

Woodlea and Land Use Change

Fieldwork Investigation: Sustainability in a Master planned Suburb

Research Question:

Is the land use change within the Woodlea housing development at Aintree sustainable?

Hypothesis:

The impacts of the land use changes at Woodlea meet the promises outlined in the developer's masterplan.

Note: This information was provided by [Matt Darvell, Senior Development Manager at Woodlea](#), who spoke to students during their fieldwork visit.

1. From Defence Land to Modern Community

- **Land Use Change:**
Woodlea is built on land that was originally owned by the Australian Defence Force (ADF). It was used for military training and consisted mostly of grassland and bushland, with no public access or housing. In the early 2000s, the land was decommissioned and rezoned for urban growth.
- **Current Use:**
The area is now home to over 16,000 residents and includes schools, parks, shops, medical services and housing.
- **Sustainability Link:**
Re-using already cleared or under-utilised land limits urban sprawl. This supports efficient land use and liveable urban design.
- **Hypothesis Link:**
This change meets key sustainability goals outlined in the masterplan.

2. Ring Road Land Allocation – Future-Proofing Infrastructure

- **Land Use Change:**
Land once used for rural or reserved purposes is now allocated for a future outer ring road.
- **Current Use:**
Planning has begun for a major arterial road to improve traffic flow and access to other growth areas.
- **Sustainability Link:**
Improved Road infrastructure reduces future congestion and promotes efficient regional connectivity.
- **Hypothesis Link:**
Matches the masterplan's vision for long-term growth and accessibility.

3. Growling Grass Frog Conservation – Nature in the Suburbs

- **Land Use Change:**
Native wetland areas previously occupied by threatened species such as the Growling Grass Frog have been conserved or rehabilitated.
- **Current Use:**
Developer-created artificial wetlands and habitat corridors support frog breeding and biodiversity. These areas are also part of community parks and stormwater systems.
- **Sustainability Link:**
This demonstrates a balance between development and environmental protection, contributing to environmental sustainability.
- **Hypothesis Link:**
The development delivers on the masterplan's promise to protect and integrate local ecosystems.

4. Public Transport – Bus Route 444 and Advocacy for More Access

- **Land Use Change:**
Before development, there were no bus or train links to the area.
- **Current Use:**
Bus Route 444 was introduced, but many areas in northern Woodlea are still not serviced. The developer is actively lobbying the state government for an extended bus network and a future train station at Mount Atkinson or nearby.
- **Sustainability Link:**
Reliable public transport reduces car use and makes the suburb more accessible. At present, this remains an area for improvement.
- **Hypothesis Link:**
This aspect of the masterplan is only partially achieved.

5. Population Growth and Liveable Density

- **Land Use Change:**
The area has grown from being uninhabited to supporting a rapidly increasing population with purpose-built infrastructure.
- **Current Use:**
The suburb includes medium-density housing, integrated services such as schools, childcare, and shopping facilities, all located to support walkability.
- **Sustainability Link:**
This supports both social and economic sustainability by providing what people need close to where they live.
- **Hypothesis Link:**
Strong evidence that the developer is meeting the masterplan's goals for liveability and balanced growth.

6. Community Engagement – Facebook and Digital Involvement

- **Land Use Change:**
Previously, there was no community engagement, as the land had no residents.
- **Current Use:**
Two large Facebook groups now act as key communication platforms for local news, events, discussions and advocacy. These digital tools help to build identity and cohesion among residents.
- **Sustainability Link:**
Strong digital communication supports social cohesion and a sense of place, contributing to social sustainability.
- **Hypothesis Link:**
Supports the developer's promise of an engaged and connected community.

7. Local Leadership – Claire Mouser's Role

- **Land Use Change:**
As the suburb has grown, local leadership has emerged to support community development and advocacy.
- **Current Use:**
Claire Mouser was recognised as Melton Member of the Year for her work supporting residents and advocating for services.
- **Sustainability Link:**
Strong local leadership ensures the suburb grows in ways that meet community needs, contributing to good governance and long-term sustainability.
- **Hypothesis Link:**
The masterplan's commitment to fostering a strong, active community is being upheld.