

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

***GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE
FORREST/RED HILL/DEAKIN/GRIFFITH HISTORIC AREAS***

**REPORT NO.27 OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING,
DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

MAY 1994

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

On 27 March 1992 (at the commencement of the Second Assembly) the Legislative Assembly established a Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Infrastructure to inquire into and report on matters referred to it by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the Committee to be of concern to the community relating to planning, land management, transport, economic development, commercial development, industrial and residential development, infrastructure and capital works, science and technology.

On 19 April 1994 the Assembly authorised the Committee to send its report on residential guidelines for the Forrest/Red Hill/Deakin/Griffith historic areas to the Speaker or, in the absence of the Speaker, to the Deputy Speaker, who is authorised to give directions for its printing and circulation, if the Assembly is not sitting when the Committee completes its report .

Committee Membership

Mr Wayne Berry (Chairman)
Mr Tony De Domenico (Deputy Chairman)
Mr Greg Cornwell
Ms Annette Ellis
Ms Helen Szuty

Secretary: Mr Rod Power

*GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FORREST/RED
HILL/DEAKIN/GRIFFITH HISTORIC AREAS*

BACKGROUND

1. This is a report of the Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Infrastructure on the draft guidelines for residential development in the Forrest/Red Hill/Deakin/Griffith historic areas. The report is directed to the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning - and will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly for information.
2. The draft guidelines were prepared by the ACT Planning Authority. They are intended to advise the public and lessees of the parameters to be used by the Planning Authority when considering and determining Design and Siting applications for development in the historic areas.
3. The draft guidelines reflect the Authority's view that these historic areas of south Canberra possess a distinctive environmental quality which should be protected by specific guidelines - to apply *in addition to* the Residential Design and Siting codes contained in the Territory Plan.
4. The Planning Authority released the draft guidelines for public comment in September 1993. The Authority received 44 submissions on the draft guidelines and reviewed them in light of the comments received. The amended guidelines were then referred to the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning, along with a summary of the comments received.
5. In a letter dated 31 January 1994, the Minister invited the Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Infrastructure to examine the revised guidelines. The Minister's letter noted:

The Guidelines are not part of the Territory Plan and have not been prepared under the provisions of the Land Act. However, the ACT Planning Authority has followed the process agreed to by the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee of the Legislative Assembly. This process involves public consultation, the review of the draft Guidelines in the light of issues raised, referral to the Minister and the PDI Committee and tabling in the Legislative Assembly for information.

6. The Committee is most appreciative of the Minister's action in referring the draft guidelines to the Committee.

7. At its meeting on 17 December 1993 the Committee resolved to call for public comment on the historic area guidelines as well as the guidelines for Area B1: North Canberra and the guidelines for Area B2: Kingston/Griffith. To take account of the Christmas/New Year holiday period, the Committee delayed placing advertisements calling for submissions until the end of January 1994.

8. In response to its call for public comment the Committee received 27 submissions on the three sets of guidelines for residential development. The submissions are listed below:

SUB NO.	AUTHOR	SUBJECT
1	Mr Morison	B1
2	Mr Daley	Historic areas
3	Mr Kershaw	B1 and B2
4	Messrs C & M Scott (Scott Brothers P/L)	Historic areas--
5	Dr Dickins (Turner Residents Association)	B1
6	Mr G E Shaw (G E Shaw & Associates P/L)	B1
7	T J & G Wright	B2
8	Mr Hunt (for a number of Red Hill residents)	Historic areas
9	Mr Evans (North Canberra Community Council)	B1
10	Mr King (Housing Industry Assoc.Ltd (ACT))	B1 and B2
11	Mr Maiuto (Ozta! Architectural P/L)	B1
12	Mr McCusker	B2
13	Mr Dorrough (Dorrough Britz & Assoc P/L)	B1, B2 and historic areas
14	Assoc Prof Taylor (Pres, National Trust, ACT)	Historic areas
15	A Mortlock	B2
16	T Emberson	B2
17	Mr Greig	B2
18	Mr Hall	B1
19	Mr Bryant (Master Builders Association)	B1, B2 and historic areas
20	Mr Martin (Heritage Council)	B1, B2 and historic areas
21	Ms Pegrum (Royal A'n Inst of Architects, ACT)- Mr Smith (Royal A'n Planning Inst, ACT)- Ms Cohen (A'n Inst of Landscape Architects, ACT)- Assoc Prof Taylor (National Trust of Aust, ACT)	B1, B2 and historic areas
22	Old Red Hill Preservation Group	Historic areas
23	Assoc Prof Taylor (Pres, National Trust, ACT)	B2
24	Mr Dowling (Bryan R Dowling & Assoc P/L)	B1 and historic areas
25	Mr King (Housing Industry Assoc)	B1, B2 and historic areas
26	Mr Evans (Nth Canb Community Council)	B1
27	Mr Kershaw (revised submission)	B1 and B2

