



West Belconnen Community Plan

Part 3 - Social infrastructure

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Riverview Projects

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Disclaimer:

The development parameters (dwelling numbers, stages etc.) referred to in this report may vary over time. The figures contained herein are estimates; they represent a good approximation of likely development outcomes to a sufficient level of accuracy for the purposes of this report.

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1 Introduction

This report forms the third part of the West Belconnen Community Plan. While the first report documented relevant project background and data and the second outlined a strategy to achieve social sustainability, this report focuses on social infrastructure requirements for West Belconnen. It has been prepared to support and inform the master plan for West Belconnen, the rezoning of the site and subsequent development applications.

Given that West Belconnen is in the planning stages, an emphasis on the design of the physical environment is recognised as a major opportunity. The master planning process is seen as a means to influence physical design of the new community and to promote social goals such as physical activity, healthy living, social interaction and community safety. The development of greenfield sites, even ones that constitute the effective continuation or completion of existing urban development, present a number of challenges as well as opportunities. This Community Plan will investigate how master planning for a large land release can be utilised to promote positive community outcomes. The provision of social infrastructure is a key element of the Structure Plan and is the focus of this part of the Community Plan.

This report includes:

- » Assessment of the need for a range of social infrastructure
- » Identification of social infrastructure requirements.

2 Social Infrastructure Provision

This part identifies likely requirements for community facilities and human services for the West Belconnen Project, based upon:

- » The demographic forecasts outlined in part one of the Community Plan
- » Assessment of the availability, distance to and capacity in existing facilities and services (in part one of the Community Plan)
- » Discussions with government agencies, and agency standards and benchmarks
- » The anticipated needs and preferences of the future population
- » The scope to promote cost effective provision by means of co-location or shared facilities
- » Issues of transport access, ongoing management costs, funding provision and facility ownership

Social infrastructure is provided by a wide variety of agencies including a range of government agencies, non-government organisations and the private sector. At the master planning phase, the strategy needs to focus on the facilities which may have known land requirements, to ensure that sufficient land is identified in appropriate locations to meet future need. This focuses particularly on facilities and services provided by the ACT Government agencies (such as schools). Services provided by the Commonwealth Government (eg employment services, some family services, veterans' services,) have land requirements that are likely to be relatively modest, and most likely will use available commercial office space within designated centres. Such sites can be identified in subsequent detailed levels of planning.

Also important in the ACT context are community type uses provided by the non-government and private sectors that may have land requirements. These include private schools, private health care services, churches, private childcare services, commercial gym and fitness facilities, residential aged care facilities and entertainment facilities such as licensed clubs. The master plan will need to allow sufficient scope and flexibility to accommodate these types of uses as demand emerges.

It is assumed that all services to the NSW component of West Belconnen will be supplied by ACT agencies (with appropriate cost sharing arrangements in place with NSW).

2.1 Social infrastructure objectives

The ACT Community Facilities Location Guide was summarised in part one of this Community Plan. Drawing upon these and based upon contemporary trends and leading practice for social infrastructure, the following principles will provide further guidance for the provision of community facilities and human services within the West Belconnen project.

Community facilities will be designed to:

- » Respond to local needs and reflect the local community's identity, values and aspirations
- » Contribute to the health, well-being and quality of life of residents, support their lifestyle needs and choices and encourage the development of social capital
- » Make the most efficient use of limited resources, where appropriate being multipurpose, co-located with other facilities and able to accommodate shared and multiple use arrangements

- » Be provided in an efficient, timely and co-ordinated way, ensuring that they are available to residents as early as possible and residents are not disadvantaged through delays in delivery
- » Ensure flexibility in their use, so they can respond and adapt as needs change. Where appropriate, buildings should be capable of delivering a range of services, rather than designated for single uses or specific target groups that may quickly become outdated
- » Promote equitable access for all sections of the population, through the distribution, design and management of facilities. In particular facilities should be affordable for their target population
- » Provide environmentally and economically sustainable buildings
- » Comply with Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles and reduce risks of vandalism and poor security through consultation with police concerning the design and location of facilities
- » Promote innovation and creativity in the way agencies come together to deliver services, recognising the need for collaborative planning and partnerships to achieve effective and efficient delivery of human services
- » Be accessible for all user groups, with all facilities meeting accessibility standards
- » Promote integrated service delivery among related agencies, and
- » Develop sustainable ownership, governance, management and maintenance arrangements for facilities.

The location of community facilities has been guided by the following criteria. Community facilities should be:

- » Central to their catchment population and easily accessible by the majority of their users
- » Visually prominent, with a main street location and presentation to the street
- » Accessible by public transport, and located to maximize access for pedestrians and cyclists
- » Located to enhance a sense of community, vibrancy and local civic identity, and to help create a focal point or hub for the community. This includes places where people already have cause to congregate, rather than on standalone sites, for reasons of safety, accessibility and convenience. Shopping centres and schools are recognised as the key destinations where people tend to congregate within a neighbourhood. Locations within or adjacent to commercial centres also add to the activity level and critical mass needed to create a vibrant mix of activities and lively centre
- » Where appropriate, clustered together or co-located on a single site to provide opportunities for shared use of resources (management, parking, meeting rooms, amenities, play equipment) and for convenience, visibility and capacity for a “one stop shop”. Clustering will also create synergies that promote better utilisation of services (for example, through cross referral of clients, or young people being more inclined to use a service that is adjacent to a place they already know)
- » Located to provide a high level of safety and security, particularly at nights and weekends. This is most usually associated with high levels of activity and casual surveillance, as well as lighting and proximity to public transport.

- » Where possible, located adjacent to open space to allow for larger outdoor community events, spill-over activities and children's play. Locations adjacent to outdoor recreation facilities such as tennis or netball courts can also provide a leisure focus as well as space for community activities
- » Located to ensure access to safe and convenient parking, including shared parking with surrounding land uses where appropriate.

2.2 Social infrastructure needs assessment

The future population of West Belconnen, estimated to be about 30,000 on completion, will be large enough to sustain a range of local neighbourhood facilities and potentially some higher order facilities designed to serve the total projected West Belconnen population. The assessment of required infrastructure will require consideration of not only the current capacity of existing facilities but also how that capacity may change over time as the population in the surrounding area evolves and changes.

