

WESTGATE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS – COMMENTS

Background

The land identified for the Westgate Strategic Planning exercise (the *planning area*) forms an easily identified pocket of land situated on the south western boundary of Brisbane City abutting Ipswich City. The *planning area* is easily identified by its natural boundaries formed by waterways (the Brisbane River, Wolston and Woogaroo Creeks) and highways which act as barriers to access in or out of the land. Within the *planning area* the major existing land use is institutional, mainly prisons, with minor recreational (golf clubs), industrial and residential occupation and use of the balance lands.

The lack of access and long term institutional use of the *planning area* have resulted in a relatively isolated area which at present forms an important green space and open area in contrast to the ever encroaching density of surrounding development. Increasingly this land is forming a significant last refuge for wildlife displaced from surrounding areas as habitat is destroyed or rendered unusable for its original non human inhabitants. In any consideration of future development options the *planning area* land needs to be acknowledged as significantly constrained. The extent to which these constraints can be successfully managed in turn will determine the development opportunities which can be considered. Of particular importance in this instance is not only how the constraints may be managed but the time frame for taking effective action relative to the granting of any development rights such as those envisaged in the Options presented. Closely linked to any time frames for the taking of effective action is the track record of the authority who has the responsibility for taking the required action. In this, the past record of authorities at all levels in taking action to prevent problems manifesting themselves or in taking timely action to prevent problems being exacerbated significantly gives little confidence.

It is plain from the presented Options that the recognised constraints lay both in the natural features of the land – significant areas below the Q100 flood line, the existence of significant vegetation and by implication the need to retain ecologically significant habitat; and the man made features – existing land uses which are to remain, and provision of adequate services. In addition and barely recognised, the area has significant access constraints. The bulk of the land is accessed by two minor access roads - Wacol Station Road and Wilruna Street/Brisbane Terrace with a single connection to the Ipswich Motorway. These roads are under fragmented control involving two local authorities and the state government.

Together these constraints significantly affect all of the opportunities set out in the four Options presented for public comment.

It is also noted that in this public presentation of development options for land overwhelmingly under one ownership, the State is acting as a private land owner. Under the Integrated Planning Act, the Assessment Manager for any development proposal is the Local Authority in whose area the land is located. At the time of approval of the Integrated Planning Act, the Minister of the day in charge of planning gave an undertaking that the State Government would be bound by the act, except in rare circumstances where there were clear extenuating circumstances. In this instance no such circumstances are obvious and therefore any further development of these lands should be dealt with in full accordance with the Integrated Planning Act.

Based on the above considerations the following submissions are made in relation to all the options presented and individually to each option.

All Options.

None of the Options presented are supported as there are no commitments, implied or otherwise to ensure that the traffic network shown as serving the *planning area* land will provide an adequate level of service without adverse impacts on the surrounding established land uses. This land cannot be treated in isolation and good planning demands that it is not so treated. There is nothing in any of the Options to acknowledge the existing problems with the established road network (excess traffic, lack of user safety, confused connectivity, poor alignment and grades) or to establish appropriate achievable solutions for existing and future traffic volumes. The cross river bridges shown, it was advised at the public display I attended, are not the responsibility of the State Government and consequently when and if these bridges will be constructed is uncertain. These bridges have not been shown without reason and indeed it would appear that they are essential to provide an adequate, convenient and safe road network serving the Westgate lands and their proposed future use. As a result their construction must underpin and precede any establishment of land use rights in the *planning area*.

Whilst Wacol Station is designated as the focus of transit orientated development the distance to the proposed residential areas will demand some public transport linkage if car use is to be minimised. Such public transport services could then provide a much needed link for visitors to the various institutions to remain in the *planning area*. More importantly the provision of public transport services between residential areas and local transport nodes such as Wacol Station needs to form an essential and documented part of the development options for the *planning area*. In terms of services, the water supply constraints in the southeast have been well documented must be addressed as an essential part of any development proposal of this nature. It is a failure to properly consider such issues in the past that are a significant factor in the present water supply constraints and the land owner in this instance needs to clearly document as part of any option how this issue can be satisfactorily addressed. The issue of providing an adequate level of other normal urban services are also just as important should further development of the *planning area* be sought. Lack of any reference to these factors appears to imply that they have not been given consideration. Such an omission if correct implies lack of proper investigation as it would affect the very fundamental considerations that underpin the options put forward.

