

How we have addressed key community concerns through the draft Place Plan and Development Concept and the draft variation to the Territory Plan number 372 for Section 76 Watson

Key community concerns	How we have addressed these concerns
Environment and trees	
<p>The community expressed wanting to retain and protect open spaces, trees, wildlife corridors and habitat for birds, such as galahs, as well as for the vulnerable Superb Parrot. These views were linked to perceptions of Canberra as the ‘bush capital’.</p> <p>An area of at least 4,000m² should be set aside for recreational open space.</p>	<p>The draft Place Plan and Development Concept (PPDC) and draft variation number 372 (DV372) to the <i>Territory Plan</i> proposes to protect trees and landscape areas for the protection of wildlife habitat including the vulnerable Superb Parrot, to reduce urban heat and provide general amenity and enjoyment.</p> <p>A one-hectare (10,000 m²) parcel of land on Section 76 is proposed to be re-zoned to urban open space to provide a public local neighbourhood park. The public will be engaged through the draft Place Plan and Development Concept on the design and development of the park.</p>
<p>The Watson community proposes that the ACT Government should return unused spaces to urban forests. Green spaces should be enhanced, for example with community gardens and playgrounds.</p>	<p>There are plans to retain the public green space adjacent to the Academy of Interactive Entertainment on Phillip Avenue and a one-hectare public neighbourhood park is also proposed for Section 76, including a playground, to provide more good quality green space in ‘New Watson’.</p> <p>Decisions on what to do with unused spaces needs to take in a range of factors such as the context of the site, community interests and relevant planning policies such as the <i>2018 ACT Planning Strategy</i> and the <i>ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025</i> which support moving towards a more compact, sustainable and inclusive city.</p> <p>It should be noted that ‘New Watson’ and ‘Old Watson’ currently have over 54 hectares of public urban open space and nature reserves within the suburb boundaries that are available for Watson residents to enjoy. The character and nature of ‘New Watson’ will</p>

	<p>be different to that of 'Old Watson' which in part would be driven by the different planning, infrastructure and landscape policies which would apply when each area was being developed.</p> <p>The development of the final PPDC is designed to establish directions for Government, developers and the community in enhancing and maintaining the future urban open spaces, street verges and street trees. Existing groups that currently provide essential community input into green spaces and reserves include the Friends of Mt Majura and Landcare groups such as the Watson Woodlands Working Group. These important community groups will be invited to participate in the community engagement on the PPCD and draft variations.</p> <p>The findings of the 2019 Section 72 Dickson – Community Needs Assessment, which included Watson in the study area, recommended there was no need for a new community garden in the Inner North Canberra.</p>
<p>Concern was expressed about existing trees being removed on the site during development stages. Residents valued the existing pine trees and other trees that act as a visual and wind buffer on Section 76.</p>	<p>The proposed part-rezoning of Section 76 to urban open space will including providing a public one-hectare local neighbourhood park and protect valuable trees and landscape on the western edge of the site.</p> <p>The trees and landscape areas that are proposed to be protected have been informed by a <i>2019 Tree Assessment Report</i> which also considered the vulnerable Superb Parrot and its habitat. Consultation was also undertaken with the Climate Change and Sustainability and Environment, the Tree Protection and Parks and Conservations areas of ACT Government.</p>
<p>The Watson community supports recommendation two of the <i>Better Suburbs Statement 2030</i> to increase funding for the planting and replacement of trees to maintain and increase tree cover to 30% of our suburbs by 2030.</p>	<p>30% of tree canopy as well as 150-200 dwellings proposed dwellings can be provided for across the site. The draft PPDC responds to this concern by showing 30% tree canopy to be developed/maintained across the site as an objective. The draft PPDC also responds to the community's valuing of the trees and landscapes in the 'place themes', including 'leafy suburb', 'sustainable living' and 'resilient neighbourhood'. The 'design principles' express these values in 'green and active' and 'sustainable and resilient'.</p>

