Summary of Draft Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan *– Kim Fischer*

# General goals

* Increase urban intensification in the Town Centre, supported by quality public transport and active transport options for walking and cycling (p9)
* The landscape should remain the dominant visual factor (p39)

# Consultation process

* 84 submissions were received from the community, and hundreds of individual comments (p17)

# Facts and figures

* Suburb of Belconnen is projected to grow 40% by 2031 to 8450 people (p19, p20)
* Belconnen town centre employed 13 550 people in 2014 (p13)
* Department of Immigration represents 25% of total employment in the Town Centre (p20)
* 67% of Belconnen town centre workers live in the Belconnen District (p19)
* The developing high density residential district between Chandler St and Eastern Valley Way may accommodate up to an additional 3300 residents – more than the current population of Aranda (p13)
* 50% of residents in Belconnen are 20-34 year olds, compared to 25% of this age bracket for the rest of the ACT (p19)
* 12% of apartments in town centre contain children (p20), and 11% containing residents over 65 (p20)

# Belconnen building design

* Belconnen Town Centre was always intended to have a variety of building heights and forms (p39)
* Maximum height level should be set to 27 storeys (p64)
* 3m setback for the middle of 7-12 storey buildings (p64)
* 6m setback for the middle of 12+ storey buildings (p64)
* Belconnen Precinct Code should be reviewed to clarify pedestrian shelter, active frontages, and relationship of building designs to surrounding buildings (p13, p44)

# Relationship to University of Canberra

* Integration of planning for the town centre with the university will ensure effective services, transport and amenities that make the area a competitive and attractive location for investment (p32)
* Much as the redevelopment of Childers St area has successfully integrated the ANU with the city centre, Belconnen should become a ‘university town’ (p21)
* Steps to achieve this include:
  + Creating a formal entry point and signage between UC and the Town Centre (p77)
  + Determining the feasibility of extending Emu Bank to Telita St, and Cameron Ave through to Bimbimbie St (p77)
  + Provide clear pedestrian and cycle paths and connections along Emu Bank and College St, linking UC, Calvary, CIT, AIS, Radford College and Lake Ginninderra College to the Community Bus Station, Westfield Belconnen and Page (p28, p29, p79, p81)
  + Encouraging UC to move its ‘business and enterprise’ precinct to the west side of campus (p77)

# “Brand Belconnen”

* Belconnen requires ‘brand recognition’ and clear destinations if it is to compete with Manuka, Bunda St or Kingston in attracting people to its restaurants, bars and locations People are going to instead of staying in Belconnen because there is no clear destination or ‘brand’ (p26, p51)
* Restaurant patrons have little incentive to stay on in the centre after a meal with no obvious activity or venue (p26)

## Destination 1: Lathlain St

* Become the ‘Main St’ for Belconnen (p71)
* Redevelop Lathlain St sites fronting onto Walder Street and Purdue Street for upper level residential development up to 18 storeys, with a new park created behind these new buildings (p71, p72)
* Relocate the Belconnen Library and Belconnen Community Service to Lathlain St (p55)
* Explore the relocation of the CIT Bruce campus to Lathlain St (p23, p54, p55)
* Increase verge width of Lathlain St to 6m (p75)
* Provide a clear cycle path linking Florey to Jamison shops through Lathlain St, including Westfield Belconnen, the bus station, and Markets (p51)
* Improve connections between Josephson St and Lathlain St to enable future development of the bus depot (p71)

## Destination 2: Emu Bank

* Complete and improve the shared path on the lakeside of the arts centre (p54, p71, p77)
* The newly created land area next to the Arts Centre could potentially be sold as a residential development to fund stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre (p71)
* Enhance the lighting of main pedestrian areas from the Arts Centre to John Knight Park, particularly along the shared lakeside path, to provide a greater level of safety and amenity (p77)
* Reduce the visual dominance of surface car parking (p71)
* Provide greater incentives to redevelop Emu Bank shops and restaurants (Block 65) by adjusting parking requirements (encouraging additional basement parking) (p77)
* Enable up to four storey buildings on Emu Bank as long as a 10m building setback and 3m wide pedestrian easement is retained (p71)
* Explore the option of redeveloping Padthaway Gardens as a combined car park and residential development (p71)
* Potential redevelopment ofthe former water police site as a mixed-used precinct (p54)
* Investigate construction of a pontoon stage and seating to form an amphitheatre adjacent to the Belconnen Arts Centre (p54)

## Destination 3: Service trades area

* Encourage a united approach to promoting the area (p78)
* Remove zoning allowing residential development (p78)
* Encourage live music venue (p78)
* Improve toilets, bike racks, street trees and asphalt paving (p26, p78)
* Improve short-term parking options and/or better parking enforcement (p26)
* Encourage local businesses instead of large franchises (p26)
* More practical regulations around signage and outdoor furniture (p26)
* Provide awnings in redeveloped sites 3m wide and 3-4m high (p78)
* Decide on the best use of the Oatley Court, Weedon Close and Purdue St “court” areas which were originally intended as open space but are now operating as car parks (p36)