9. The Committee held public hearings on the three sets of guidelines on Friday 4 March 1994 when the following persons appeared before the Committee:

- Mr Dowling (Bryan R Dowling & Associates P/L: architects and planners)

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- Mr Bell (Ron Bell and Associates)
- Mr Kershaw
- Mr Shaw (G E Shaw & Associates)
- Mr Martin (Heritage Council)
- Dr Dickins (Turner Residents Association)
- Mr Morison
- Messrs Moss (Institute of Architects), Smith (Royal Australian Planning Institute), Dorrough (Institute of Landscape Architects), Setchell and Dunbar (National Trust)
- Mr Hall (Architect)
- Mr Hunt (for a group of Red Hill residents) and Mr Gillespie-Jones (local resident)
- Mr King (Housing Industry Association)
- Mr Maiuto (Architect)
- Mr Digweed, Mrs Howarth, Messrs Harvey, Allen, Laurie, and Howarth (Old Red Hill Preservation Group)
- Mr Purdon (Master Builders Association).

10. The Committee considered the guidelines in private sessions on 11 March, 18 March, 8 April, 22 April and 29 April 1994. As well, Members of the Committee inspected the area.

11. The Committee has been extensively briefed on the draft guidelines by officers of the Planning Authority. The Committee also has benefited from a briefing by the Heritage Council of the ACT.

12. The Committee would like to thank all the people who appeared before it and/or who made submissions to its inquiry. In addition to the evidence gathered by the Committee, Members have reviewed the original submissions to the Planning Authority following its call for public comment on the initial guidelines released in September 1993.

CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE

13. The Committee notes that the draft guidelines are intended to retain the design character and quality of existing streets and the established landscape character of the area as a whole; and to do so without imposing obstacles to sensitive redevelopment. The Committee considers these objectives are appropriate.

14. The Committee notes that the draft guidelines emphasise the retention of street trees, verges and established hedges, with new building development being designed to minimise the visual impact as seen from the street. The Committee considers this performance measure is very important in the historic areas.

15. It follows that the Planning Authority should have particular regard to the setbacks of new development, in order to maintain the existing streetscape. For the same reason, care should be taken in considering the height of new building work. These provisions are included in the draft guidelines and the Committee endorses them.

16. Similarly, the Committee endorses the requirement that Design and Siting applications for substantial redevelopment of blocks in the historic areas should include detailed tree surveys and landscape plans specifying how significant stands of trees (or significant individual trees) are to be protected.

17. The Committee agrees with a requirement that landscape plans should show where new trees and shrubs are to be planted to compensate for the effect that agreed tree removal will cause. In one respect, however, the Committee would go further than the present wording of the draft guidelines: that is, the Committee urges the Government to consider inserting a requirement that the landscape plans generally provide for **mature** plantings where trees have been removed, or damaged during construction work. This reflects the Committee's view that some Canberra streetscapes and development sites have suffered from planting immature specimens that are not able to thrive, thus in effect negating the purpose of their planting. If this occurred in the historic areas, the existing high quality tree scape of the area would be threatened.

18. The need for mature plantings in areas affected by redevelopment was referred to in several submissions to the Committee, including that by Bryan R Dowling & Associates Pty.Ltd. and the Old Red Hill Preservation Group:

... many of the mature trees in the area are nearing the end of their life, especially conifers, and there should be allowance for these trees to be replaced by mature trees, and a general requirement for adding mature trees at the boundaries to emphasise further the urban forest character of the area.¹

¹ Bryan R Dowling & Associates Pty.Ltd. submission on the historic areas, p3

... plant growth rates in Canberra are slower than in any other major urban area in Australia. What reassurance can the ACT Government give the citizens of Canberra that it will not allow the aesthetics of our "Garden City" to be compromised at the hands of developers who have been given permission to carry out "agreed tree removal". ... How long will it take "new tree and shrub planting" to provide an alternative landscape character of the area as a whole?²

19. The Planning Authority - at the behest of the Committee - has prepared a practice note for any work in verges that affects street trees. The Committee understands that the proponent of a development will have to contact the Parks and Conservation section of the Department of the Environment, Land and Planning, to get advice on how verge works can be carried out with minimal impact on street trees. Further, once the development work is complete, the proponent will have to obtain some form of certification from the Parks and Conservation section that the work has been carried out in response to that section's requirements.