While social infrastructure is traditionally defined as including community centres, libraries, youth centres, etc.; for West Belconnen it is also important to consider other types of facilities that serve a social function. Stott, Stott and Wiles (2009:17) in their review of the UK New Towns, considered the importance of local meeting places like neighbourhood shops. They write that sense of community was maintained through networks of family and friends and through the “mundane and routine interactions that take place at the local shops, hairdressers and post office” and found that “the loss of such places was seen as having quite devastating effects on the sense of community as opportunities for social interaction and engagement were reduced.” Planning for West Belconnen should consider the important social function performed not only by formal social infrastructure like community centres, but also the community benefits gained through the availability of meeting and gathering places like shops, parks and playgrounds.

Following from this, at the local level, residents of West Belconnen will require access to the following:

- » Retail and commercial services
- » Spaces for informal meeting and gathering, such as cafes
- » Indoor spaces for community activities, programs and services
- » Medical services such as GP's
- » Childcare and some family support services
- » Schools
- » Local leisure and entertainment facilities, such as restaurants
- » Places of worship.

From a West Belconnen district perspective, residents will require access to the following:

- » Multipurpose spaces for a range of community activities, programs and events
- » A high school and other learning facilities
- » Civic and cultural space including a library
- » Sporting and recreation facilities
- » Larger areas of open space for active and passive recreation

- » Individual and family support services, and services addressing particular issues such as welfare, legal aid, employment, housing
- » Facilities and services for particular sections of the population, such as young people, older people, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- » Larger places of worship
- » Emergency and safety services.

While the West Belconnen site is divided between ACT and NSW areas, the needs of the population have been considered for the development as a whole, rather than in two separate components. This reflects the ways in which people use facilities and services at the local level, without regard for artificial boundaries. It also recognises that planning on the basis of separate populations and catchments would not represent efficient and sustainable use of resources and would likely result in a fragmented, rather than, integrated approach to community facility provision.

The ways in which these needs will be met are described below, in terms of government, non-government and private sector responsibilities.

2.3 Indicative requirements for social infrastructure

The following table provides an indication of social infrastructure requirements.

Facility	Definition	Existing facilities	Number required in West Belconnen	Size	Location
Community centre (district)	A facility containing a range of multipurpose spaces such as halls, meeting rooms and interview space which are available for community use at an affordable price. May have a paid coordinator.	Holt Community Hub West Belconnen Family and Child Centre Belconnen Community Services	1	1,600 sqm GFA If stand alone site area would be approximately 5,000 – 6,000 square metres	Central to catchment As part of or adjacent to main centre. Integrated with shops, open space
Community centre (local)	Smaller version of above providing local level meeting and recreational space to meet needs of local residents	Hawker Guide Hall Charnwood Scout Hall Kippax Uniting Community Centre	1	800 sqm GFA If stand alone site area would be approximately 2,500 – 4,000 square metres	As part of community node
Library	A facility offering a range of literary and artistic materials and information delivery services which seeks to inspire lifelong learning and engagement of the community with ideas, creativity and knowledge	Kippax Library Belconnen Library	1	1,200 sqm GFA. If stand-alone site area approx. 3,500 – 5,000 sqm	Ideally co-located with district community centre to form a community hub Strong links with main centre shops

Facility	Definition	Existing facilities	Number required in West Belconnen	Size	Location
Long day care	A licensed child care service providing long day care for at least 48 weeks of the year, usually from babies to school age infants.	Closest facilities are Charnwood Full Day Care, Coolinda Cottage (Charnwood) and Nan's Child Care (Scullin). Data suggests reasonable capacity at moment. New Facility opening in Holt in 2015	3-4	3,500 square metres site area	Proximity to primary schools
Non-government P-6	A non-government facility providing primary (usually combined with pre-school) education (P-6 or 7 or P-10)	Closes non-government primary schools are St Thomas Aquinas and St John the Apostle. Scope exists for an independent (non-Catholic) school	2	4 ha (site area) including an oval (3.5 ha if accessing an existing oval)	Central to catchment, linked to pedestrian system, within 400 metres of retail centre. Opportunity for shared open space and shared community hall. Possibility of co-location with child care.
Government High School (P-10)	A school facility providing primary through to year 10 education	Kingsford Smith Belconnen High School Melba-Copland ACT Education reports existing high schools currently have reasonable capacity	1	8.6 ha including an oval (7.6 ha if accessing an existing oval)	Central to district catchment, on a collector or distributor road, within 400 metres of retail if possible. Where possible adjoin district playing field. Includes indoor recreation facility that will be shared with community use

Facility	Definition	Existing facilities	Number required in West Belconnen	Size	Location
Residential aged care	An aged care facility will accommodate clients at all levels of need. Facilities will almost always have more than 90 beds, however developers aim for 120 and sometimes over to ensure viability	Closest facilities include Canberra Masonic Homes, Ginninderra Gardens, Villaggio Sant Antonio, Ridgecrest Retirement Village Currently limited vacancies in the area	1 (will depend on market demand/ take up)	75sqm of land is required per resident. This includes an allowance for 25sqm of external space. Approximately 1.5 ha site	Independent living units should be within 400 metres of shops, located to avoid residents having to cross high traffic roads, noise separation from schools, colleges, etc. Hostels and nursing homes should be located in residential areas
GP Medical centres	A surgery providing ongoing comprehensive health care	Various	6-7	200 square metres GFA for a facility supporting 4 doctors and 1 nurse	Locations often include either shopping centres or commercial office zones. Facilities can also be located within other health service facilities, such as aged care accommodation where services can be shared.
Religious facility	A church or other religious space providing spaces for worship. Facilities may also be used for non-religious activities (e.g. social, educational and recreational activities) either exclusively by a congregation or hired by the general community.	Various	3-4 or potentially fewer if shared, multi-purpose facility	Site areas from quite small to 10,000-15,000 square metres	Larger religious facilities can generate significant traffic and parking demands and may be best located out of purely residential areas. Shared, multi-domination facility encouraged.
Licensed club	A licensed club under the Liquor Act 2010 operated by a community or sporting group for hospitality purposes.	West Belconnen Golf Club West Belconnen Leagues Club Magpies Sports Club, Holt	3-4	Site areas range from 5,000 to 20,000 square metres	Within main centre Noise separation from residential areas

