

31 January 2023

[REDACTED]
Planning and Sustainable Development
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Dear [REDACTED]

Comments on the New Territory Plan – Block 9 Section 19 Forrest

This letter has been prepared on behalf of Sirocco Pty Ltd regarding the call for comments on the New Territory Plan, specifically with how it relates to our Territory Plan Variation (TPV) Process for Block 9 Section 19 Forrest (the subject site), located on the corner of Franklin Street and Dominion Circuit.

The club building was demolished in 2016 and the site is currently vacant. Following closure of the Club, the site was sold to the current lessees who have investigated a variety of land uses that are consistent with the existing zoning, including commercial accommodation. A DA for a seven-storey hotel complex was approved in 2016.

Through analysis of the viability of a hotel complex on the site, the current lessee explored other potential uses, with a mixed-use residential development being identified as the most appropriate given the sites convenient access to transport corridors and commercial and employment centres. The site is in close proximity to Canberra Avenue and the future light rail station at Sydney Avenue, the shopping precinct of Manuka, and the employment hub of Barton.

To enable the proposed development a change of zoning was required, a proposed TPV was originally raised with the ACT Government in 2018. Due to a review of CZ6 – Leisure and Accommodation by the Territory Government, which ran from 2019 to 2021, a request for Scoping was not accepted until November 2020. It is understood that several broader considerations were taken into account in development of the Scoping Document. It is understood that the ACT Government considered the initial request holistically, including the likely path of Future Light Rail and the strategic thinking for the New Territory Plan. The Scoping Document was received May 2021.

In responding to the Scoping Document, the Project Team undertook several detailed studies along with undertaking an extensive community engagement process based on a high-level scheme prepared by Stewart Architecture. The study established that the most appropriate use of the site is for residential with some minor mixed uses, which aligns with the ACT Government objectives for urban infill in established Central Canberra suburbs.

Commercial uses were proposed, so long as they do not adversely impact the centres hierarchy. This was recommended to be through limitations on GFA for commercial uses as part of the TPV proposal.

The proposed rezoning will benefit the local community in terms of increasing housing choice in Inner South Canberra and opportunities for increased support to the local commercial and recreational facilities, as well as other land uses in the Manuka Group Centre. Investigations concluded that the proposed rezoning of the site for residential use is appropriate and will deliver a net positive community benefit to the area.

The completed response to the Scoping Document was lodged in November 2021, and included a detailed planning report, a report on community engagement, and all relevant studies which aided in the assessment for the appropriateness of the proposed rezoning.

Agency comments were received in April and June 2022, outlining minor updates relating to the proposal. These elements were responded to with a final version of the TPV package submitted to EPSDD in July 2022.

The status of the assessment of the final package was discussed with [REDACTED] on 18 August from the Territory Plan Team. At this session we discussed the new Territory Plan, the status of our TPV proposal and the pathway moving forward. At this session we outlined our concern with regard to timing of progression of our proposal given the new Territory Plan's scheduled timing. It was suggested that the TPV proposal, given its maturity, could form part of the new Territory Plan. We were advised that this would be considered by the Territory Plan Team.

In reviewing the new Territory Plan, we note that the subject site has been included as a "Possible Development" under the District policies. We further note that no change to the District Policy, which would be the enabling legislation to progress the proposal on the site, has remained largely unchanged for the Inner South in terms of substance. It is appreciated that the site has been considered as part of the process, however we believe that this consideration does not reflect the status of the process already undertaken.

This situation is concerning, should the New Territory Plan be ratified in its current form, there will be a further process to progress the proposal for Forrest. By our estimation this could take another year or more unless the proposal is included in the current Territory Plan Revision process. This will mean that the site will have not been developed for the better part of a decade.

As demonstrated above, the proposed TPV for Forrest commenced almost five years ago. The proposal is well-established, has responded to all Territory comments, and importantly the community have been engaged on the proposal, with changes to the design considered

as part of the extensive consultation process conducted by Purdon. It is our view that the community would expect this site to be included in the New Territory Plan. We believe this is a missed opportunity to progress a project which is appropriate for the location, aligns with the ACT Government's objectives for urban infill, and will be of net benefit to the Canberra community and the economy.

With the above considerations in mind, it is recommended that the proposed rezoning and associated changes to the (former Precinct Code, now District policy) be included as part of the current Territory Plan revision process.

We are available to meet and discuss at your convenience. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to get in contact with [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Kind Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Managing Director | Head of Planning Practice
Purdon Planning