



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment
and Planning

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into DPA-B – Forrest Section 19 Blocks 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12

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Submission to
The Standing Committee on Environment and Planning
ACT Government
Rezoning for Section 19 Forrest, Blocks 5,6,9,11,12

I am a resident of Forrest who has become increasingly concerned that the push to increase dwelling density within the Inner South is impacting some of the important, recognized values of this area. Forrest contains a large number of Canberra's heritage buildings and precincts because of its important role in the early development of the city and its central position. These special features of Forrest constitute an important value for not just Forrest but for all of Canberra.

I am writing to provide comments on the proposed rezoning of Section 19, Blocks 5,6,9,11,12 Forrest from CZ6 to CZ5. Amongst other things, the proposal as put forward for public comment will restrict building heights to 7 storeys (cf 10 storeys under CZ5 zoning) and will require landscaping along the Dominion Circuit frontage in consideration of the residential area on Dominion Circuit.

My principal concern is with the potential height and bulk of such a development along the Dominion Circuit frontage in such close proximity to 1 and 2 storey residences across the street and adjacent to the Forrest Tennis Club. I understand that the specific impact of a development cannot be assessed until a DA is lodged, but the potential impact of a 7-storey development is so clear at this stage that it warrants caveats on the rezoning beyond the 7 storey limitation and the landscaping that the Planning Authority has already proposed.

The proposed rezoning clearly contravenes some of the objectives of the Territory Plan. The Inner South District Strategy identifies Sustainable Neighbourhoods as one of its 5 Big Drivers. To be sustainable, such neighbourhoods would require "New residential development ... of a height and density appropriate to neighbourhood characteristics and amenities". The Inner South District Strategy describes the area's characteristics as being "leafy suburbs, beautiful streetscapes and a mix of old and new buildings", "heritage heart of natural and cultural history", and having "a sense of community". The area surrounding the proposed rezoning, including the residential areas opposite on Dominion Circuit, illustrate this character well. However, a 7-storey development (approx 21m plus rooftop equipment) fronting Dominion Circuit flies in the face of this objective. The Inner South District Strategy (p43) explicitly recognizes the impacts of large developments on this site when it says that developments should "Consider noise and overlooking impacts of the adjoining tennis courts and church". The same

considerations should be shown to residential areas opposite the proposed rezoning area, but this is clearly being ignored in the rezoning proposal.

A 7-storey development immediately opposite low rise residential housing would also compromise the Outcomes to be achieved in the Planning Technical Specifications (Commercial Zones) 2024. Assessment Outcome 14 requires that the “Height, Bulk and scale of the development is appropriate, noting the desired zone policy outcomes and the streetscape. This includes consideration of building envelope and setbacks”. Outcome 10 requires that any “development achieves reasonable solar access and microclimate conditions to public areas and streets to support their use by the community”, while Outcome 15 seeks “Reasonable solar access to dwellings and private open space within a block and on adjoining residential blocks”. Clearly these outcomes are unlikely to be achieved in the surrounding low rise blocks, especially the residential housing on the south side of Dominion Circuit if a large 21⁺m development was permitted along the length of the north side.

The Urban Design Guidelines provide guidance for addressing these concerns. They say, under Scale and Massing Transitions (p80), that “building edges should be consistent with the appropriate urban scale, establishing a human-scale experience at street level”. Fig 38 (p80) of these Guidelines shows how this can be achieved by “stepping down” the height of a multi-storey development so that it is of comparable scale and bulk to nearby housing. This suggestion is directly applicable to the proposed rezoning to CZ5 directly opposite a RZ2 zone – two areas of completely different character and scale.

The proposed limit on building height at 7 storeys is too high. It is significantly higher than other commercial buildings in the area. Thus, the commercial buildings across Franklin St from the rezoned area and fronting Canberra Avenue are 4 storeys high. The Commercial buildings along National Circuit between Canberra Avenue and Sydney Avenue are 4-5 storeys high; the Rydges Hotel on Canberra Avenue is 4 storeys high. None are close to 7 storeys. For some inexplicable reason, the proposed rezoned site on Section 19 is intimately connected to a major residential area and yet its height limitation is proposed to be set significantly higher than the height of the adjacent fully commercial zone.

The Planning Authority has already placed caveats on the rezoning such as the 7-storey restriction. I suggest that the overall height permitted should be limited to 4 storeys for Block 9 (the block closest to the existing commercial area, Section 18, between Franklin St and Canberra Avenue) to provide a consistent profile with the adjacent commercial area. Blocks 5,6,11,12 should be rezoned to a medium density residential zoning. The Authority should add a further caveat to the rezoning that any development be “stepped down” along the frontage of Dominion Circuit to 2 storeys at street frontage.

This decision should not be delayed until a DA is submitted in order to give clear guidance to developers prior to submitting a DA. Unlike the present proposal, such a decision would be consistent with the Territory Plan and would achieve the Outcomes for this area of the Inner South.

Richard Davis