



## **Submission**

# **Draft Master Plan for Mawson Group Centre (January 2015)**

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The Woden Valley Community Council (WVCC) is a non-political, voluntary lobby group for the Woden Valley community. We focus on a wide range of issues such as planning, community facilities and infrastructure, parks and open space, public transport, parking, education, the environment and health. Community Councils are officially recognised by the ACT Government and are consulted by government on issues affecting our communities.

### **WVCC submission on the Draft Master Plan for Mawson Group Centre (January 2015)**

WVCC appreciates the extensive community consultation that preceded the Plan, the results of which have been helpfully consolidated and recorded in the Community Engagement Report (Stage 1) of October 2014. It was good to see that advice to include the transport corridor in the Woden/Mawson master planning exercise has been heeded.

The overall intent of the plan, to sustain and improve the convenience, attractiveness and liveliness of the group centre, is well-supported. In particular, connecting Mawson Place with Athllon Drive so as to create an effective and attractive through-street is an excellent initiative.

It is disappointing, however, that key aspects of the community response have not been incorporated into the draft Master Plan. The community clearly wanted (and wants) improvements to the urban amenity and public realm of the Group Centre, plus a moderate degree of re-development. Most people are in favour of low-rise mixed-use development in the Group Centre.

Yet the Plan is constructed around Mawson as a major public transport 'hub', with intensification of residential development proposed on virtually every private lease within and adjacent to, the Centre. Public realm improvements are not prioritised.

The Plan needs to incorporate more of the community's views and values than is currently the case. If the final version simply re-states the ideas in the draft document, the community can be excused for thinking the consultation itself was an empty exercise.

### **What the community said (as reported in the Engagement document)**

- The community's top two priorities for change are improved landscaping, better public spaces and re-vamping of existing residential development on Wilkins Street, facing the Group Centre (table 7)<sup>1</sup>.
- Improved walking and cycling access was the third priority (table 7).
- 79.2% of those surveyed wanted maximum building heights of four storeys or less (fig 14)<sup>2</sup> (table 5)<sup>3</sup>. It is quite disingenuous to use these figures to claim substantial there is majority support for four storeys or more.
- There is support for making Mawson Place a more pleasant street, and for connecting it to the south with Athllon Drive (figure 13)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> page 17 Mawson master plan community engagement report Stage 1

<sup>2</sup> Page 16 Mawson master plan community engagement report Stage 1

<sup>3</sup> Page 32 Draft Mawson master plan

<sup>4</sup> Page 15 Mawson master plan community engagement report Stage 1

- Support for residential development in the Centre is limited (figure 15)<sup>5</sup>. The gist of this response is clearly that residential development should be allowed, in the context of a continuing emphasis on retail, commercial and services.

### **What the draft plan provides**

- Six storeys and four storeys throughout the group centre, except for the central area
- Six storey, primarily residential, buildings along both sides of Mawson Place – while businesses are supposed to operate on the ground floors, proposed alignments would mean little opportunity for engagement with the street.
- Rezoning of existing club (business) sites to allow residential development
- A marker building of 8 storeys to the south of Mawson Drive, on the site of the existing park and ride
- Intensive development (6 storeys and four storeys) on existing zoned public open space on the northern side of Mawson Drive, at the intersection with Athllon Drive
- Removal of the existing park-and-ride to a site further away from the bus stops
- No provision for enhanced pedestrian access other than walkways contained within proposed blocks of primarily residential development along Athllon Drive and Mawson Place.

### **Ideas for the next stage**

The draft master plan should be revised, according to the following principles:

- Endorsement of Mawson as a continuing Group Centre– not a transport ‘hub’ (Woden is a transport ‘hub’ (i.e. a place where a number of major transport routes intersect); Mawson is an important transport access point or node, but not a hub.
- As well as building-on the precinct plan, the Master Plan should enhance and maintain existing business activity and the public realm (eg prioritising small-scale stand-alone businesses, providing resources for re-designing ‘back-of-house’ activities on Mawson Place; laying out pleasant footpaths, and improving access for cyclists, school children and residents).
- A major central playground should be considered, to encourage more families to use and stay at the Mawson group centre. Great examples are the Chifley local centre and the Wanniasa Group centre.
- Other public spaces could also be developed to attract young families – better integration of the playing spaces and residential areas on the south-east side should be a planning priority.
- There is no need to alienate the car park area on block 6 section 57 to provide for a supermarket. Mawson has had two supermarkets in the past – commercial pressures caused the closure of the second one. There is ample space for a second supermarket to re-open within existing buildings.

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<sup>5</sup> Page 16 Mawson master plan community engagement report Stage 1

- More thought should be given to enhancing the existing high-density residential zone, and to facilitating town-house low rise development in appropriate locations, particularly to the south-east, rather than cramming apartments onto Athllon Drive
- Height limits on Mawson Place should remain at 2 storeys or at most 4 storeys
- Every effort should be made to retain community facilities such as clubs<sup>6</sup>). These sites should not be rezoned to facilitate residential development; if current leaseholders are not prepared to retain and improve these facilities, the land (assuming it was initially subject to concessional leases) should be made available to leaseholders who are prepared to observe these conditions;
- The public open space at the intersection of Athllon and Mawson drives should not be re-zoned, but should be landscaped to include a major wetland so as to form part of landscaped public open space extending south along the eastern side of the drain from the point of the intersection with Parramatta Street. Yarralumla Creek should be naturalised with wetlands as much as possible
- Retain park-and-ride on its current site; moving it will discourage people from using it.
- The intersection of Athllon and Beasley is nearing capacity during peak periods<sup>7</sup> Bus priority lanes should be installed to reduce bus congestion.
- Much more detail is needed on public domain issues such as lighting, security, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and the provision of green spaces.

Mawson was planned as a place for shopping, meeting and services for residents in the southern part of Woden Valley, and should continue to serve this purpose. These functions are clearly endorsed in the 2008 Precinct Plan.

Group Centres have a clear place in the planning hierarchy of Canberra. They were intended to be (and should remain) convenient places for day-to-day shopping, providing ease of access for many (particularly the elderly) for whom Town Centres are too crowded and daunting.

WVCC looks forward to further discussion of these important issues.

Dr Jenny Stewart (Committee member) and

Martin Miller (President)

On behalf of Woden Valley Community Council

27 February 2015

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<sup>6</sup> note that the draft master plan – p.17 – is in error: only two of the original four clubs now remain

<sup>7</sup> AECOM Mawson Group centre – Infrastructure study