

A number of factors were at play which are worthy of close scrutiny. Despite crowds beyond the capacity of the council chamber meetings openly opposing the land swap and thousands signing a petition to this effect, the deal appears to have proceeded amid massive public protest due to an ALP dominated council, which chose to ignore the stated wishes of a vast number of constituents and ratepayers in an undemocratic decision.

Profit at the expense of the community; The land was handed over to State Government by the ALP majority Council despite the contentious matter of the land being independently valued at \$35M in exchange for a contaminated site valued by the Government at a mere \$17M (which appears not to include site remediation costs). There was no independent valuation made. Later the Ombudsman found that 7,250sq m would be lost to roads. It is surprising indeed that a barren site (ripe for housing development) would be swapped for a beautiful Park and oval which then needs to be destroyed to make way for intense high-rise residential development. One wonders why the other site was not even considered for this purpose, since both are claimed to be 4.7ha. The Charles Sturt community would appear to have lost an asset.

It is noteworthy that Crs. T. Wasylenko, A. Keneally, E. Agius, J. Fitzpatrick and T. Scheffler voted in favour of the land swap, as did Anna Rau (former wife of Attorney-General and Planning Minister John Rau). No wonder the Ombudsman was called! It is within this somewhat seamy setting that the matter moves to the Ministerial DPA of Planning Minister Mr. John Rau for consideration of the St. Clair Reserve (Park and Oval) to be razed for conversion of the site to a potential Woodville Station TOD, the subject of this (Woodville Station) DPA.

Destruction Of Character, Flora And Fauna

Page 3 Reference 2.2.1 Consistency with Planning Strategy – 30 Year Plan

“The main aim of the plan is to outline how the South Australian Government proposes to balance population and economic growth with the need to preserve the environment and protect the heritage, history and character of Greater Adelaide”.

How is this in any way achieved by taking away a public, well loved St. Clair Reserve and destroying it for high-rise housing and giving the people a barren, contaminated site ‘in exchange’? How does this preserve the ‘heritage, history and character’ of Adelaide. It makes no sense to trash a beautiful site when there is no attempt to create anything remotely similar. Not only the community, but the wildlife, must also bear the brunt of tree loss and loss of amenity. Professor Chris Daniels warns that Adelaide is fast heading towards a “biodiversity DEAD ZONE” – and this appears to advance that probability without any justification.

Detrimental To The Health And Well Being Of The Environment And The Residents.

Page 16 2.3.5 ‘Towards One Planet Living: Greening the Western suburbs’ and on Page 17 ‘Healthy by Design: Guide to Environments for Active Living’ - This DPA does precisely the opposite. It destroys a well utilized and loved St. Clair Reserve and plans to replace it with intensive high-rise housing and a railway station. There is no healthy walking involved to the transport mode; residents will forego the beauty and amenity of parkland and oval surrounds for the convenience of living alongside a railway line (which may at some far future time be electric powered).

Yet it states in this section, by way of explanation “provide an opportunity to establish higher density residential development near the Woodville Railway Station which is likely to reduce reliance on motor vehicles and, in turn, reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Surely the trees intended to be destroyed are currently absorbing traffic pollution from roads in the area and are passively delivering other environmental services, such as storing carbon (which will be released into the atmosphere when they are cut down). Refer to Figure 12 of Page 36 which indicates a number of significant and regulated trees to be destroyed for this ‘plan’.

On Page 20 – South Australia’s Planning Policy Library – it is noted that ‘the State Government is improving South Australian planning and development assessment system by engaging and assisting in the conversion of development plans using the South Australian Planning Policy Library (SAPPL). The Charles Sturt Council DP was converted to the SAPPL in August, 2009 following gazettal of its ‘ Better Development Plan and General Development Plan Amendment’ . While it is readily understood that using a template for the ‘Better Development Plan’ may make things a little easier for planners and developers – it is creating anomalies in many Council plans due to the template simply not being a ‘one size fits all’ matter. Some councils which are inland have such anomalies as coastal dunes and ‘sapphire flats’, while it is clear that central Adelaide Hills councils do not have “perched swamps or Ramsar Wetlands”. So it would appear that the convenience of using a ‘Better Planning’ template to fast track development creates other anomalies.

Loss Of Priceless Open Space, Impossible To Replace.

Page 34 Item 405 Open Space – it is stated “In the event that the eventual St. Clair Avenue alignment requires land from the St. Clair Reserve space, an equivalent amount of open space will be provided on the Renewal SA (formerly Land Management Corporation) owned portion of the area affected by the DPA.”

So the land grab continues with the final deal not even being limited to 4.7ha, but intentionally open-ended to allow for further changes as the development evolves.

