



West End Community Association Inc.

P.O. Box 3898
South Brisbane QLD 4101

info@weca.org.au
www.weca.org.au

ABN: 38 338 933 037

The Honourable Lord Mayor, Graham Quirk

10 April, 2016

Dear Honourable Lord Mayor Quirk,

RE: Former Absoe (111 Boundary St) and former Distance Education (403 Montague Rd) sites

Congratulations on your recent return by the voters of Brisbane to your post in City Hall on behalf of the West End Community Association (WECA). Furthermore thank you for your responses on development issues in the Wet End area. As a community we are very passionate about the sustainable development and the vibrancy of our area as a model for a truly urban neighbourhood.

I am writing on behalf of the West End Community Association (WECA) following considerable concern by the community about the governance and decision making of the mega-developments of the former Absoe and former Distance Education sites. The total population on these sites alone will double the 2011 census population. Consequently these developments require significantly more scrutiny to ensure good planning outcomes.

The Absoe Site development

We welcomed the public call in July 2015 from Cr Amanda Cooper as Chair of Planning that the rejecting the application and requiring that the site needed to master planned to provide community certainty. We were dismayed and disappointed when despite these assurances; the Council approved a code assessable Stage 1 development without the master plan in place. This undermines planning outcomes for this critical site for Brisbane and also undermines confidence in the planning process that your Council delivers.

Additionally the decision to approve the Stage 1 was made during the caretaker period of Council, less than one week before the election. This contravenes convention to not make significant decisions. As this is the largest inner city single development any decision is significant. During the past weeks of the caretaker period we had no Councillor. This cuts out the voice of the elected representative for the people and undermines democratic process on this critical development.

Council has enabled and approved the current situation by allowing parallel applications for the project of a piecemeal Stage 1 development application and the Preliminary application. Council also enabled the timing of this decision to coincide with the election. Council did not exercise the right it has to delay a development decision to be after the caretaker period. It is very disappointing that the only response that has been given from you about the decision was that Council has to work within the timeframes set out. This is completely misleading and inadequate.

We are writing to request that all documentation about meetings with the proponent be made public to make transparent the requirement for master planning that was stated publicly and how this has not been upheld. Specifically we request:

1. The documentation that details the decision that allowed for the proponent to make parallel submissions despite the public assurance to master plan the site
2. The documentation that details the agreement about the timing of development application submissions for these parallel applications.
3. The documentation that details the decision to allow the Stage 1 development to be approved without a master plan in place.

All planning needs to meet with community expectations and this project clearly does not. There has been a consistent history of widespread community action across south east Queensland expressing deep concern at council planning processes in general, as well as to this site specifically.

We bring to your attention to a Change.org petition requesting to “call in” the Absoe site Stage 1 development. As of Sunday afternoon, almost 1,500 people had signed this petition.

We set out our request to you to recognise the project as a significant site and that your Council uphold its own undertaking to ensure that it be master planned before any piece of it is considered. **We ask that you put on hold any approval of the project until it is considered as a whole impact assessable.**

Historically we know that piecemeal applications of significant sites requiring an overall plan This has already been allowed to occur at City South Square at Woolloongabba and the Anthony John project in Buranda. We trust that this approach is not also enabled at the Absoe site.

We ask for your assurance that the response to the impact assessable development of the overall project plan is given before any stage is approved.

Former Distance Education site

As the Council is in caretaker mode and without a sworn in Councillor for the majority of the submission period for the former Distance Education site (DA A004255285) we ask that the submission period be extended.

We ask for the equivalent submission period for this DA starting as of the 12th of April when our new Councillor is sworn in.

We look forward to your response on this matter.

Sincerely,



Dr Erin Evans, President,
West End Community Association
Cc BCC CEO Colin Jensen,
Councillor Jonathan Sri and
South Brisbane MP and Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Jackie Trad