



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
PLANNING**

(Reference: [Inquiry into DPA-B – Forrest Section 19 Blocks 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12](#))

Members:

MS J CLAY (Chair)
MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)
MR P CAIN
MS C TOUGH

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2025

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Secretary to the committee:
Mr J Bunce (Ph: 620 50199)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.00 am

BARCLAY, MS DOROTHY, Forrest Hotel and Apartments, Waldren Holdings
WALDREN, MR MARK, Forrest Hotel and Apartments, Waldren Holding

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to this public hearings of the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning and its Inquiry into DPA-B—Forrest Section 19, Blocks 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the city and this region. We would like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event, or who may be joining us via Zoom from somewhere else.

We welcome Dot Barclay and Mark Waldren from Forrest Hotel and Apartments. As witnesses you are protected by parliamentary privilege and you are bound by its obligations. You need to tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

You have sent through some comments by email. Do you want to make a short opening statement and talk us through some of the things you would like to discuss?

Mr Waldren: I just have some notes that are associated with the summary that Stewart Architecture sent through. So section 19 was identified in the district strategy as a key site which has the potential to be rezoned as CZ5 mixed use. Why is it a key site? The 2023 Inner South District Strategy identifies the site as being within 800 metres—readily walkable—of the Manuka group centre catchment. This makes the proposal very desirable for many people who wish to live, work and play in the local neighbourhood.

In time, the light rail will land nearby and complement the existing bus services which stop outside our property. High-quality, spacious developments have obviously been an attraction for empty-nesters across Canberra who wish to downsize but also to professional people and especially families and young children who might want to attend the various schools close by, and it is a shorter walk down Dominion Circuit to these facilities. Large, high-quality apartments are very amenable to ageing in place, particularly because there are shared facilities such as a pool and gym in the development as well as the amenities around the site. The Forrest Tennis Club is right next door and it is a short walk to the lake. As we have mentioned before, it is within walking distance to where eventually the light rail will come through.

The section 19 master plan results in site coverage increasing from approximately 19 to 26 per cent, which is more appropriate for a section nominated as a key site for future development. Despite the increased density, hardstand is reduced and soft landscape is increased. This is particularly true for blocks 5, 6 and 11 because paved on-grade parking is being relocated underground, and deep-root zoning for large trees is seen as an opportunity to create a generous garden city landscape.

The blocks across the road on Dominion Circuit site are large blocks of 1,700 to 2,000 square metres and are zoned RZ2. That sort of goes through to the Manuka centre and three-storey townhouses are allowed to be built. The Territory Plan has recently reduced the front setbacks so as to increase density. We consider the proposed CZ5 and existing RZ2 zones as very complementary. So it is just outside that RZ2 area that goes through to Manuka.

With regard to the architectural character, our family has amalgamated the three blocks over time. While the existing buildings were nicely built for their time, we recognise their ageing nature and feel the time has come for quality replacements that meet the emerging accommodation needs of our city. We feel that the location begs for design excellence. We would like to be able to allow enough scale on the sites, given that we want to go up to a certain height, so that the floors are set back to create better architectural effect as well as allowing the sun to come through to neighbours. So given the fact that we are providing quite a lot of green space compared to a lot of developments in relation to the amount of building on site we propose maybe an extra floor of eight storeys. We do not want to go above eight storeys because there are complications with the 25-metre rule and with the fire department rules. So we feel eight storeys across the section would be appropriate.

And one last thing about our design, we have really gone to extensive efforts and costs to try and get detailed designs drawn so that we could present what might be possible. The buildings are not all the same height. On section 11 we are envisaging about eight storeys, and then on blocks 5 and 6 the building drops to a lower height to let sunshine through to the back buildings on Dominion Circuit and then it comes back up again. So it is not as if it is just like a short back and sides haircut.

Ms Barclay: It has that sort of tapering effect which is so lovely for light.

Mr Waldren: So I think I have said as much as I want to at this stage.

THE CHAIR: We have had a few submissions on this, and there were a few submissions to government on the original amendment. Two of the things that interest me particularly are urban heat island permeable surface—and you have touched on that—and whether the community genuinely would get access to some of the green space or whether it would just be for private use. Also, do you think this is a good area for social and affordable housing. There is not a lot of that in here. These are decisions are probably taken at a later stage, but do you think that is a useful contribution. Can you talk me through your views on that?