Facility	Definition	Existing facilities	Number required in West Belconnen	Size	Location
Recreation					
District Playing Field	District level fields reflecting ACT Sport and Recreation's centralised model of provision. A basic DPF includes six AFL/cricket ovals each of which can also be used as two union, league or soccer fields. DPFs may also include an enclosed field for premier level sports.	Kippax District Playing Field	1	18 hectares site area including shared space included with schools	Central location Could be located on waste disposal site however DPF will need to be flood lit with lighting requiring significant foundations. Could be split into two smaller spaces if required due to site constraints
Indoor recreation	Multipurpose indoor sports courts that could be used for basketball, volleyball, netball, futsal and variety of other indoor sports	Belconnen Community Centre	1 as shared P-10 school two court facility	Two court facility to be incorporated within P-10 school site	As part of P-10 school site. Requires a minimum of two courts.
Tennis	Outdoor courts for tennis includes club room/house	Four court facility at Kippax	1	6 – 8 court facility Approximately 0.5 ha	As part of DPF
Squash	Indoor courts for squash	No local facilities	1	4 court facility	As part of DPF
Swimming Pool/ Aquatic Centre	Indoor facility including 25 metre lap pool and leisure pool	Canberra International Sports and Aquatic Centre	1	0.5 – 1.0 hectare	Edge of main centre

The following section provides greater explanation of the facility requirements identified in the table above.

2.3.1 Government social infrastructure

Community centres

Community centres provide space for a variety of community activities and programs (e.g. fitness, playgroups, craft groups, after school activities), for organisations and community groups to meet, for the delivery of community services and for private functions, such as birthday parties. They also provide sources of community information and a focal point for community development initiatives and the building of community networks and support structures.

Community centres may be provided at a variety of scales to meet the needs of different sized catchment populations. In recent times, there has been a move away from providing small, stand alone community centres for local neighbourhood populations, on the grounds of their high management and maintenance costs, lack of flexibility, limited use, security problems and lack of capacity for staffing. Instead, leading practice now supports the provision of larger multi-purpose facilities for a larger population catchment that can provide a variety of higher quality social and recreational amenities and combine a variety of functions. Larger centres are also able to provide accommodation for human services organisations, thereby enabling centres to be staffed and so increasing their levels of activity. In this way they are better able to meet the needs of their catchment population than multiple small centres offering limited facilities.

For West Belconnen two community centres are proposed. It is noted that the ACT does not have specific standards to guide the sizing of community centres. Based upon Elton Consulting's experience in other projects and the functional requirements identified in this report, it is proposed that 2,400 square metres of community centre floor space be provided. One community centre would be a larger district level facility of approximately 1,600 square metres in floor area and the other a smaller more local community centre of approximately 800 square metres.

Within West Belconnen, the large multi-purpose community centre will incorporate:

- » A variety of large and smaller flexible spaces suitable for a range of social, leisure, learning and cultural activities. These might include a hall suitable for large gatherings and functions, performances and physical activity such as gymnastics or dance classes, and rooms suitable for smaller groups
- » Meeting rooms, also suitable for adult education or training activity
- » Play space for children's activities
- » Informal lounge / foyer area
- » Hot desks for a community development worker, and for other human service providers
- » Rooms for sessional services such as baby health clinic, counselling or family support services
- » "Reheat" kitchen suitable to support private functions such as birthday parties
- » Plenty of storage to meet the needs of a variety of user groups
- » Toilet facilities and nappy change / breastfeeding area
- » Adjacent outdoor space with children's play equipment and barbecue, to provide for spill over social events and activities for children.

It is proposed that the district multi-purpose community centre will be located within the main centre, on a site that satisfies the location criteria outlined earlier. A facility of this size will not be warranted until a population of substantial size has been established in West Belconnen. This is likely to be triggered by the time about 3,000 households have moved into the development. Also it will not be feasible to build the community centre until the main retail centre has been

established, and therefore its timing will depend on the overall staging of the development and sequencing of infrastructure servicing.

However, Riverview Projects recognises the critical importance of providing core meeting and activity space at the outset of development, to meet the needs of early residents and establish initial social support networks. For this reason, it is proposed that a temporary community centre be provided within Stage 1 of the development. This would be provided as soon as possible after the arrival of initial residents, to operate until the permanent facility in the main centre is operational. The temporary centre might comprise a demountable building, dwelling, or part of the sales centre. It would provide meeting and activity spaces suitable for groups such as playgroups and resident interest groups, and associated outdoor play areas.

To meet as wide a range of needs as possible, a variety of spaces of different sizes is desirable, with scope for flexible division, e.g. capable of being subdivided to accommodate small groups. There will however be a need for some large spaces with appropriate linked facilities (e.g. kitchens) capable of hosting larger gatherings, community events and private functions such as wedding receptions. There may also be a need for some specialist facilities – for instance wet and dry areas for arts and crafts, IT room for training activities, or sound studios / multi-media room for other cultural activities.

The smaller, more local community centre will be a useful attractor to assist with activating other nodes or focal points outside of the main West Belconnen centre.

Libraries

As outlined in part one of the Community Plan, the nearest library is in Kippax group centre, about 10 minutes' drive from the site. It is a small community library and has some capacity for expansion.

In the ACT, libraries are not planned according to standards, but reflect the availability of funding and budget allocations in addition to broad issues of population growth and demand.

ACT Libraries has advised that a new full service community library in West Belconnen is unlikely to be warranted, given the proximity of Kippax community library. In fact, the increased population of the area resulting from the West Belconnen development would increase the viability of the Kippax library and potentially result in this service being expanded. However, some form of local library outlet may be required, as a place for pick-up and drop-off of books from Kippax library. The Kingston shopfront library may be an appropriate model, indicating a need for shopfront premises in the main shopping centre. Alternatively, a library outlet may be co-located with the proposed multi-purpose community centre.