How is this in any way fair to the residents and ratepayers of Charles Sturt? What sort of a deal is this? The goal posts keep on changing and this DPA promotes such change.

The areas affected are St. Clair Reserve and oval, The St Clair Recreation Centre, Brocas House State Heritage place and the Woodville High School complex.

Renewal SA acquired 4.7ha portion of the former Sheridan site to be developed as a reserve then ‘swapped’ this new reserve for the 4.7ha portion of council owned St. Clair Reserve with the intention of developing the site for a TOD. This aligns with the 30 Year Plan identifying Woodville as one of 14 TODS proposed for the metro area.

It would appear that achieving a certain number of TODS was a much higher priority than carefully considering what might be lost or in fact, considering the merits of the polluted site for this purpose, leaving St. Clair Reserve intact for the people.

Woodville Road And Precinct “Vibrancy” And “Revitalisation” Mythology and Loss of Heritage.

The Open Space Management Plan also states that the area will be “a vibrant, inner metropolitan neighbourhood”.

Page 37 4.6.1 Under 4.6 Heritage it is stated
“Woodville Railway Station – Down Platform Shelter, Up Platform Shelter with weatherboard ticket office, single storey brick building”

Then follows this statement: “This listing was reviewed in 2010, in a Heritage Value Assessment prepared by McDougal and Vines. The Heritage Value Assessment concluded that.....

‘ It is not essential to retain the existing structures of the Woodville Railway Station in order to retain its heritage value. The value of the place resides in its function as a railway station and its location on the Adelaide to Port Adelaide line”

It is not stated whether the Station is listed as merely ‘contributory heritage’ so appears to be ‘Heritage listed’. If this is so then the above loose interpretation of “heritage’ and what constitutes ‘heritage’ may see unfortunate and irreplaceable loss due to setting of such a precedent. What is to prevent this precedent being transposed to any further item (tree, building, horse trough or memorial) if accepted in this context? If the old Railway Station is worthy only of demolition (on merit) then different wording is required to avoid such an awkward precedent and its consequences.

CONCLUSION

Apart from all the anomalies and irregular decisions regarding St. Clair Reserve over the past four years, it would appear that the much referred to “land swap” was not a fair swap at all (being defined as exchanging one thing for another). If there was not to be a ‘kind for kind’ or ‘like for like’ exchange, surely the amount of value at variance should have received some consideration. The ratepayers of Charles Sturt are out of pocket by some \$18M – apart from the loss of the currently enjoyed amenity, beauty and recreational use of well loved grounds. St. Clair Reserve conveys a “sense of place” simply not achievable by substituting a barren stretch of contaminated ground (former Actil factory site). This is the sort of thing we have come to expect of planning in China or other less democratic nations, not in Australia.

It is noted that the contaminated soil area of the ‘swap’ site is to be covered with half a metre of certified clean fill, or concrete paving/building slab. This then begs the question why was the so-called swap done in the first place? Why wasn’t this site used for the high priority TOD? Surely it would have been much cheaper and fairer to merely move the railway line, since it is clear that it is intended to demolish the existing ‘heritage listed’ Woodville Railway Station anyway.

When the Development Policy Advisory Committee has considered all the comments and heard all the public submissions, it will provide the Minister of Planning with a report of its findings. The Minister for Planning will then either approve (with or without changes) or refuse the DPA.

If the DPAC is to be seen to be a truly independent body responsible for conducting the consultation stage of the MDPA and if, as stated, changes may occur as a result of this consultation process – then clearly the only wise and sensible recommendation based on all the known facts and the weight of evidence from the people of Charles Sturt is for the DPA to be refused.

The question which might define democracy in South Australia is 'Will a Minister refuse his own DPA in the light of overwhelming evidence to do so?' If not, where is democracy?

Community Alliance SA Inc. (on behalf of all member groups) strongly requests that the Woodville Station (St. Clair) Ministerial DPA be **refused**, and wishes to be heard at the public meeting scheduled for Tuesday 5th March.

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P.S. While few were surprised, it was nonetheless disappointing that members found it much easier to locate this matter via Google than via the Government planning website, where the DPA is open to public consultation until 14th February, 2013.

About the Community Alliance SA

Community Alliance SA is calling for reform based on a genuine partnership between communities, government and the development sector.

We are a community group representing around 30 residents' associations dedicated to 'Putting the People back into Planning and Development'. We are fighting for a development process that guarantees genuine community engagement.

Our goal is the establishment of a planning and development system that engages all parties in an open, transparent and accountable process from the initial design concept through to implementation. This process should create well conceived, regulated, sustainable, planned, designed and implemented developments.