Mr Waldren: We had not considered that because we have not really focused too much on who would be buying the apartments, except for the downsizers. That is certainly something we would be prepared to look at.

Ms Barclay: We can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Talk me through what is in here to stop us getting an urban heat island in terms of permeable surface green space, and also public access to some of that green space.

Ms Barclay: As Mark mentioned, we are increasing the green space from 19 per cent to 26 per cent. A build like this will allow deep-rooted trees. We all know that Canberra is about beautiful trees and a lot of developments have not considered that. This has been something that is really important to us. As Mark mentioned, we have worked extensively with landscape designers and really put a lot of money and effort into thinking about that space. We grew up in the area. We love the area. We want it to be something that we feel proud of. We are Canberrans; we are third-generation Canberrans, so it is really important to us.

Mr Waldren: With regard to the public access, as you would know, it is a real balance, particularly if older people are living in the apartments, in relation to security. We are happy to take that on notice to give a little bit of immediate clarity on that and we can look at that. We would have to look at what would be possible because of that consideration.

One comment I would say is it is a very low-density area. And even with the RZ2, that is not high density through to Manuka. There is quite a lot of parkland around. With regard to people being able to use the area to transit through, there are footpaths quite close on either side along Dominion Circuit through to National Circuit which allow that to happen.

Ms Barclay: We have the Forrest Tennis Club next door, so it is a very community kind of area. Then we have got the bowling club a little bit further down. We have a footpath in between the bowling club and the Forrest Tennis Club, so that an access that people use to walk their children to school and walk their dogs. So it is an area where people walk. People work in the area in Barton and all that. So the whole area is highly used and there are beautiful oak trees that we have in National Circuit.

Mr Waldren: One other thing about community access we would like to include in development is a café on block 11, which would mean that people who live in the area can walk to that café and have a cup of coffee on the way to work, also bike riders, whoever. We would like an outdoor seating area so people can enjoy that. What that does for the residents, particularly if they are older, is it allows interaction with people.

THE CHAIR: There is no cafe in this area at the moment?

Ms Barclay: There is no cafe in that area.

THE CHAIR: So it sounds like the primary benefit to the community here would be more downsizing housing.

Ms Barclay: Very much downsizing housing.

THE CHAIR: And maybe some social benefits in the area that are not currently there.

Ms Barclay: Yes.

MS CARRICK: My question is about Dominion Circuit. A number of submissions were concerned about the building heights opposite that, and you talked about that being RZ2 and able to go to three-storey buildings. I note that for the Ainslie one that was

approved recently if it was 15 metres off the street it could go to 12.5 metres in height and then it went to 21.5, so it sort of tapered up from the suburban street. What are your views about tapering up from the from the suburban street so for 15 metres you get 12.5 metres in height and then it goes higher after that so it gives a bit more human scale at street level?

Mr Waldren: On the Dominion Circuit site, the last three storeys that we would like to build are inset. I think there are two and then the third one is set back even a little bit more. That allows the sun to come through at the same angle and not overshadow the road. Remembering, too, the impact of these buildings from the street will not be that noticeable because there are such large trees on both Dominion Circuit and National Circuit.

Ms Barclay: And Dominion Circuit is a very wide boulevard, which is also very helpful. And the setbacks are very considered in that proportion as well.

MS CARRICK: You own blocks 5 and 6, which are on Dominion Circuit?

Ms Barclay: Yes.

Mr Waldren: And block 11 as well on National Circuit.

MS CARRICK: There were also concerns in the submissions about parking and that where areas are densified you get spillover onto the streets and other car parks around the area get filled up. What are your views about the level of on-site car parking and the potential for there to be spillover on to the streets?

Mr Waldren: We have actually over allocated car parking spaces so people could buy an extra car parking space if they wanted and also to have plenty of visitor car parking. We do not envisage any on-street parking associated with the residents. Even with the cafe we would consider putting extra parking in place for people to be able park there and use the cafe as well. You are quite right—they of busy roads.

MS CARRICK: One of the submissions mentioned the amount of apartments in the area. Barton has a very high level of apartments. One submission mentions that according to a census from 2021 Forrest has 46.6 per cent.

Ms Barclay: Per cent of housing?

MS CARRICK: No.

Mr Waldren: Or apartments?