This requires further consultation with ACT Libraries. Our table of social infrastructure requirements suggests a library facility of approximately 1,200 square metres would be warranted. We would consider a library to be an essential anchor facility, and key attractor, for a multipurpose community centre located within the main West Belconnen centre. Libraries are essential sources of learning and gathering for a wide range of age groups through both traditional means and increasingly through access to technology. They are active throughout the day and evening and, therefore, can be important attractors in town or village centres.

Civic and cultural facilities

The north western part of the ACT is considered to be well serviced with cultural facilities, primarily through the Belconnen Arts Centre. A major expansion of this facility has been planned to include formal exhibition space, dance studio, and performance space, in addition to existing facilities for visual arts. Strathnairn Homestead Gallery also exists within the West Belconnen study area.

Given the availability of existing facilities, no purpose-built cultural facility is proposed for West Belconnen. However, to support local cultural development, some space for cultural expression will

be provided within the multi-purpose community centre outlined above. Design considerations for the multi-purpose community centre include:

- » The hall should be suitable for local performances and classes (such as dance, drama, music)
- » Activity spaces should include flexible areas to allow for community arts activities
- » Office and meeting space should provide for local cultural organisations and community groups
- » The foyer and reception area should be suitable for displays and exhibitions
- » Adjoining outdoor space should allow for community cultural events.

Facilities and services for young people

At the local neighbourhood level, the needs of young people for space for social and leisure activities may be met through the proposed multi-purpose community centre, which will include spaces and programs suitable for activities for young people, in particular access to IT facilities.

In addition, the needs of young people will be met through the open space, sporting and recreation facilities, and through the shopping centres and other public domain areas that will be designed and managed to be 'youth friendly'. A library at West Belconnen would also help to address young people's needs in its provision of technology services, digital media offerings, study space as well as acting as a meeting place for young people.

Young people will also be assisted to access the leisure and entertainment facilities and youth support services in the wider area, through early provision of public transport services. It should be noted however that in the suburbs immediately adjacent to the site there are limited facilities for youth. These facilities are concentrated in the Belconnen town centre.

Facilities and services for older people

Leading practice now steers away from providing age-specific buildings, such as senior citizens centres, which can only be used by specific sections of the population and which thereby run the risk of being under-utilised for much of the week or as the population changes. Instead, the usual practice is to provide multi-purpose facilities which have flexibility to incorporate activities for different target groups as required.

The social, leisure and recreational needs of older people will be met through mainstream programs and activities for the whole community and through specific programs and activities for older people delivered within the multi-purpose community centre. This may necessitate a fairly large centre, which can be used concurrently by different sections of the population (e.g. enable older people to have a social group at the same time as the playgroup is meeting). The office and sessional spaces within the multi-purpose community centre may also provide accommodation for some aged care services, depending on the needs of the future population. The facility design needs to consider the requirements of older people and people with a disability, and to incorporate accessibility principles to ensure flexibility and adaptability.

In keeping with the aim of creating a community that can be home to people of all ages, and that allows people to age in place, it will be important to recognise the needs of older people in the planning and design process. It will be especially important to promote a sense of safety and security and to make it easy for older people to move around, e.g. by providing seating in the public domain, appropriate pathways and an age friendly built environment.

Education

As outlined previously, many public schools closest to the development are currently at or above capacity. However, it is anticipated that there may be some capacity for new students at Latham Primary School. Enrolments and capacity will fluctuate as existing populations age and new

populations move in. Education and Training ACT has identified the need for a new P-10 school at West Belconnen. Beyond that Education and Training ACT will continue to monitor enrolment trends and seek to use existing school resources in the area to accommodate demand for schooling generated from West Belconnen. The Riverview Group will continue to work with ACT and NSW education agencies throughout the rezoning process and the master plan will maintain the flexibility to accommodate additional school sites should they be required in the future.

In discussions with a wide range of stakeholders for West Belconnen, schools are recognised as critical to community building. A number of opportunities exist for schools to play an important community development role in West Belconnen with many of these opportunities stemming from the 'schools as community centres' concept. This Community Plan assumes that ovals or play space incorporated into schools will be available out of school hours as a shared community resource. It is also assumed that the proposed P-10 school will include a two court gymnasium facility that will be available as a shared community recreation space outside of school hours. Opportunities also exist in the design of schools for consideration to be given to sharing of resources. For example, school design can, at least, provide the flexibility for school canteens to be designed so that they can serve multiple purposes. Examples include school canteens also functioning as a café, food outlet for general community use and as training spaces for hospitality based skills development. This flexibility focuses on maximising possibilities for the most efficient use of government infrastructure to provide the maximum possible community benefits.

Other education

Lifelong learning activities (e.g. community outreach programs, evening classes, U3A) will be accommodated in the multi-purpose community centre / library and possibly through the inclusion of an adult community education centre that could be associated with the community centre.

The West Belconnen population will rely on existing university and technical/vocational education facilities in established parts of Canberra, as outlined in part one of the Community Plan, to meet their requirements for technical and higher education.

Public and community health services

The new West Belconnen population will not be large enough in its early stages to support public and community health services in its own right, but will utilise those available in the surrounding Belconnen district. Chief amongst these are the Calvary Hospital and recently expanded Belconnen Community Health Centre.

The ways in which existing community health and hospital services will be expanded in the longer term to meet demand generated by West Belconnen will need to be considered as planning for the project proceeds. The planning of new facilities reflects the anticipated age and health profile of the incoming population, rather than simple population benchmarks.

The West Belconnen Health Cooperative is an existing, successful, local model that has the potential to be extended to the proposed West Belconnen development.

ACT Health has advised that there may be a need to provide some local community health services within West Belconnen on a sessional or outreach basis, such as early childhood clinic, health education activities or healthy ageing programs. The proposed multi-purpose community centre will provide sufficient space to accommodate such services and programs.

Human services

While the West Belconnen population is not expected to be particularly disadvantaged or aged, over time residents may need access to a variety of individual and family support services, such as those funded by ACT Health and the Community Services Directorate.

