their visual impact and not being in keeping with the principles of the ‘Garden City’; the social impact of high-rise living; and concerns about high-rise not being energy efficient and environmentally friendly. The issue of wind tunnelling and overshadowing, together with traffic impact and inadequate infrastructure facilities, were also matters of concern to a number of respondents.

Summary of reasons given:

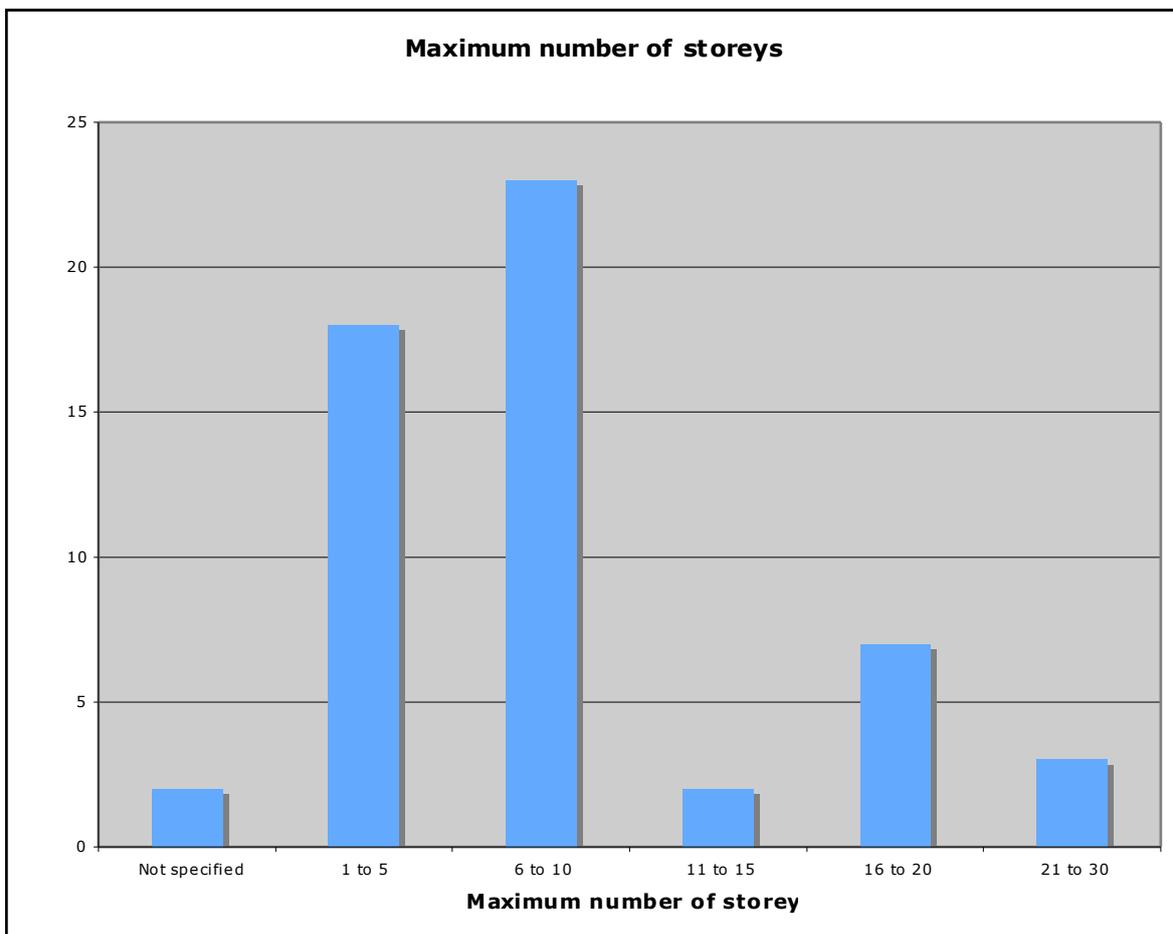
- unattractive visual and landscape effects—inappropriate and out of character with surrounding development; compromises ‘garden city’ principles (29)
- social impact on residents and not suitable for families (16)
- environment—embodies a lot of energy, as well as greater ongoing energy use (13)
- overcrowding excessive number of residents in an area; enough high-rise development already (6)
- inadequate facilities /infrastructure (6)
- overshadowing—reduced access to sunlight either for residents or adjacent areas (6)
- classic example of development design which was rejected 40 years ago in Sydney, Melbourne and the UK. High-rise buildings degrade quicker and/or become slums, as in Shanghai (6)
- wind tunnelling (5)
- traffic (5)
- parking—inadequate and needs to be enhanced, including disabled parking (4)
- loss of amenity and impact on neighbours—3; and
- safety—hard to escape from in an emergency; difficult to respond to fires (2)

The following reasons were each given by only one person:

- affordability deteriorates in high-rise cities—high-rise only benefits those living there—insufficient regulation to ensure buildings meet resident expectations, eg. car parks which don’t flood, emergency vehicle access, insulation etc.

Question 2 in survey: ‘What is the maximum number of storeys you would like to see in this development?’