20. The Committee expects that the measures outlined in the preceding paragraph will apply to all of Canberra and not just to the historic areas that are the subject of this report. The Committee reiterates its concern that existing high quality streetscapes and property tree scapes will no longer be threatened by insensitive housing and landscape design or careless construction activity.

21. The Committee notes the draft guidelines limit the maximum gross floor area of new buildings to 35 per cent of the area of the site. The Planning Authority advised the Committee that the figure of 35 per cent was chosen in part because it was used by the old National Capital Development Commission for many years to limit development on the standard detached housing blocks then common in Canberra; but the key feature of any such plot ratio is that it facilitates the objective of ensuring the built form does not dominate the landscape of the area.

22. The Committee sees the plot ratio performance measure set out in the draft guidelines in this light and endorses such a provision. In doing so, the Committee also is conscious of the comment of the professional Institutes that: 'We particularly welcome the introduction of plot ratio and set back provisions in the Forrest/Red Hill/Deakin/Griffith area'.³

23. In the course of its examination into the draft guidelines, the Committee became aware of special claims being made about the Old Red Hill area that might justify some adjustment of the guidelines for that area. A submission on behalf of a group of Red Hill residents stated:

It is our assertion that the foresight of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee in 1924 in providing a mix of block

² Old Red Hill Preservation Group submission, p37

³ Submission by the royal Australian Institute of Architects (ACT Chapter), the Royal Australian Planning Institute (ACT Division), the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (ACT Group) and the National Trust, p1

sizes, including some large blocks of the order of one hectare, remains relevant today. There is still a need and a market for such large sized blocks. As they are not being provided elsewhere in Canberra (having regard to present servicing costs), it is incumbent on our present generation to ensure that progressive subdivision does not whittle away the present limited number of such blocks.⁴

24. The Old Red Hill Preservation Group submitted that:

Old Red Hill comprises 73 single dwelling residential blocks and one park in a compact area bound by Mugga Way, Flinders Way, Monaro Crescent, Arthur Circle and Moresby Street. At present, there is no townhouse development in this historic area. It is predominantly used to house families, but also contains 17 diplomatic residences, Calthorpe House Museum and the Carmelite nuns residence and Chapel.

Old Red Hill is an intact area of planning, planting and housing which was commenced after the first land auction in Canberra which took place on 12 December 1924. It was originally designed to provide substantial accommodation on large parcels of land... [which] fulfilled the vision of "a garden city", with free standing picturesque houses set in large parklike gardens....⁵

We are seeking a Variation to the Territory Plan so that Old Red Hill will become exempt from townhouse development...⁶

25. The Committee also notes advice from the National Trust of Australia (ACT) that:

the Red Hill area has historic values, social values and aesthetic values... The character of spacious layout, well treed blocks, street planting and relationship between architecture and garden must be maintained... It is difficult to see how unsympathetic development, for example apartments, could be excluded under the published Guidelines... [which] are wholly inadequate... [and which should include] a clear statement that development will be restricted to additional detached residences. In this way minimum impact to the character and to the residents will be achieved.⁷

⁴ Submission from Tir Pty.Ltd. on behalf of a number of Red Hill residents

⁵ Old Red Hill Preservation Group submission, p10

⁶ Ibid, p4

⁷ Letter to the Chief Planner from the National Trust of Australia (ACT) [Associate Professor K Taylor] dated 7 October 1993

26. The Committee closely questioned officials of the Heritage Council of the ACT about these claims. The formal position of the Heritage Council is contained in a letter from the Council to the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning dated 11 November 1993:

The Council has considered comprehensive submissions from the residents about the heritage value of the area and as a consequence agreed that there is merit in considering the area for possible inclusion in the interim Heritage Places Register.

... the Council does not see that the area has sufficient heritage merit to prevent new and additional building work from proceeding in the area, so long as the existing streetscape and mature trees in the area are respected.

Council will now proceed to the development of a draft citation for the interim Heritage Places Register. This should not prevent development applications which are currently under consideration from proceeding. In these cases, the Council will provide its comments according to the established procedures.