Consultation with representatives of these directorates suggests that:

- » No specific capital facilities would be required within West Belconnen for direct service provision
- » Funding is provided to a variety of community-based and non-government organisations to deliver welfare and support services. Most of these services are provided to larger district and regional population catchments. West Belconnen would be serviced by organisations currently servicing Belconnen, including Belconnen Community Service Inc, West Belconnen Child and Family Service and Kippax UnitingCare
- » However some of the funded organisations may want to or need to provide local services from a base within West Belconnen. The proposed multi-purpose community centre will provide spaces for sessional or outreach services, and some accommodation for community services (for example family counselling sessions, parenting advice classes or youth support activities). Alternatively, full-time services may lease commercial office accommodation in the centre without the need for purpose-built premises
- » The main requirements of welfare and support services to meet the needs of the growing population in the area will be for additional recurrent funding to expand their existing services and programs, rather than for built facilities. Such funding will need to be provided through a variety of government programs. Funding for these programs will need to be increased in line with population growth in the area and departmental resource allocation processes

A community of almost 30,000 people will generate sufficient demand to support direct onsite provision of certain services to support health and wellbeing, in many cases on an outreach or sessional basis. There will also be a need for some office and administrative space for service providers. The range of services will need to respond to the particular needs and characteristics of the incoming population, but is likely to include support services for young people, older people, people with disabilities, and parents and families.

Justice and emergency services

As outlined in part one of the Community Plan, the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) has recently opened a new ambulance / fire station at Charnwood to serve the suburbs adjoining the West Belconnen site.

At this early stage in the planning process, ESA is not able to determine how it would service West Belconnen, as servicing arrangements will be influenced by likely response times, dependent upon the future road network. However, it is unlikely that ESA will require a site for a new facility within West Belconnen, especially in the short-medium term. It is probable that West Belconnen will be serviced from the new facility at Charnwood, with services expanded through additional staffing. Whilst response times to the West Belconnen Project area via the existing road network are adequate, they will be improved by the completion of the Ginninderra Drive connection which provides a direct link to the Charnwood facility.

2.3.2 Recreation facilities

This section of the Community Plan focuses on active indoor and outdoor recreation facilities (recreation centres and sports facilities). Other forms of open space (parks, trails, playgrounds, etc.) are addressed in the Landscape and Open Space plans.

District Playing Fields (DPF)

ACT Sport and Recreation is encouraging a model of provision for sports fields that focus on the provision of fewer but larger and better equipped district level sports fields that can accommodate a number of sports in a centralised and accessible location. ACT Sport and Recreation report that two of the main drivers behind this model of provision are unsustainable levels of required maintenance (with multiple, dispersed smaller fields) and issues with sports club viability and efficiency when clubs are forced to play across multiple (home) locations as smaller fields may be inadequate for the needs of the club.

While nationally accepted standards for sports field provision do not exist, ACT Sport and Recreation suggest that a nominal standard of approximately 0.6-0.7 hectares of sporting field for every 1,000 people is a reasonable starting point for assessing active open space requirements in new development areas. Applying the 0.6 figure to the West Belconnen projected population of 30,000 gives an estimated total of active open space of approximately 18 hectares.

While the figure of 18 hectares is understood, providing that amount of space in a single district playing field in West Belconnen is challenging due to a number of significant land constraints. An alternative of providing the 18 hectares in the following configuration is being explored:

- » Approximately 10 hectares as the main district playing field
- » Approximately 5 hectares as a secondary major playing field area (with either the 10 or 5 hectare area being co-located with the P-10 school)
- » Approximately 3 hectares distributed as shared school/community space among schools.

A further alternative being considered has arisen out of recent discussions with the ACT Economic Development Directorate (EDD) regarding the planning of Molonglo Stage 3. It is understood that similar land constraints in Molonglo Stage 3 may prohibit the location of an identified district playing field within that development area. Given the issues there, and at West Belconnen, EDD, ACT Sport and Recreation and Riverview, are considering the possibility of a regional level playing field (to serve both West Belconnen and Molonglo Stage 3) located in between both development areas. If that were to be the case, at least from the West Belconnen perspective, some playing field provision would likely still be provided within West Belconnen (possibly between 5-10 hectares) with the remainder provided as a contribution toward the regional sports field.

Discussions on this issue are continuing at the time of writing.

An important issue for further consideration in the later more detailed design stages is the design of sports fields to encourage multiple use during various times of the day and week. While organised sport remains popular, the most common activities for most Australians involve informal recreation and exercise including walking for pleasure and health. Sports fields require significant space allocations for uses that predominantly occur during weekends. While training and other activities do occur, there is a danger that sports fields can remain largely unused during weekday hours. Co-location with schools is one way to address this inefficiency, but also important is the design of these spaces to encourage greater informal and passive use with walking trails, landscaping, fitness equipment, playgrounds, seating, etc.

Indoor recreation

While discussions with ACT Sport and Recreation suggested that a stand-alone indoor recreation facility in West Belconnen may not be warranted, it is recommended to include a two court indoor recreation facility as part of the P-10 school that would be a shared school-community recreation facility. For this to be viable, it is recommended that this facility comprise a minimum of two multipurpose courts. School design will need to consider the location of the facility on the school site to enable community access while also recognising the security requirements of the school.

Tennis and Squash

Discussions with ACT Sport and Recreation revealed a lack of tennis and squash facilities in the West Belconnen area currently. A 6-8 court tennis facility and a 4 court squash facility are recommended with both suggested to be located within the District Playing Field.

One option to consider in relation to tennis are 'family tennis areas' an idea proposed by Tennis Australia. The 'family tennis area' model is basically smaller, modified tennis courts in parks and open spaces that encourage whole family participation. The 'family tennis areas' are part of Tennis Australia's 'tennis hot shots' program that encourages children to play tennis. Some ACT schools such as Kaleen Primary School have a 'family tennis areas' as a result of the hot spots program. As of May 2014, Tennis Australia was seeking expressions of interest for local councils and others who are interested in exploring the concept of smaller, modified tennis courts.

Aquatics

Discussions with ACT Sport and Recreation expressed some reservations about the inclusion of aquatic facilities in West Belconnen. However, as with other areas in Canberra, community demand for aquatic facilities is likely to be strong. The nearest public swimming facility is located at Bruce (Canberra International Sports and Aquatic Centre) with the Kings Swim Centre private swim school located in Macgregor. Available standards from Parks and Leisure Australia (2012) and Aquatics and Recreation Victoria (2011) suggest the provision of a 25 metre indoor pool with leisure pool to serve a population of 30,000.