Graph 2



The responses for the number of storeys ranged from 1 storey (one respondent) to a maximum of 30 storeys (3 respondents). The latter includes one response of ‘many’. Where a respondent stipulated a range, eg. 4 to 6 storeys, the higher number was used.

Reasons for choosing the maximum number of storeys

Under this question and others many respondents cited the ‘ugly Sky Plaza’ as an ‘eyesore’ as a benchmark to avoid. Main reasons for limiting height were visual impact and environmental issues. Social impact on residents and overlooking neighbours were a concern as were wind impact and

overshadowing. Traffic generation was also an issue. Costs of units and maintenance were also an issue with mention being made of the costs of servicing and replacing lifts.

Summary of reasons given:

- environment—less sustainable. To reduce carbon footprint, need to keep to 3 to 4 storeys (13)
- social impact, including on neighbours and overcrowding; forces people indoors (10)
- impact on vista—lower is better; not in keeping with surrounding development and topography (9)
- not bigger than ‘ugly’ Sky Plaza (8)
- costs, quality and maintenance (difficult/ not good in high-rise); lifts costly (7)
- traffic—already congested; access an issue (6)
- compared unfavourably with neighbouring low-rise human-landscape scale (5)
- overshadowing; maximum number of storeys depends on location and design (4)
- wind tunnelling effect (4)
- safety, such as escaping from fire and lifts not operating (2)
- overlooking adjacent residences (2)
- 30 storeys OK if slender building to limit overshadowing (2)

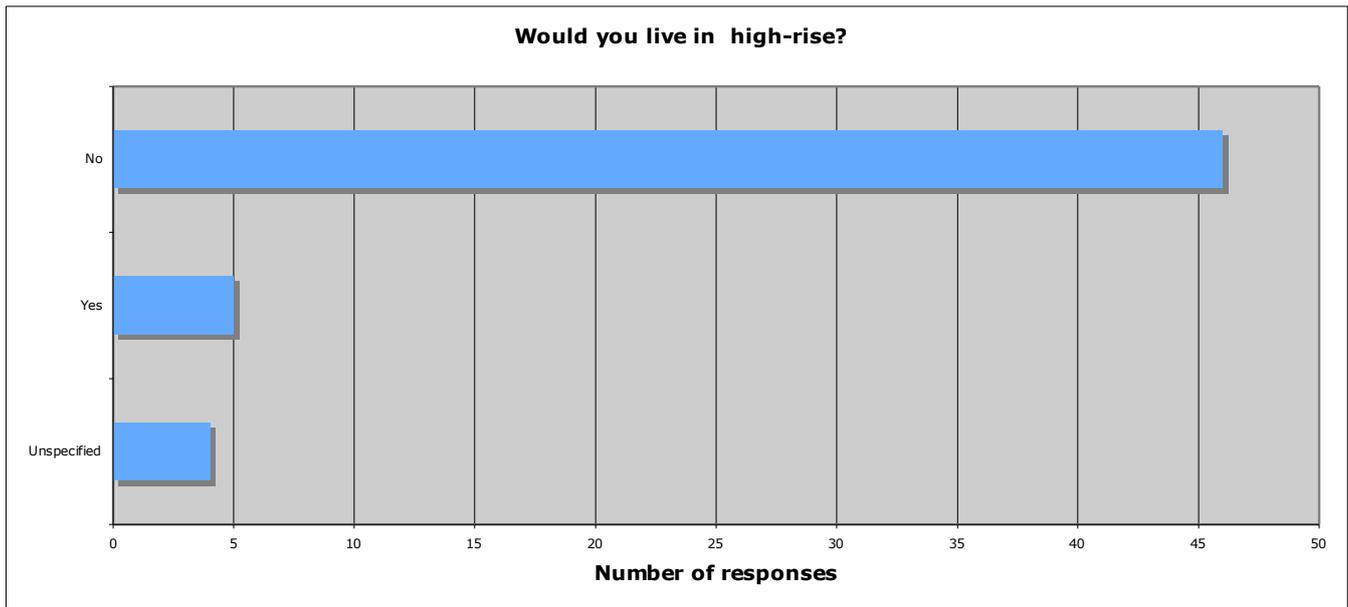
The following reasons were each given by only one person:

- 6 to 8 storeys sufficient for visual support for tall buildings and gateway—as many [storeys] as can be fitted in—build to outer limits of Canberra—should only be 5 to 6 storeys—insufficient leisure facilities—10 to 15 storeys maintains benefit and reduces impact; and—don’t increase the population.

Question 3 in survey: ‘Would you personally consider living in a high-rise residential tower?’

No—46; Yes—5; Not Specified—4

Graph 3



Question 4 in survey: ‘Any other comments you wish to make on the proposed development?’

Main concerns focused on social issues including the impact on residents. Others raised either traffic and/or parking issues, opposition to high-rise and poor impact on environment including energy use (embodied and ongoing).