# Transport

## Active transport options

* Walking and cycling should be made the easiest travel options (p9)
* Current issues include:
  + Unsafe footpaths, including underpasses without lighting and secluded areas without passive surveillance (p28, p29)
  + Unclear markings of footpaths, connections and quickest routes (p28, p29)
  + On-road cycle lanes that terminate without an off-road alternative (p28, p29)
  + Lack of secure bicycle parking (p28, p29)
  + Shared paths that are too narrow such as the Ginninderra Drive bridge shared path (p28, p29)
  + Lack of cycle connections within town centre (p28, p29)
  + Narrow/obstructed paths in town centre (p28, p29)
* Link existing cycle lanes at the lake along Eastern Valley Way and Benjamin Way (p79)
* Convert the Benjamin Way median strip into a two-way cycle path along its full length, linking Macquarie to the lake through the existing avenue of trees (p51)
* Convert the former busway near Joynton Smith Drive into a cycle path (p61)
* Improve signs for the portion of the Canberra Centenary Trail that goes through the town centre (p79)
* Build separated cycle lanes along Belconnen Way from Kingsford Smith Drive to Coulter Drive (p28, p79)
* Investigate a ‘cycle hub’ including storage and change facilities (p81)
* Provide missing footpaths where dirt tracks have formed, in particular beside Coulter Drive (p81)
* Expand the 40 km/h zone in the town centre, including all roads surrounding Westfield and through the Emu Bank precinct (p83)

## Car parking

* Parking suffers from three key shortcomings:
  + Westfield parking is at capacity at peak times on Saturdays
  + An undersupply of all-day parking is encouraging commuters to use short-stay spaces
  + Ensuring sufficient spaces for the Emu Bank precinct (p32, p49)
* Multi-story carparks (“podiums”) are now the preferred method of providing carparks
  + Suitable locations for additional commercial, multi-storey carparks need to be identified and reserved (p81)
  + They should have defined entrances and provide attractive and active frontages for main pedestrian areas (p64)
  + They should be well-designed and provide surveillance to main pedestrian routes (p44)
  + Car park height limited to 6 storeys and wrapped with residential/commercial users where fronting on to main pedestrian areas (p65)
  + Main car and service access points should be on secondary streets (p65)
* Encourage commercially operated car sharing / car hire in Belconnen Town Centre (p83)
* Other issues to look at include:
  + Office developments in Belconnen are only required to provide one car park per 100 m2gross floor area (GFA), compared to two spaces elsewhere in Canberra (p32)
  + The public are unable to utilise unused apartment dwelling car parking spaces (p32)

# Parks and environment

* Margaret Timpson Park is currently the only significant space in the town centre away from Lake Ginninderra. It could be an ideal place for children’s play areas, possibly incorporating water play, attracting users from outside the area. The redevelopment could also include barbeque facilities, public toilets, and a legal graffiti wall (p49, p67, p68)
* A new park may be created as part of creating the Lathlain St destination and residential developments (p72)
* Other remaining open space areas have little amenity and are to be sold as Service Zones in the future (p36)
* John Knight Park would benefit from additional parking (p65)
* There is a growing demand for access to Lake Ginninderra from groups including the sea scouts and girl guides (p36)
* Potential to establish a community garden, possibly on the western side of the lake (p38)
* Potential need to replace the current gross pollutant trap on Eastern Valley way (which is difficult and expensive to clean) with a new facility further upstream potentially providing significant operational savings (p38)

# Public amenity and environmental design

* Characteristics of strong public domain areas are:
  + Memorable with opportunities for surprise and delight
  + Streets enclosed with buildings and trees at a comfortable scale
  + Places to gather and socialise
  + Active shopfronts that are busy and attractive
  + Consistent and connected awnings and colonnades
  + Wider footpaths on key areas and streets
  + Safe spaces with good lighting, surveillance and no entrapment spaces
  + Views are reinforced with way-finding features including signage and public art
  + Interesting lighting
  + “Wrapping” multi-storey carparks with offices or residential dwellings
  + Footpaths and open spaces overlooked by building users
  + Spaces for concerts, markets, and community barbeques
  + No unused or left over areas (p52)
* Paving and street furniture in the town centre is uncoordinated and developments aren’t required to follow any particular standards. The Canberra Central Design manual could potentially be adopted or adapted to the needs of the Belconnen Town Centre (p39)
* Belconnen should be cool and attractive during hot periods, using techniques including:
  + planting more large canopied shade trees and vegetation
  + better solar passive design such as using light coloured pavements and building materials
  + increasing pathway and parkland shade including awnings
  + installing seats and drinking fountains (p36, p46, p51)
* Improved perceptions of safety through better lighting, improved activity levels, and improved passive surveillance (p44, p45)

# Culture, sport and heritage

* The second stage of the Belconnen Arts Centre will provide a theatre and dance studio, a substantial addition to the cultural life of Belconnen (p23)
* There are no plans for additional sports facilities in the town centre at this stage (p25)
* The Town Centre Library and Margaret Timpson Park “Tumbling Cubes” are likely to be heritage listed, along with the already-listed John Knight Memorial Park (p18)
* Public art installed in Belconnen includes:
  + *Tumbling Cubes* by Bert Flugelman (1979)
  + *Optical Galaxy* by Gerald Gladstone
  + *About face* by Wellspring (2001)
  + *Running Lights* by Thylacine Art Projects (2006)
  + *Ark in the Ark and Beyond* by Wataru Hamasaka (2009)
  + *Dancers on a Lakefront* by Konstantin Dimopoulos (2010)
  + *The Ability to Imagine* by Peter Tilley (2010)
  + *Winds of Light* by Peter Blizzard (2011)
  + *Owl* by Bruce Armstrong (2011) (p39)