2.3.3 Social infrastructure provided by non-government and private sectors

Shops and commercial services

Retail and commercial services to satisfy local everyday needs will be provided in the proposed centre. Residents will also make use of the Kippax Group Centre and district shopping facilities in Belconnen.

Children's services

A number of different forms of childcare and activities for young children are generally provided in a community, including long daycare, family daycare, pre-school, occasional care and playgroups. Additionally, services to support families with young children may be provided.

It is not appropriate at this stage of the planning process to try to anticipate need for the various types of services. Instead, leading practice encourages planning of flexible multi-purpose childcare centres, which can adapt as precise needs are identified or provide a mix of services.

The provision of childcare has changed substantially in recent years, associated with shifts in government regulation and funding policy, such that the private sector is now the provider of the majority of childcare centres in Australia. As such, the provision of childcare in most new developments is commonly now largely left to market forces, once need can be demonstrated.

However, as an indication of the potential requirement for childcare centres, the benchmark of 1 centre per 4,000 residents, adopted elsewhere within the ACT, has been applied. This suggests a need for around 7-8 childcare centres within West Belconnen (although need will depend upon the number of places included in each centre). Given that West Belconnen will eventually be home to a large proportion of families, a high level of demand for child care is anticipated and it would therefore be prudent to make allowance for at least 3-4 centres. This also recognises that each of the 3-4 primary schools will also incorporate a pre-school component.

Where feasible, child care facilities should be dispersed across the community. However, demand is unlikely to be sufficient for a centre in every neighbourhood. This will be subject to feasibility assessment by potential commercial operators.

The location of childcare centres should have regard to the following principles:

- » Childcare should be provided in central and conveniently accessible locations, and primarily in centres to reinforce the role of the hub as the focal point for the community
- » Childcare should be located adjacent to complementary land uses such as schools and community centres
- » Childcare centres should not be located in residential areas that have amenity impacts on adjoining residents (particularly in terms of traffic congestion).

Locations for childcare centres should be identified as part of the planning and design process for each neighbourhood. Locations close to other community and commercial uses are preferred, with good transport access. Facilities require a substantial open-air play area and siting and design are subject to strict licensing requirements. The early provision of high quality facilities can be facilitated through the development process and is likely to be a marketing attraction to early home buyers.

Considerations for an EOI process include:

- » The affordability of childcare services, given the likely socio-economic profile of residents
- » Opening hours to meet the needs of parents who work long distances from their homes
- » Providing a mix of long day care places and pre-school places that is consistent with the employment patterns and needs of families
- » The sustainability and viability of facilities, particularly given recent upheavals in the private childcare sector
- » The need to provide adequate spaces for 0-2 year olds, who are less “profitable” than older children because of their higher staff ratios
- » Capability to include children and families with special needs e.g. children with a physical disability.

Planning for childcare will also need to address the need for out of hours school care for primary school aged children. Such need is usually met through multi-purpose childcare centres, through before and after school programs co-located within schools or through vacation care programs in community centres and schools.

Non-government schools

As noted earlier, the closest non-government schools to the site are at St Thomas Aquinas Primary and St John the Apostle, both of which are Catholic. Brindabella Christina College has also recently opened in Charnwood. In 2014 there is one Kindergarten class, that will expand to include K to Year 1 in 2015, and eventually a 12 months to Year 12 Campus will be located on the site.

Independent schools (including Catholic Schools) currently cater for over 40% of ACT school-children, and the availability of independent schooling at West Belconnen would be a major attractor to families seeking a new home there.

Site requirements will depend on the specific needs of the proponents, but are likely to include a central location within the catchment area with good road access. As private schools cater to a wider catchment area, connectivity with the regional road network is a key consideration. Site area requirements are generally similar to public schools with around four hectares for a primary and seven to eight hectares for a P-10.

Market demand for private schools and partnership opportunities will be assessed in subsequent stages of planning and development. Considerations include:

- » Choosing providers and models that are likely to appeal to a broad cross-section of the West Belconnen population, rather than a restricted faith or non-mainstream education philosophy
- » Choosing sites that are easily accessible for the broader catchment areas that characterise private schools
- » The extent to which private providers may consider early provision of facilities
- » The extent to which providers may consider sharing of their facilities (eg library, sporting facilities, school hall) with the broader community, or with other private or public schools
- » The affordability of the services they offer in relation to the likely socio-economic profile of West Belconnen residents.

Medical services

The West Belconnen population will be large enough to support a number of general practitioners, medical specialists and a variety of allied health services such as dentists, physiotherapists and natural health practitioners, pharmacists, and imaging and pathology services.

Such services are generally accommodated in commercial suites in town / village centres, without the need for purpose-built facilities. The proposed group centre within West Belconnen will contain sufficient spaces for such uses. The West Belconnen population will also rely on health and medical services in the wider area.

The national benchmark for GP's is currently 1 (full-time equivalent) GP per 1172 residents. A population of 30,000 people will generate a need for around 25 GPs.

In this regard, models of care in general practice service provision are changing rapidly. Previous GP diffusion into growing population areas through isolated small practice cottage surgeries is not sustainable due to a number of factors including lifestyle expectations and financial imperatives. GP's are increasingly aggregating into larger multi-faceted practices offering the opportunity for increased integration in care provision with government funded health services. Demand for, and location of, GPs is largely a commercial consideration for individual providers. Doctors' surgeries are permitted uses within residential zones, so in theory no special provision needs to be made in the planning for West Belconnen.

Most specialist and allied health services address a sub-regional catchment, although it is anticipated that some private practitioners will wish to set up in West Belconnen once demand is demonstrated. As with GPs, commercial space within the town centre or in local neighbourhood centres is likely to prove attractive to physiotherapists, dentists and other allied health workers.

It is no longer prudent to expect market forces to attract the GP workforce required to service a growing population as demand emerges. There will be a need for strategies to attract and retain private sector health services, in particular medical centres and dental practices. If these are simply left to the market to come along later, it is highly likely that they will be provided inadequately. In the short term, Riverview should encourage a local medical centre to establish

within stage 1 in the interest of ensuring that an onsite GP service is available as soon as this is practical. One option for this could be a West Belconnen Health Cooperative clinic. In the longer term, the inclusion of commercial office space and professional suites within the group centre will provide suitable accommodation for medical services.