MS CARRICK: That is what it says in the submission—in the 2021 census 36 per cent of dwellings in Forrest were separate houses, 17 per cent were semi-detached and 46 per cent were flats, units or apartments.

Mr Waldren: Forrest does not stop at Canberra Avenue. Most people think it does.

MS CARRICK: It goes over the road, yes.

Mr Waldren: It goes right down to New South Wales Crescent. So on the other side of Canberra Avenue there are quite a lot of apartments. In the old days we used to call them flats, and I think that was a good word, to be honest.

Ms Barclay: So that is from Telopea Park School. So that is that whole dense area. But where we are on the other side of Forrest there is really nothing much at all.

Mr Waldren: There are so many really big blocks of land in the Forrest, and I think it was really appropriate that the RZ2 zone, for instance, was extended across the road through to Manuka. But with regard to our blocks, it is worth noting that they have never been low-density housing; it is more of almost a commercial precinct in a way. You have the bowling club, the tennis courts, the Serbian church, the Jewish synagogue, the old Italian club in just section 19. Blocks 5 and 6 were zoned residential, but there was an anomaly in the Territory Plan and for some reason they are still zoned RZ1.

The blocks of flats that are built there should not be there, but they were approved and somehow or other the government did not redo the zoning to make that commensurate with what was already there.

The section itself, we think can be considered quite different to the rest of the suburb because of its semi-commercial nature. Blocks 9, 10 and 11 at the moment are all zoned tourism and leisure.

Ms Barclay: When you consider the old Italian club on the corner, that was obviously commercial and that was the vision for the area.

MS CARRICK: What is commercial there now? The bowling club?

Ms Barclay: The bowling club, and then obviously the community use the tennis club and there is the Serbian Church.

Mr Waldren: In saying commercial, it is commercial/community use. It is not a residential section, and the tennis club is a big part of that. The original bowling club was knocked down and rebuilt and they put some townhouses next to that, obviously years ago. For the most part it is a little bit of residential but mostly tourism, leisure and community use in a sense, including the original bowling club

Ms Barclay: And people stay at our hotel and can walk to Manuka in 7 minutes and it is half an hour to the National Gallery. So in terms of location and community and all that business district of Barton, it is a unique area in a way. Then obviously with the light rail coming through we think it has the potential to be a great spot to live.

MS CARRICK: What are the building heights on Canberra Avenue when you get to the ends, the closest to your blocks?

Mr Waldren: Do you mean the Human Services building?

MS CARRICK: Yes, they have put some new buildings in on Canberra Avenue at the end. If you were to come out of National Circuit and Dominion Circuit onto Canberra

Avenue, what is that like closest to you?

Mr Waldren: The Human Services building was actually allowed to be built higher than what it was. They were going to do residential and they could have gone a floor higher, but they tailor made the building for the tenant, being Human Services. I am not really sure what the height is along Canberra Avenue, but we can get back to you on that.

Ms Barclay: We will take it on notice.

Mr Waldren: But also the Realm precinct, as you might recall that was Macquarie Hostel. That was three storeys originally, and the sort of scale we are wanting to achieve would be that sort of height. But we feel we are offering a lot more green space compared to what was done over there, particularly on blocks 5 and 6.

MR CAIN: As much as you are able to comment, how much flexibility do you have if, for example, the final approval is for a lessening of the height and an increase in the proportion of residential.

Ms Barclay: Costs are a big thing.

Mr Waldren: Increasing the proportion of the residential?

MR CAIN: And reducing the commercial.

Mr Waldren: Sorry, Mr Cain; the only commercial space is CZ5, as you know, and that is mixed use. So blocks 5 and 6 we intend to be 100 per cent residential, and block 11 we think 100 per cent residential plus a cafe. There would be the opportunity to put some offices on there or that type of thing, but we feel like there is enough of that in Barton. And to create just a pleasant environment for the residents we intend just the cafe, which the community could use.

MR CAIN: And blocks 9 and 12?

Mr Waldren: That being the old Italian Club, the Italian Cultural Centre. We do not believe the Italian Cultural Centre has any plans at the moment. But we know the people on block 12 are planning something. We believe it is probably all residential, but we really do not know. We have not seen their plans yet.

MS TOUGH: What engagement have you had with the people that use the tennis club and the facilities around it? How have current patrons of the hotel responded to about this. What engagement have you had?