27. Subsequently, the Heritage Council on 4 May 1994 advised the Chief Planner that it would not consider any proposals for multi-unit development in the Old Red Hill area 'until the completion of the Council's consideration of the area for the interim Heritage Places Register'. The Council's letter to the Chief Planner (which was copied to the Committee) continued:

The Council further recommends that the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Infrastructure's consideration of the draft planning and development guidelines for areas of inner Canberra, including Old Red Hill, will also be deferred pending the Council's heritage assessment.

The Council is currently negotiating with the National Trust and the University of Canberra School of Environmental Design about the timing of their work funded under a grant from the ACT Heritage Grants Program to prepare a heritage assessment of the area. This work will result in a citation to the interim Heritage Places Register prepared by the Council. At this stage the Council proposes to conclude its considerations by the end of July 1994.

28. In the light of these actions, the Committee acknowledges that application of the draft guidelines to the Old Red Hill area at this stage would be premature. The Committee wishes to have the formal advice of the Heritage Council on the heritage value of Old Red Hill area before it makes a decision on the guidelines to apply to this area.

29. At the same time, the Committee is conscious of the need to finalise appropriate guidelines as soon as possible. Accordingly, the Committee has written to the Heritage Council to request that it expedite its report to the Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Infrastructure by the end of July.

30. When this report becomes available, the Committee will examine it and determine its action with respect to guidelines for Old Red Hill.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends that the Government adopt the guidelines for the Forrest/Red Hill/Deakin/Griffith historic areas [prepared by the Planning Authority and dated January 1994] for all of the area except that known as Old Red Hill - these guidelines are reproduced as an Attachment to this report. The Committee recommends that the Government strengthen that portion of the guidelines dealing with landscaping to emphasise the need for mature plantings where trees have been removed, or damaged during construction work.

With respect to the Old Red Hill area, the Committee reserves its decision until the report of the Heritage Council of the ACT on this area becomes available.

The Committee is conscious that a decision on Old Red Hill should not be unduly delayed and so has requested the Heritage Council advise it in writing by the end of July 1994 on the heritage aspects of the area in relation to the proposed guidelines; whereupon the Committee will re examine the issue and provide a further report to the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning and to the Legislative Assembly.

Wayne Berry MLA
Chairman
6 May 1994

ATTACHMENT

**DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
FORREST/RED HILL/DEAKIN/GRIFFITH
HISTORIC AREAS**

ACT PLANNING AUTHORITY

JANUARY 1994

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The ACT Planning Authority has prepared draft guidelines for the historic areas of Forrest, Red Hill, Deakin and Griffith shown on the attached plan.

The Territory Plan, which came into force on 18 October 1993, encourages urban renewal and allows more than one dwelling unit per block subject to extensive public notification and third party appeal rights.

The Authority considers that because of the distinctive environmental quality of these historic sectors of South Canberra additional guidelines are needed.

The guidelines now proposed are intended to advise the public and lessees of the parameters that the ACTPA intends to use in considering and determining Design & Siting applications for development in this area.

2.0 HISTORY AND HERITAGE

The historic areas of Forrest, Red Hill, Deakin and Griffith shown on the attached plan were included in the original Griffin plan of 1912. The street layout for the area north of Collins Park was constructed largely in conformity with the last Griffin plan of 1918 and was gazetted by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee in 1924.

The road layout of the part of Red Hill containing the very large blocks bounded by Mugga Way, Monaro Crescent and Flinders Way was gazetted in 1926.

The road layout in the vicinity of Bass Garden was gazetted in 1927.

The Heritage Council of the ACT has advised that it is considering the areas shown on the attached plan for inclusion in the Interim Heritage Places Register. The two main areas are the Forrest Conservation Area and an area of Griffith previously known as Blandfordia Precinct No. 5. A number of individual properties shown on the plan are also being considered for inclusion in the Interim Heritage Places Register. Seven such properties are situated in the old Red Hill area and include Calthorpe's House and the late Sir Harold White's House. If these areas and individual properties are entered in the ACT Heritage Places Register they will be subject to specific requirements designed to recognise their significance and ensure their conservation. In the meantime the ACTPA will liaise closely with the Heritage Council in considering development applications for properties in areas being considered for listing.

The Heritage Council of the ACT has also advised that it has considered submissions from residents about the heritage value of the old Red Hill area which is also shown on the attached plan. The Council's preliminary heritage advice is that this area as a whole does not have sufficient heritage merit to prevent new and additional building work from proceeding so long as the existing streetscape and mature trees in the area are respected. The Council has advised that it is proceeding with the development of a draft citation of the old Red Hill Area for the Heritage Places Register but that this should not

prevent consideration of current development applications in the area from proceeding. The ACT Planning Authority will refer design and siting applications for development in the old Red Hill area to the Heritage Council for advice.