Considerations for a potential EOI process for the provision of a medical centre in West Belconnen include:

- » The number of GP's in the practice and its sustainability
- » Whether the practice bulk bills
- » The range of services offered
- » Hours of operation, arrangements for out-of hours and home visit services and back-up
- » Arrangements for diagnostic services
- » Early establishment of a medical centre
- » The location and accessibility of medical services, particularly to people who do not have private transport
- » The implications for other local GP's of any large corporations establishing medical centres in West Belconnen.

Once GP's are attracted to West Belconnen, it would be expected that allied health and associated services such as pharmacies are likely to follow. These services will require commercial premises in group and local centres, including shopfronts and professional suites, or adapted dwellings in residential neighbourhoods.

Residential Aged Care

Residential care facilities are permitted uses within community facility land use zones. Aged care facilities need to provide ready access to shops, services and public transport, and so should be located close to the group and local centres.

A further key issue for residential care facilities (and retirement housing more generally) is the high cost of land in suitable locations that provide good access to services, facilities and public transport. As a result, residential care facilities are often forced to locate on the urban fringe, with the risk that older people will be isolated from mainstream community life. It will be important that sites for residential care facilities that are suitably located are identified as planning for West Belconnen continues.

Considerations for an EOI process include:

- » Whether aged care organisations have existing bed licenses to provide residential aged care facilities
- » The levels of care and support services (both residential and community) they will provide
- » Whether organisations are from profit / not for profit charitable sectors
- » The resources providers will bring to West Belconnen and the extent of any assistance they will be seeking.

It should be noted that most of the accommodation needs of older people and people with a disability can be met through well designed and located self-care housing that allows them to live independently within the community, and that less than 10% of people in these groups will seek entry to residential care facilities providing supported accommodation. This reinforces the importance of encouraging a mix of housing types and sizes in each neighbourhood, in order to provide housing choice for older people and people with a disability.

Following on from the general principles encouraged in social infrastructure provision by this Community Plan, the location of residential aged care should consider co-location or clustering with uses where synergies, including community building activity, could be facilitated. As an example, a number of programs exist where residential aged care is located close to schools and child care and, allowing for the necessary child protection requirements being addressed, residents of the retirement village/aged care facility are able to provide volunteer support to the schools and child care centres and/or the children are able to visit the facility for a range of activities. These intergenerational activities can provide great personal and community building benefits for both children and adults. The physical master planning for West Belconnen should enable these kinds of connections.

Entertainment facilities

Higher level entertainment facilities (e.g. theatres, art galleries) are available in the district located at Belconnen and other town centres. Local facilities and services, both community-based and commercial, will also be desirable within West Belconnen, and these will need to include:

- » Art/exhibition space, attached to a library or community facility (such as Strathnairn)
- » Spaces that support local cultural activity e.g. local music, dance and drama groups, workshop space for artists (also possibly Strathnairn)
- » Cafés, restaurants, clubs and pubs
- » Spaces for multi-cultural groups to meet and hold activities
- » Opportunities for outdoor leisure and entertainment (e.g. an amphitheatre suitable for movie screenings, festivals and markets)

Leisure and entertainment facilities such as restaurants, pubs and clubs will be provided on a commercial basis by private sector operators according to market demand, with suitable land available within the mixed use and commercial areas within the centre. Key considerations for Riverview include:

- » Ways of encouraging the early provision of entertainment facilities at the outset of development, given the existing shortage in the surrounding area
- » Ensuring entertainment opportunities are affordable, particularly for young people
- » Including both indoor and outdoor entertainment opportunities.

Riverview should also be mindful that:

- » Quality public art is desirable as a means of promoting a sense of place.
- » There are likely to be opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the Aboriginal and European cultural heritage of West Belconnen through onsite features or facilities.

Places of worship

As well as providing places of worship, these facilities can provide an important base for community development, youth, volunteer and welfare support activities in new communities, and are important in building community spirit and identity. Places of worship may also provide halls and other spaces which can be utilised for community activities by the general community. Religious organisations may also be providers or partners in the provision of other community facilities and human services (particularly for young people, older people and disadvantaged groups). For these reasons, it is important that places of worship be established within West Belconnen.

The acquisition of sites for places of worship is generally left to market forces, according to their ability to purchase sites, and it is difficult to specifically identify sites in the master planning process.

Ensuring that places of worship are provided within West Belconnen will be a matter for consideration in subsequent planning and development phases.

It is recognised that that not every religious organisation needs its own facility, and that such organisations may also utilise other community facilities for their meetings, (such as community centres and schools), particularly as these are often not used by others when demand for space for religious activity is at its highest (for example on a Sunday morning for Christian denominations).

Alternatively, and consistent with the general principles of social infrastructure provision described in this Community Plan, a multipurpose, multi-faith, flexible shared use facility should also be considered as an alternative model to separated places of worship for each denomination.

The following issues should be taken into consideration in the future planning of places of worship within West Belconnen:

- » Places of worship can contribute significantly to community identity and activity. They should be located close to other types of community facilities to create synergies and help provide a focal point for the community (eg located within centres).
- » Places of worship need to be readily accessible and visible, and located so as not to impact on adjoining residential areas.
- » Given the limited utilisation of such facilities across the week, it is important that opportunities for shared or joint use be explored with other types of facilities, or multiple religious groups, in the interests of making the most efficient use of land resources. This includes shared provision of parking and meeting/activity space.
- » Design and placement of places of worship can offer significant urban design benefits in terms of providing iconic buildings, landmark features, community identity and way finding.
- » Denomination of places of worship will need to be considered once the community becomes established. The existing West Belconnen suburbs are serviced by a range of Christian churches.

2.4 Models of provision

While previously community facilities have been viewed as places for the provision of support and services for disadvantaged communities and those in need of assistance, the role of social infrastructure is increasingly expanding. While the provision of social support will continue (with a greater focus in some areas, depending on community needs), community facilities have undergone a transition to also become places of celebration, information, recreation, education, social gathering and community building.