Ms Barclay: We have spoken to Forrest Residents Group and we have been always been very open. We have a lovely relationship with the Forrest Tennis Club. Our guests get a discount with the tennis club, so they only pay half the fee and the club drop the keys in. We are very, very in touch with the community. We have had many meetings over time just to let them know. The response is obviously always mixed, but a lot of the response is, "Well, maybe that's somewhere I'd like to live."

Mr Waldren: At one particular meeting with the residents association we were discussing the different town planning issues of how development works in the ACT. I think it is difficult for community groups to try and get across all the town planning rules and we have tried to explain what we know of them.

Ms Barclay: Which is a constant learning process.

MS TOUGH: So a hotel will stay in some form with the residential?

Ms Barclay: No.

Mr Waldren: It would be possible to have a hotel there, but at this stage that is not our intention. It is not impossible; these buildings can be changed to still have a similar amount of traffic coming in and out. It is just that people are on shorter stays.

MS TOUGH: It would be the same people coming in and out instead of different people every few days.

Mr Waldren: That is right, yes.

MR CAIN: Obviously we will be hearing from some of the opponents shortly. What is your response to them to provide either some comfort or clarity?

Mr Waldren: Normally at this stage of a change to the Territory Plan people would not have put together as detailed a plan as what we have done. We have done that so we can focus on building a high-quality development. We do not just want those buildings to be knocked down. They are still in active use, but they are getting towards the end of their timeframe. We want good architecture and a good quality build and with the cafe to give something back to people who live in the area. We just want to do something of good quality.

With the setbacks of the higher floors, we feel the scale of the development is not frightening. Instead of having buildings going right across the front of each of the blocks, we have generous spacing in between the buildings so it is not just one big building. That is to have visual pleasure as well as letting light through to all the neighbours.

Block 11, for instance, the higher floors are tapered at the street front and along and then tapered at the back. That so that lines of sunlight at different times of day can get through to behind. There are a lot of sort of things we have planned to try and make it friendly to all the neighbours as well as to the people who live in the buildings themselves. We want to have something that people want to live in and feel happy being there.

Ms Barclay: I reiterate the emphasis on the landscaping to make it visually appealing for the current residents, because it is such a beautiful area. We really want to make sure that whatever we do we leave that in place.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for coming in today and for your time.

GOODBODY, MS ELIZABETH, Chair, Forrest Residents Group, Inner South Canberra Community Council

JOHNSTON, MR RICHARD, Deputy Chair, Inner South Canberra Community Council

WALTERS, MR COLIN, Chair, Inner South Canberra Community Council

THE CHAIR: Welcome to our representatives from the Inner South Community Council and the Forrest Residents Group. As witnesses you are protected by parliamentary privilege and you are bound by its obligations. You need to tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

Before we proceed with questions, do you want to make a short opening statement?

Mr Walters: First thing to say is, having listened to the previous evidence, that was about a particular development proposal whereas this inquiry is about an amendment to the Territory Plan which covers a wide swathe of Forrest. Having said that, we understand that the matter you were previously talking about, there have been documents tabled that we have not seen. While there have been some discussions between the Forrest hotel and Forrest Residents Group, for which we are grateful, if you would like our comments on the documents which you have seen and we have not, we would appreciate seeing them and having some time to comment.

THE CHAIR: Those are public documents now so you can see those afterwards, and if you have written comments once you have read them you will be more than welcome to send those to us.

Mr Walters: Thank you, Chair. Can we have a couple of weeks to do that?

THE CHAIR: Yes, I reckon a couple of weeks would be fine. Our secretariat will advise you about the day.

Mr Walters: Thank you very much. To cut to the chase, we have comments at two levels on this proposal, firstly at the strategic level and secondly in terms of the impact on local residents. In a nutshell, at the strategic level we have offered you a choice. The government's proposal is for commercial zoning over quite a wide area of Forrest. You have heard one possibility, but that opens the possibility of high-rise office buildings encroaching into this area and quite considerable change in the character of the area, with much taller buildings.

Our proposal is the one which we suggest is the green proposal, and it is the proposal which allows for missing middle housing because it is lower scale, it provides, as Richard could explain, more green space around the housing and we think it is more in keeping with the character of the area.