Old Red Hill and the other areas within the boundary shown on the plan that are not being considered for Heritage listing are considered to have qualities and characteristics that justify design guidelines in addition to the codes for single and multi unit developments contained in the Territory Plan.

The key characteristics of the area stem from four inter related factors - streetscape, block size, on site landscape and built form.

3.0 STREETScape

The predominant streetscape elements are carriageways of widths varying from the formal and divided Hobart Avenue, the spacious and geometric of Arthur Circle and the three Circuits to the narrow and intimate dimensions of the Crescents in Forrest.

Wide grassed verges are the second main element and the formally planted and mature street trees both native and exotic form the third element. Collectively these elements produce streetscapes of the highest quality where buildings are not the dominant element.

4.0 BLOCK SIZE AND ON SITE LANDSCAPE

Most of the blocks in this area are substantially larger than the Canberra average and some of the blocks in the Red Hill sector are in excess of 1 ha. Large detached houses set in spacious landscaped grounds are the norm and this has resulted in extensive on site planting of trees that produces a heavily landscaped backdrop to the whole area that is significantly more intense and varied than in the average Canberra suburb where block size inevitably limits the size and scale of tree planting.

Part of the original design philosophy for early Canberra was to use hedges as landscape/streetscape elements. Many such hedges remain and are often over 2m in height. These all add to the landscape character of the area.

5.0 BUILT FORM

Even though this area contains some of the largest houses in Canberra the streetscapes, block sizes and garden landscaping result in even two storey houses being relatively low key elements. Outside the proposed heritage areas house design and alterations and additions to established houses have been carried out in a wide variety of styles and materials. Many have not detracted significantly from the homogeneous design quality of the area as a whole but some have not been sympathetic to their settings. However the vast majority of the existing houses are of masonry construction with pitched, tiled

roofs and it is this basic built form which is a significant feature of the area.

6.0 THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines have been prepared to retain the key elements of the character of the area and to safeguard the residential amenity of existing lessees.

The guidelines consist of two elements - objectives and performance measures. The objectives establish the outcomes sought by the Authority in considering Design and Siting applications and the performance measures are the standards that in normal circumstances could be taken to meet the objectives. Because the circumstances of each site and each development proposal are unique the Authority will exercise some discretion in applying the performance measures.

The public interest is safeguarded in this process by the provisions in the Territory Plan for public notification and third party appeals for all development proposals that increase the number of dwellings on the land.

The guidelines will be used in addition to the Residential Design and Siting codes contained in the Territory Plan.

Objective

To retain the design character and quality of existing streets and to secure the conservation of heritage values for listed areas.

Performance Measures

Proposals which retain and conserve street trees, verges and established hedges. Building development designed and sited to minimise the visual impact on the street scene.

Front set backs that respect the established building lines of existing properties. Set backs of 10m will apply in most of the area. In parts of the Red Hill area where established building lines are up to 30m from the front property boundaries a set back of 20m or an average of 20m will be sought.

The maximum wall height of 7.5m above natural ground level referred to in the Design & Siting Codes that form part of the Territory Plan will apply in this area. The maximum height from natural ground level to the highest part of a roof structure shall not exceed 11.5m.

New buildings shall be constructed of predominantly masonry materials and shall have pitched tiled roofs except where alterations and/or additions are proposed for existing flat roofed houses.

The maximum gross floor area of new buildings shall not exceed 35% of the area of the site. Gross floor area is the sum of the areas of all floors in all buildings on the site as measured from their external surfaces excluding only attic rooms and basements as defined in the Design & Siting Codes that form part of the Territory Plan.

Objective

To retain the established landscape character of the areas as a whole.

Performance Measures

Design and Siting applications for substantial redevelopment of blocks in this area are to be accompanied by detailed and accurate tree surveys and landscape plans. Development proposals shall provide for the retention of large groups of trees and individual specimen trees that make a significant contribution to the established landscape character of the area. Landscape plans shall provide for new tree and shrub planting to compensate for the effect that agreed tree removal will cause.

Objective

To minimise the impact of redevelopment on existing residents.

Performance Measures

New buildings designed to minimise overlooking of the side and rear boundaries of adjacent leases.