<p>The Watson community have suggested that all major development applications for Watson, and critically the North Watson area, which have the potential to impact on Justice Robert Hope Park and Mount Majura Nature Reserve should include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addressing any risks to the local flora and fauna.</p>	<p>An Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment (EVCA) was undertaken on these site in April 2017 by Capital Ecology. This EVCA considered any listed significant biodiversity values that occurred, or had the potential to occur, on the site.</p> <p>The EVCA concluded that development on Section 76 is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to significantly impact upon any Matter of National Environmental Significance (MNES), meaning that referral under the EPBC Act would not be warranted, and • Unlikely to have a significant adverse environmental impact on any species or ecological communities listed under the ACT's Nature Conservation Act, meaning the requirement for preparation of an EIS would not be triggered. <p>Consultation and advice from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, ACT Government also confirmed that there are no biodiversity constraints on the site, except for the need to retain trees and landscape areas for the Superb Parrot. Parks and Conservation are currently monitoring the Superb Parrot and have advised that the bird uses Section 76 for foraging for food. These trees and areas are reflected in the draft PPDC and draft variation will be protected.</p>
<p>Traffic, parking and walking and cycling connections</p>	
<p>Concern was also expressed that some current residential developments in North Watson do not provide enough parking for residents and visitors.</p> <p>The community also raised that there are not enough parking spaces at the Watson shops to accommodate additional demand.</p>	<p>All development applications are required to include a Traffic Impact Assessment and meet the requirements of the <i>Parking and Vehicular Access General Code</i> to show the development can provide for adequate residents and visitor parking.</p> <p>The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate recently reviewed the parking at Watson shops. The review found that due to the popularity of the shops, there is high parking demand from a range of users. The two-hour parking area at the front of the shops on Watson Place caters to visitors and customers and is well utilised. This issue with the parking at local shops is not confined to Watson with local centres at Ainslie, Lyneham and O'Connor experiencing issues with parking. The demand for</p>

	<p>parking differs throughout the day but trying to add additional car parking spaces is constrained by existing, and established, land uses.</p> <p>Staff and long-stay customers can utilise the approximately 50 unrestricted on-street parking spaces within 50 to 200 metres of the shops on Harvey, Gwynne, Windeyer, Knox and Burton Streets. These on-street spaces, which are easily accessible, can also be used as overflow parking for people visiting the shops if needed.</p> <p>People who may find it difficult to walk 100 metres can apply for a Mobility Parking Permit, allowing them to park in Designated Accessible Parking Spaces, such as those provided on Watson Place at the Watson Shops.</p>
<p>The community suggested buses need to have their own stopping areas, to allow other traffic to move efficiently without being impeded by buses stopping frequently.</p>	<p>To address this concern would require land take that may not be possible, particularly on Aspinall Street where the street verge is constrained by existing residential buildings, trees and gardens. It is also not desirable from an urban design perspective, particularly where providing areas for buses may take away opportunity for larger street verges to allow for deep root tree planting and improved walking and cycling connections.</p>
<p>Concerns were expressed by residents that both Aspinall Street and Antill Streets in North Watson are currently used for “rat running” by people who don’t live in this area, and that this needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Additional traffic on these streets would make the current situation worse. The need for better active travel (walking and bicycle path) connections was also identified.</p>	<p>The background planning and technical work undertaken to justify re-zoning Section 76 to RZ4 Medium Density Residential included a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) which looked at the cumulative effects of the future developments on Section 76 and Section 74 with the currently underway Norrebro, The Ridge and Mount Majura Estate developments.</p> <p>The TIA concluded that traffic impacts of all these developments and the future developments on Section 76 and on Section 74 would not require upgrades to the roads or the intersections in North Watson. This assessment was based on a figure of 560 dwellings, not 400 dwellings across Section 74 and Section 76 under the ACT’s Indicative Land Release Program. This approach was taken to ensure that the impacts of current and future developments was considered, noting that the current project focus is for Section 76 only.</p>

	<p>Looking for short cuts, or 'rat running' is a common occurrence in inner city areas where motorists look to save time by using local roads. It is unlikely that measures could be applied that would prevent people from outside an area 'rat running' – such measures might also affect the ability of residents to move easily through the area.</p> <p>2016 Census data also shows that Watson residents are more likely to walk or catch the bus to work and are less likely to drive than other residents in the ACT. The draft PPDC proposes new connections to the existing walking and cycling path network, including a new walking and cycling connection through Section 76 from Aspinall Street to the Federal Highway to make it easier to get to places, including to the rapid bus route on Aspinall Street or the Light Rail stop at Phillip Avenue.</p> <p>The draft PPDC also shows how the site can provide connections to the existing walking and cycling network, beyond the site boundaries and highlights the importance of active travel in 'active people' and 'leafy suburb'.</p>
Community, recreation, commercial facilities and local amenities	
<p>The Watson community requested an area of 4000m² of land be set aside for open space to accommodate new residents on Sections 74 and 76.</p>	<p>A one-hectare (10,000 m²) local neighbourhood public park including a playground is proposed for Section 76 with an additional linear public urban open space area on the western edge to support a new walking and cycling path and provide protection of Superb Parrot habitat. During consultation on the draft PPDC the community will have the opportunity to provide their views and aspirations on what they would want to see in the new park.</p> <p>The ACT Government provides a range of public parks such as town parks and district parks as well as neighbourhood parks to the smaller micro parks. The provision of public parks is based on the location, the population and the catchment they service. Town parks are adjacent to town centres and are managed to a high standard and may contain amenities such as toilets to support special events. District parks can be between 4-10 hectares and can include amenities requiring higher maintenance such as skate parks or BMX tracks. Neighbourhood parks are small and are usually between 0.25 to 2 hectares</p>