At the other level—the impact on local residents and occupants—Elizabeth can take you through that. One particular point I would like to draw your attention to is the possible impact on the National Jewish Memorial Centre on the other side of National Circuit. This is a national cultural institution of national importance. It is also a very vulnerable one. And if I could say as somebody who used to be a counter-terrorist

official in a former life, I think you should take very seriously the possible impact of that centre of buildings which have a line of sight into it.

I do not think I need to spell out the threat any more clearly than that. We have had discussions with the centre and I know they are quite concerned about that possibility, when they are also considering some redevelopment improvement proposals, which I think have the support of both the ACT and the federal governments. I will leave my comments at that. I do not know if my colleagues would like to add.

Mr Johnston: If I can add a little to what Colin said, particularly about the appropriateness of commercial mixed use zoning over these blocks, we have been quite consistent in our submissions saying that that it is not appropriate, particularly if your intention is for residential redevelopment of these blocks.

The C5 mixed use zone, the commercial zone, would actually permit, I have calculated, 35 non-residential land uses or development types on those sites, including the proposed addition of commercial accommodation uses. There will be no limit on the extent of any of those commercial-type uses, except for a supermarket or a shop selling food limited to 250 square metres. So you could develop the whole of those sites for office uses or other commercial uses. There is no guarantee in what is being proposed that there would be any residential development on these sites at all. That is something I think you have really got to consider.

We pointed out in previous submissions the mixed use zone has no limit on site coverage, the normal sort of thing you would have through the residential zoning. There is nothing about planting area or tree canopy cover within the building area. There is something about tree canopy cover for open car parking, but essentially you do not have the same degree of development control that you have through a residential zone.

Also there is something that I think is very critical in this situation where you have development interfacing with other lower rise development, particularly across Dominion Circuit. There is this thing called transitional height limits which applies, for example, to the residential RZ5 zone, the highest density zone. That says that if you are within 50 metres of the boundary of a lower density residential area—RZ1 through to RZ3—building height is limited to three storeys. That would be a very useful thing to retain in this situation, particularly for the blocks fronting Dominion Circuit. But also it may be desirable to think about having a lower density zoning on, say, block 5, which is the one adjacent to the tennis courts, just to make sure that you are not having serious overshadowing of the tennis court area.

The last point is that it is worth looking at the different circumstances for the different blocks in the section. We have been advocating all the way through that residential zoning—R5 perhaps grading down to R3—would be appropriate along the Dominion Circuit side. We are a bit more relaxed about what happens on the Empire Circuit side. I might leave that to Elizabeth in case there is a concern about that.

Ms Goodbody: There were three things that we outlined in the submission that was to do with turning it to a mixed use. It basically is one of the earliest suburbs; it is very much keeping to the garden city principles. A lot of the possibilities within this change of zoning would potentially destroy all of that. It would certainly provide a precedent

for allowing it to be destroyed. It is, in fact, one of the strategies for sustainable development and it is one of the five big drivers. So it is very scary, frankly.

Residents are worried about height and particular height implications. We have heard about the hotel/motel and now the development proposal. But there is still a greater height than is currently there. And to Richard's comment, in terms of housing, there is more infill around the block I live in—which is directly opposite the tennis courts—than probably most blocks that you have seen. Now half the houses that were single houses are now two, three, and up to four houses in that block. We are actually increasing the amount of living space and housing, but we are not retaining the character that was fundamental, particularly as there are also a lot of heritage zoned houses and areas within Forrest itself.

Finally, traffic and parking. We have heard in terms of the particular development that they are keen to make sure that there is enough parking both for residents and visitors, et cetera. But parking already is a nightmare. People are all over the place across the road from my house because they do not have enough parking for the offices that are in Barton. So they are walking to and fro and are moving between themselves during the day. Parking is an issue.

It is essentially a series of issues for us as residents, and it is the destruction of what is a very beautiful and historic place. My house will be 100 years old next year. There are not too many of those in Canberra. But basically it is also within keeping of filling more housing where we can and where we need it, and we have done so quietly and effectively. We would not like a precedent to be set to change the whole of that character from a Forrest resident's perspective, adding to what both Colin and Richard have mentioned.

THE CHAIR: The two things I would love to touch on, it sounds like we have commonality that there should be some more residential, but there are different views on what that should look like. If it were an RZ zoning alone, I am not sure if that would allow things like housing with a cafe below, which sounds like it would be useful in the area.

Ms Goodbody: Actually, we are very close to Manuka.