One of the fundamental innovations in social infrastructure provision centres on understanding, and perhaps reinterpreting, its role and purpose. Despite a number of significant lifestyle changes related to technology and the nature of work, many people still identify feeling part of a community as an important priority in contemporary life.

Trends in community facilities planning are responding to an appetite from a wide range of communities, for safe social places where people can gather, meet and feel like they are part of a broader community. This includes the provision of places where people can interact and engage in both formal and informal ways including shared public spaces where you can work and interact as

part of a group or where you can be there independently but still participate (even as an observer) in the life of the community. Supporting the notion of a third place, the Libraries Building Communities Project (State Library of Victoria, 2005) found that libraries are “fast becoming the ‘village greens’, ‘neighbourhood’, or ‘community hubs’: places where people can meet, and exchange ideas and information. Many libraries now provide coffee and tea to strengthen this role. People come, spend time, interact ...”.

Community hubs

Community facility provision cannot be considered in isolation. Facilities must be viewed as being connected and integrated to each other as well as being part of a broader urban fabric that links with shops, town squares, parks, plazas and other features of centres. While it is not desirable to attempt to develop a single model for all community facilities, the community hub model provides some direction for future provision. Community hubs have been variously described as:

A space where communities gather and meet, supported by a range of compatible land uses including residential, retail, commercial (economic/employment), open space, social infrastructure, education, transport, essential services and technology uses ... They offer a way to improve services to each individual community, and deliver services in an efficient, effective and inclusive way. Community hubs enhance local character and identity, create active and vibrant centres, and assist in casual surveillance and safety (Sunshine Coast Council, 2011)

A conveniently located public place that is recognised and valued in the local community as a safe gathering place for people and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs, services and events (Parramatta City Council, 2008).

A series of conjoined building on a new central site where a wide range of community services and activities can be co-located. A place where the community can come together to have many of their needs met. It may include a neighbourhood learning centre, a senior citizens centre, a youth centre, meeting rooms, a childcare centre, a public library and much more (La Trobe City Council, 2008)

A hub is a collection of facilities clustered together on the same or adjoining sites ... Together, they create a focal point for community activity. A hub is often also a base for outreach services to other smaller facilities or surrounding communities. Community hubs can also be created by locating a number of facilities in a common locality. This arrangement would be appropriate in transit-oriented and inner-city communities, where social spaces in the public domain are limited. These hubs play an important role in helping to bring people together and creating a sense of local community identity (Queensland Government, Office of Urban Management, 2007)

Although each of these definitions has a slightly different emphasis, we can see that a community hub, in essence, is a multipurpose public gathering and activity place where a variety of activities occur and where a wide range of community needs can be met in both formal and informal ways. The key to the community hubs concept is integration. This can mean both integration of services, programs and activities within a multipurpose community space or the integration of a range of activity generating uses including community and cultural facilities, shops, transport, parks and plazas.

The essential characteristics of a community hub appear to be that they:

- » Respond to, and are shaped by, the unique circumstances, needs and assets of their community

- » Co-locate or cluster a range of community facilities and human services
- » Include a variety of uses (including residential, retail and commercial) that attract different groups of people at different times of the day for a variety of purposes and meet a wide range of community needs and support community strengths
- » Attract people and are identified as a focal point and gathering place for the community
- » Are readily accessible to ensure all members of the community can use them
- » Have a civic quality, sense of stability and level of amenity that mark them as an important place in the community
- » Include an inviting public domain that encourages people to interact in the public realm.

Community hubs respond to the key policy directions of ACT Government for community facilities as well as the vision and guiding principles for West Belconnen in that they:

- » Are based in locations that are readily accessible by public transport and where people already congregate
- » Cluster with other activity generating uses to increase convenience and enhance safety
- » Bring community services together to improve both coordination and convenience of use
- » Provide for multiple uses, serve a range of population groups and offer a diversity of services, programs, activities and events
- » Provide important gathering places for people and act as a focal point for community activity
- » Often rely on partnerships arrangements to be most effective with no one entity likely to be completely responsible for funding, service provision or operation.

An essential feature of community hubs, regardless of scale, is that they are a form of social infrastructure that is not seen in isolation but rather as an integrated, valid and contributing element of a vibrant and interesting activity centre. They can act as important people attractors and add significant value to town and commercial centres; their multipurpose nature also enables them to be targeted to address specific community needs and to adapt and evolve over time.

There are also potential benefits for service delivery of community hubs including:

- » Pooling of resources to provide better facilities
- » The concentration of compatible services and facilities to create a community focal point
- » Improved access and safety for users who can access a range of services in a single location
- » More integrated and innovative delivery of services
- » More efficient use of land and other resources, through shared, rather than separate, uses such as meeting rooms, staff amenities and parking
- » Greater viability of services and agencies through sharing of resources.

In West Belconnen there is the potential for a number of the recommended facilities to be integrated within a community hub. The larger multipurpose community centre and library are obvious choices for a hub arrangement and could potentially be combined with child care, adult education and potentially health and medical services.

3 Next steps

This stage of the planning process has focussed on the physical (land) requirements for social infrastructure to enable provision to be incorporated into the master plan and reflected in the rezoning. However, to achieve the desired community outcomes for West Belconnen an ongoing process of stakeholder engagement and partnership building is required. While provision of the physical spaces for community activities to occur is fundamental, the desired community benefits will not be achieved without a coordinated approach to service delivery and community development.

The ACT Government is currently introducing a new approach to human services provision, the Human Services Blueprint. The blueprint aims to provide a more integrated and coordinated approach to human service provision and attempts to overcome some of the traditional bureaucratic obstacles to a more streamlined and integrated approach to service provision. With the physical social infrastructure, according to this Community Plan, providing the facilities that encourage cooperation and integration, West Belconnen may provide a good test case for the ACT Government to trial the Human Services Blueprint.

A References

Aquatics and Recreation Victoria (2011), *Indoor Aquatic and Recreation Facility Development Guidelines*, State Government of Victoria

Parks and Leisure Australia (2012), *Benchmarks for Community Infrastructure*, Davis Langdon Australia



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