	and reflect the character of the local area. These parks do not provide amenities such as barbeques and toilets as they are near where people live.
The community have also requested public toilets for their suburb.	There are no plans to provide public toilets in Watson. Public toilets are provided in higher use areas such as group and town centres and in destination and district parks.
<p>Current facilities in the older parts of Watson were not seen as adequate to meet the needs of new North Watson residents. Of concern was the potential impact on local schools, particularly on Majura Primary, but also on high schools in the area.</p> <p>There was a view that residential development in North Watson had not been accompanied by adequate provision of additional open space, playgrounds leisure facilities, child care centres, and meeting rooms.</p>	<p>A community needs assessment undertaken for the site was based on the 2019 Section 72 Dickson – Community Needs Assessment which included Watson in the study catchment. The study showed that the Inner North Canberra is generally well catered for and outlined best practice principles for how community and recreational facilities should be provided for in urban renewal settings. These principles included facilities being co-located with other uses such as a library or a group centre. Buildings for community facilities should also be designed to be flexible to accommodate a mix of uses and services that can change over time to meet the needs of a changing population.</p> <p>It is expected that some of the children living in North Watson will attend the Majura Primary School. The Education Directorate has been involved in the development of the planning policies and is aware of the impact that this development will have on the demand for places at the Majura Primary School.</p> <p>There are no new community facilities proposed except for a social enterprise to be included into demonstration housing for the purpose of supporting residents to build new skills for employment opportunities. For example, residents could practice their skills at a bike fixing shop which could include a coffee shop as an ancillary use.</p> <p>As all community facilities cannot be provided for in every suburb, for example, a swimming pool, residents can use the frequent public transport including the Rapid Route 9 (Belconnen to Watson) and Bus Route 50 (Watson to City) to access community and recreational facilities in the Inner North Canberra and beyond. In addition to the swimming pool, there are a broad range of community facilities available at or near the Dickson Group Centre such as health facilities, a library, a community centre, child care centres, artists centre, dance school and religious facilities.</p>

	The Norrebro development adjacent to Section 76 on Aspinall Street proposes a 6-storey apartment building with a child care centre, gym, café and grocer.
<p>Several suggestions were made for potential alternative uses of the site, or for elements that could be incorporated into future development, including aged care facilities, restaurants, cafes.</p> <p>Concern was also raised about the impact of new residents and the potential need for a new local centre.</p>	<p>RZ4 Medium Density allows for some community uses, such as a community activity centre, residential care, a retirement village and health facility. The zoning does not allow for a shop. DV372 does however propose a craft workshop and a social enterprise that may have a café as an axillary use.</p> <p>The Watson and Hackett shops are well patronised and are nearby. The Dickson Group Centre also a higher level of shops such as an existing Woolworths, with a proposed new Coles supermarket to be established in the near future. A weekly farmers market is also located within walking and cycling distance at Exhibition Park Canberra.</p>
The importance of the local character of North Watson	
<p>The Watson community have said they want Watson to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be leafy for shade and wildlife with established street tree canopy of eucalyptus, oaks and Chinese elms • have magnificent views of Mt Majura nature park to the east; • an environment of low crime, low traffic, low pollution and low noise; • great schools and education facilities, local shops and businesses; • a friendly community, and access to nature trails and off leash dog walking area; and • a community-minded, egalitarian spirit 	<p>The draft PPDC provides the community with the opportunity to shape what Section 76 could look like in the future and the character that they desire – to be leafy, green, inclusive, well connected and active.</p> <p>The draft PPDC and DV372 shows retaining trees and landscapes and encourages buildings to be positioned to take advantage of sunlight and views to Mount Majura and the Brindabellas.</p> <p>The draft PPDC 's design principles encourage a 'safe and inclusive' and 'green and active' future for North Watson. New proposed walking and cycling connections show how the site could be better connected to the existing network to help people to move to the local shops, parks, frequent public transport and beyond. While driven by a desire for similar outcomes, it is likely that the development outcome on North Watson will be different to the rest of Watson. 'Old Watson' was shaped by different planning, infrastructure and landscape policies than those which apply now – people's desires and needs have also changed.</p>

	<p>DV372 includes adding the definitions to provide for demonstration housing, including for co-housing, a social enterprise and a craft workshop to encourage not only housing but a community that can share spaces for socialising and opportunities to build new skills in a safe environment.</p> <p>The zoning proposed for Section 76 through DV372 provides opportunities for new people to live in Watson, to benefit from the existing amenities and to be within close proximity to urban spaces, employment, schools, shops and public transport. Future housing provided on the site could provide affordable housing options for new home buyers or people wanting to down-size.</p> <p>The PPCD and the draft variations provide opportunities for community and commercial facilities should the demand arises, such as for a small shop or meeting rooms, to provide for a suburb that supports a friendly social and active community.</p>
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