THE CHAIR: Yes, but we did get submissions asking for a cafe in the area, so I would love to know your views on whether that is a reason to not do RZ. And the other thing I am interested in is the comments on character. We have heard a very clear view on what character is, and there is history and heritage and a certain type of housing. Forrest is quite mixed though. When I look at Forrest I see lots of different types of character. So those are the two things I am interested in.

Mr Johnston: I am happy to comment on the first one particularly. The planning authority has already set a precedent for adding uses even to the commercial zone. They have proposed to add commercial accommodation use, which is not actually one of the permitted uses in the C5 mixed use zone, oddly enough. That is the one that permits serviced apartments, so you would expect that to be there. I do not personally, as a planner, have a problem with adding those sorts of uses in a particular situation. If it is desired to have a cafe on one or more of the blocks, I do not see that as a big problem.

You can add that to the list of permitted uses.

THE CHAIR: If it were RZ?

Mr Johnston: In the zoning, yes.

THE CHAIR: So you would add those things into the zoning rather than making it a CZ zone?

Mr Johnston: Yes.

Ms Goodbody: Within the zoning.

Mr Johnston: And the planning authority has already set the precedent for that with commercial accommodation use.

THE CHAIR: There are a lot of different views on what the character of Forrest is.

Ms Goodbody: But it is homogenous insofar as they all live happily together. So we have lovely treed streets to point that the previous people who were presenting mentioned, but a lot of those trees are dying. You cannot rely on them to be giving you a lot of shade in the way that I was hearing, because we already know how many have died, literally, along Dominion, and never mind the other streets.

THE CHAIR: Is that from the age of the trees or is that from something else?

Ms Goodbody: The age of the trees.

THE CHAIR: So they need to be replaced?

Ms Goodbody: So if you could put in new trees, it is fine, but it is going to take you 100 years or close to actually get that kind of shade and environment, if you will. Having lived there for quite a number of years myself, it is basically a suburb that has allowed a melding of both the old and the new. They have put in townhouses, they have put in small apartments very early on in the piece, and basically those people all live together. They all are part of a community. But putting in something that is wildly different in terms of the kind of usage that is suggested in the change of the plan, that is very different altogether.

MS CARRICK: The fact that the proposal goes straight into 26 metres across the site, I do not think that the MPA has different heights throughout the site. What are your views about having a lower height along Dominion Circuit and then going higher as you go further into the block?

Mr Johnston: I am picking up on what we have said in our submissions and what I said a little while ago—the RZ5 zone does have this transitional height requirement. So if you are within 50 metres of the boundary of a lower density residential zone, you have to step down. It cannot be any more than three storeys within that 50-metre band. Dominion Circuit, I think, is of the order of 20 metres wide. So with the first 30 metres of the depth of the blocks that we are talking about it would be restricted automatically

under RZ5 to a three-storey height limit.

I did say that I thought there is a case for stepping down on the end block adjacent to the tennis court for having a lower density zoning there just to make quite sure that you are not getting excessive overshadowing there. There is an issue, I think, about the degree of overshadowing that the blocks on the southern side, on the Dominion Circuit side, might get from high density, high-rise development on the National Circuit side.

The residential controls probably provide enough restriction. They have a height profile that requires you to step down in relation to a boundary. That may be enough. It is a bit of a detailed issue. The alternative is that you actually have a lower density zoning along the northern side along National Circuit. But as I say, that is a detailed issue that could be resolved in the planning within the area.

MS CARRICK: I was interested in what you said about commercial zones do not have the same degree of development controls as residential do. That is interesting, and I wonder with the missing middle whether they will ever put some more controls in around the commercial zones. But anyway, that is just a comment we will pass on.

MR CAIN: You made mention in your submission, Mr Walters, and in your opening about the concerns of the Jewish Memorial Centre. Obviously we have a very concerning rise in anti-Semitism in our nation, perhaps less in Canberra but time will tell. I note the Jewish centre have not put in a submission though.

Mr Walters: They are aware that we were going to speak about their issue. I do not know why they have not put that in, but they did put in a submission I think to the original government proposal. It has been a two-stage process. And I think if they were a bit confused about that they would probably not be the only people who were because people might have thought you would take into account the documentation that was provided before.