Enhancement of the environmental qualities of the *planning area* is applauded. However it would appear, lacking any comment to the contrary, that the environment referred to applies to only the identified significant vegetation. Even that designation varies between options with some significant vegetation identified in one option disappearing in another – what about the Vegetation Management Act that applies to all other development? This is currently an area which because of its long term institutional use retains significant natural habitat used by all manner of wildlife. In the context of the local area south of the river, the *planning area* is a significant green area and should be retained in a manner that will enhance its role as a significant last refuge of wildlife forced out of other areas by development. To this end suitable provision for wildlife, particularly monopedes, to move between the area known as Poo Corner and the river without coming into conflict with traffic using Wacol Station Road needs to be considered and implemented.

Option 1.

Subject to the modification of the indicated residential areas as set out below this Option is preferred. It is noted that establishment of the proposed residential area can only proceed after filling areas below the flood line. This filling will probably reduce the flood storage capacity and together with the need to obtain fill, result in considerable excavation and reforming of lands below the existing flood line, in the process destroying the existing environment of these areas. Whilst it is acknowledged farming practices have already modified the original environment of these areas any modification previously carried out will be minor when compared to the likely removal of soil from the area to fill the residential area. This is not environmentally sound practice and any residential areas should be constrained to above the established Q100 line. Similar concerns exist for the proposed cross river link passing through the residential areas. The proposed road should be flood free, possibly requiring elevation to allow flood flows to pass below.

There needs to be a clear linkage for wildlife to move between the natural area known as Poo Corner and Wacol Creek and its abutting old pasture lands. The machinery sales area occupying the north western corner of Poo Corner (eastern side of Wacol Station Road) has recently been expanded and would act as a block to any movement of native ground based wildlife, as will development in this location on the western side of the road. This area should be resummed and returned to an undeveloped state as part of a wildlife movement corridor.

The indicated Wacol Station Transit Orientated precinct implies relocation of the John Oxley Centre. Is this to be relocated within the *planning area* or to some other place?

Option 2.

The proposed private school and community uses would act to effectively isolate the area known as Poo Corner from the Brisbane River. In addition the proposed site appears to encompass the original sewerage treatment works for the nearby prison development. With falling birth rates there is some doubt on the long term need for a further school in the locality as a number of schools both private and public already exist in the adjacent residential areas to the north of the *planning area* (a problem of planning within set boundaries?). If indeed a need is seen to exist, then any school would be better located in the centre or to the west of the residential area, subject of course to the reduction of the residential area as set out in Option 1 comments.

The reduced amount of community use area proposed is inconsistent with the increased residential area being proposed.

Overall this option is not supported.

Option 3.

The significant increase in the mixed business area of this proposal is not supported by increased vehicle access provisions which are considered necessary for its effective functioning. This increased area has come with a loss of open green space (golf course) in the south western sector of the *planning area*. It is noted that in part this open green space has been relocated to the flood prone lands south of Woolston Creek effectively breaking any direct contact between the residential areas and the natural corridor containing Woolston Creek. It is my view that most, if not all, flood prone lands should remain undeveloped and left to revert

to natural vegetation cover over time with minimal human interference. In the process created a much needed common area for the use of Brisbane and Ipswich residents.

For these reasons combined with the general comments on the creation of residential areas on land now below the flood line Concept 3 is not supported.

Option 4.

This concept includes many of the concepts objected to in the previous options 1 to 3, and consequently is not supported for all the reasons previously outlined.

Conclusion

Despite the publicity because of its relatively isolated nature the defined *planning area* is not considered to be either a key site for managing future growth in this sector nor will its development have a significant impact on the strategic outcome for the region. Were this to be the case then the proposed concepts put forward are totally inappropriate for such grand aims. That is not to say that the future development of this area is not important, it is, but with the uses being proposed it is just another large scale development site and needs to be treated as such.

In conclusion my thanks for the opportunity to comment.

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