Summary of comments given:

- social and personal experience of 15th floor ‘prison’; slum of the future; not family friendly; social isolation (14)
- oppose high-rise; in this area medium-rise preferred; against vertical sprawl; don’t have that height in Civic or Kingston; many European cities have only 5 to 6 storeys (10)
- traffic roads and parking; pedestrian links east and west important; bus at Woden Green; will not limit need for car with most use out of hours (8)
- environment; development should face north (6)
- it is about good design and moderation; rampant high-rise does not make a city better (6)
- over shadowing (5)
- wind tunnelling; design to prevent (4)
- visual impact—high-rise should be central not backing onto low-rise suburbs; Woden Green looks like bookends with low-rise in the middle (4)
- oppose ‘eyesore’ eg. Sky Plaza (3)
- safety—fire; Woden Creek not satisfactorily addressed; flood plain (3)
- need open space (3)
- will high-rise improve facilities? high-rise will improve facilities; support only if better (21); and

- planning—need master plan; high-rise is against the original plan for Woden (2)

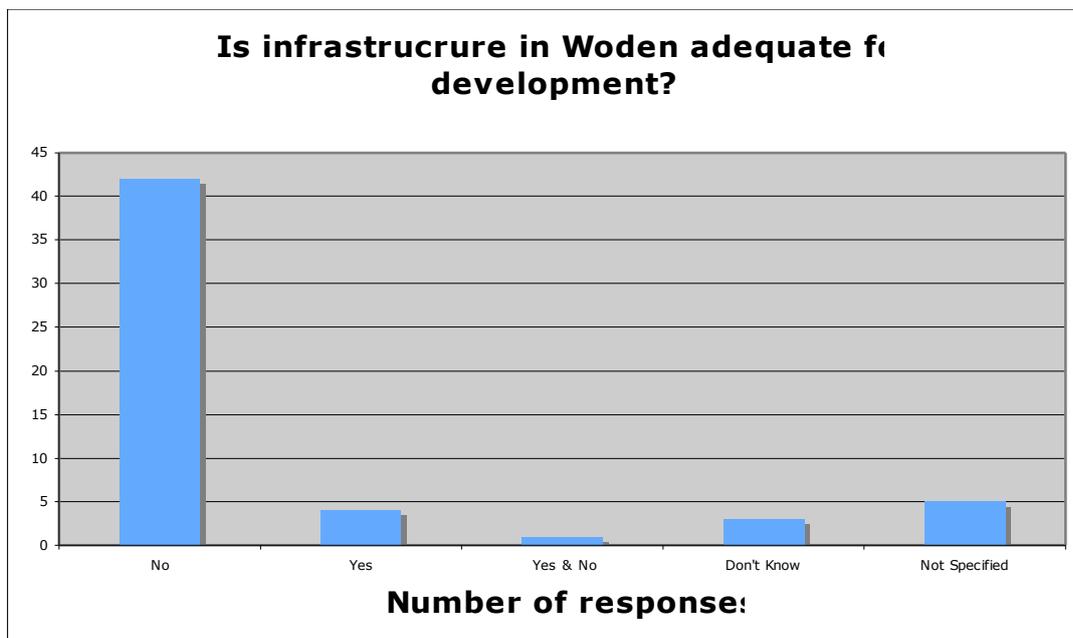
The following comments were each made by only one person:

- development, what amenities will it bring?—35 storeys will be an aviation risk to Canberra hospital helicopter service—ambit claim by developer to achieve less height eg. 20 storeys—pedestrian connectivity with Woden Plaza western side important—body corporate fees expensive--don't know—high-rise good idea but there needs to be diversity of apartments—more acceptable if it achieves less pressure on suburbs—needs storage for scooters and bikes; and—who benefits?

Question 5 in survey: ‘Do you think the infrastructure in Woden is adequate for the development?’

No—42; Yes—4; Yes and No—1; Don't Know—3; Not Specified—5

Graph 4



Overwhelmingly, respondents considered the currently inadequate facilities in Woden would **not** be able to accommodate a greater population. Many thought Woden's facilities were currently poor or inadequate. On the positive side some respondents thought the increased density could deliver better infrastructure in community facilities, pool, arts etc. shops and restaurants.

Summary of needs:

- new facilities, eg.
 - a) recreation including leisure facilities, bowling and indoor pool (17)
 - b) shops, restaurants, cafes and commercial small business (eg. Aldi) (11)
 - c) community centre (6); and
 - d) arts centre (2)

- roads and traffic (21)
- parking, including disabled parking (14)
- preserve green space, or need for more green space and more small parks to soften development (11)
- upgrade of public transport, including bus interchange (9)
- more hospital/medical facilities (6)
- safety—flood plain; upstream flood mitigation; fire and limited exit points—policing will need to increase (5)
- walking and cycling and access to facilities on west needs to be upgraded (4);
- schools—none in the area is an issue (4)
- new infrastructure for high-rise and high-density development; upgrade utilities (3)
- sewerage and stormwater and water utilities may not be adequate for the level of development (3); and
- infrastructure is inadequate (2)

The following comments were each made by only one person:

- infrastructure is adequate—need to integrate commercial and residential facilities in Woden Green—and need more family-sized town houses.

Graph 5

Infrastructure needed