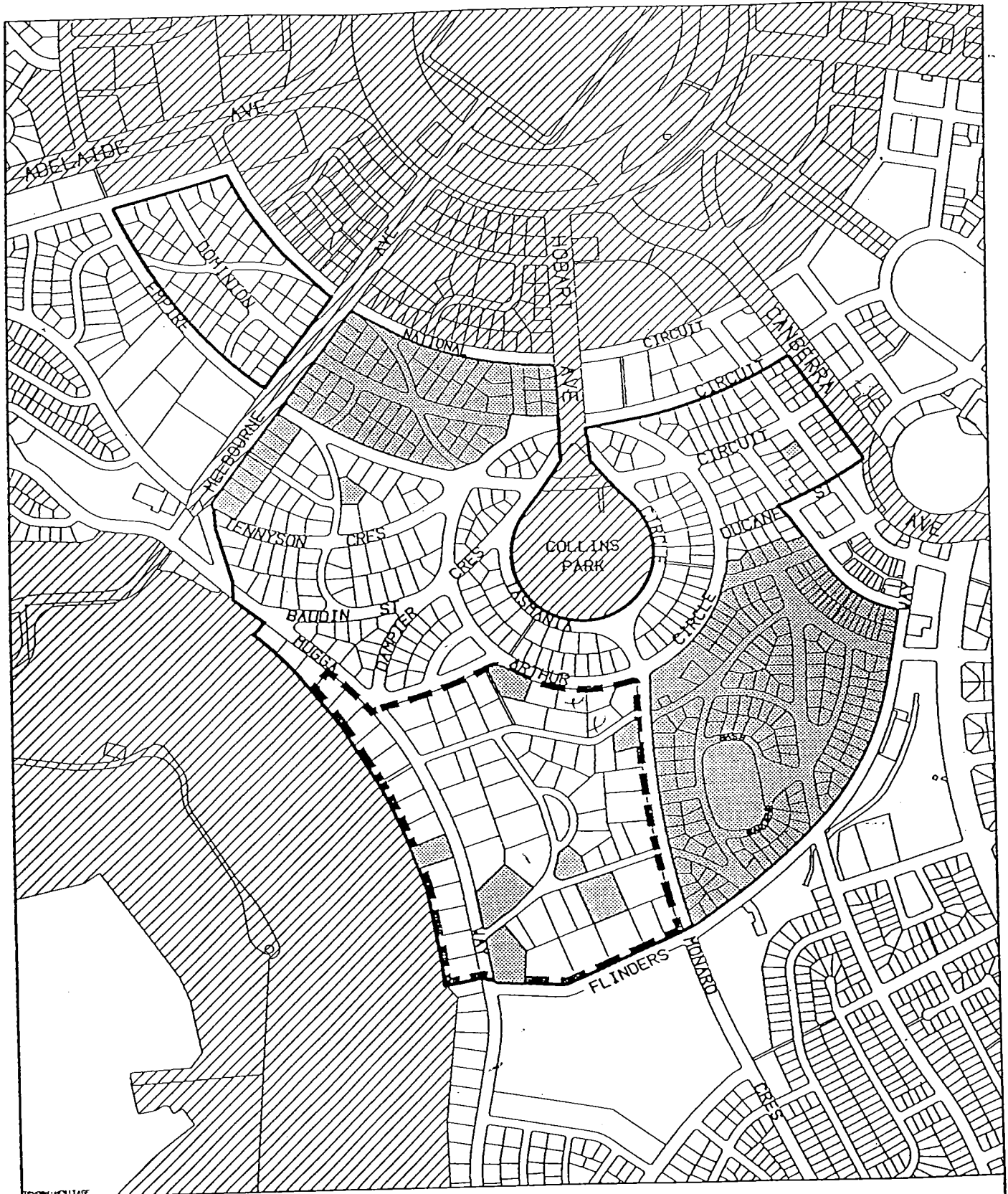
(NOTE: Buildings may need to be set back from rear and side boundaries greater distances than provided for in the codes included in the Territory Plan in order to meet the objectives and principles outlined in the Plan).

In the case of multi unit developments accessed from narrow streets that cannot safely accommodate car parking additional provision shall be made on site to accommodate all foreseeable visitor parking needs.

Submission Requirements

Persons proposing redevelopment are advised to discuss their proposals with the ACTPA prior to the preparation of sketch plans. Submissions are to be accompanied by written assessments of the following characteristics of the site, its content and the proposed development:

- . History
- . Architecture
- . Landscape
- . Traffic and Infrastructure
- . Subdivision pattern



Area Subject to Guidelines



Areas being considered for listing
on Interim Heritage Places Register



Designated Areas
(National Capital Plan)

--- Areas being considered for



HISTORIC AREAS FORRESTER, RED HILL