But to amplify on that point, the fact that we have fortunately been relatively free of problems in Canberra—although I do believe that some of the university students have been subject to a bit of harassment—if you look at the broader picture, unfortunately Jewish institutions around the world have been subject to terrorist attacks, including in remote places like South America. We know we have seen incidents in Sydney and Melbourne, so it is not far away. I am afraid that there will be an issue here for as long as there is a problem in the Middle East. President Trump might think he has solved that, but I do not think most of us do. It is going to be around for a long time and there will be a security concern there for a long time.

As I say, the centre are themselves hoping to develop a bigger Holocaust memorial and so on. Speaking from my former experience, I used to be the head of the counter terrorist division in the UK Home Office, admittedly some time ago, but the issues are not too different. If you had something with a line of sight into their premises, it would allow for surveillance of people coming and going. And of course it would allow for something more serious if you had the ability for a sniper to look into that area. So it would be a problem for them and it would be a problem for the government and the AFP and ASIO going forward because there is no easy way of providing protection in that situation—certainly no cheap way of doing it.

MR CAIN: God forbid on those scenarios. So what height do you think would be satisfactory from a security point of view?

Mr Walters: I am no expert on that. To be honest, I am an old warrior on this stuff. You really need to consult the AFP and ASIO. They are the people who should be able to provide current and up-to-date advice on things like that.

MR CAIN: Obviously the Forrest Primary School nearby. Do your concerns extend to that?

Ms Goodbody: Yes, from a broader perspective. There are concerns, but there are all sorts of concerns to do with traffic and parking and safety and whatever. So safety in the broadest sense, so any kind of safety that people might be impacted as a result of these sorts of changes.

MS TOUGH: I want to follow up on Mr Cain's question about the primary school. There are a lot of schools across Australia that have quite high housing opposite them that allows families to have closer access to schools or grandparents to be closer to the school in instances of care and stuff. Why would having that height and that much residential near this particular school be an issue?

Ms Goodbody: I do not think it is the height per se near the school because a lot of the children at that school actually do not live in the area. Numbers of them do, but a great number of them do not, which adds to the parking issue because they are coming in and out in their cars twice a day. Basically I think it is more to do with safety issues around young people of that age group, the primary school age group, and their families trying to get access to the place. The broader things that Colin has mentioned are not particularly what we are focused on in terms of broader safety for the population at large, particularly younger people and their families.

MS TOUGH: Speaking of the parking more generally on the site, obviously we have just heard from the Forrest hotel that their plans will include a fair bit of parking for residents and people visiting the site. That is just one part of the rezoning. If all the plans actually included parking, how much parking are you looking at? Enough for every resident plus every visitor?

Ms Goodbody: I do not think we would have numbers. I am a little limited as well at this point, but the way it is designed at the moment in terms of these zoning changes, it does not put protection in for those sorts of things. Whilst we may have people who are genuinely interested—and I know they are—in maintaining high standards and good quality and leaving something like a memento from a family who have been heavily involved in the area for some time, that is quite different from just general multi-use things with high levels of building which may not have any restrictions. It sets a precedent for the things that could happen that would not be good.

Mr Walters: We really need to look at Manuka and Forrest as a whole because people are parking up here from Manuka. You have got the new Capital Hotel which is near completion and will be opened, and they will be having quite large functions there if Mrs Liangis's intentions are fulfilled, as I have no doubt they will be. When that hotel

was approved they only had to provide limited parking because it was claimed and agreed that the existing car parks in Manuka would be sufficient to cater for that overflow. So that is going to provide additional pressure.

There are more bigger events at Manuka Oval which spreads parking around all over the whole district. So what we are saying is that commercial zoning would add significantly to that pressure. The proposal we have given you for residential zoning should not add too much to that pressure.

THE CHAIR: I can see a couple of key differences with a proposal for residential and commercial. Residential zoning I do not think could do things like apartments with a cafe. That would be one of those changes. Another change is differences in how many people you can get in there. Do you think light rail coming in changes that balance as to whether this is a good area to go up a bit higher?

Mr Walters: It certainly could increase the parking pressure. The interesting thing about light rail is that the inner south bears the brunt of the building and the disruption that will take place but we have very few access points to light rail. There will be one somewhere down at Deakin and there will be the stop in Barton. So you have the real possibility that people who want to use it will drive to the vicinity in order to get on the light rail. So I would have thought the main impact could well be negative rather than positive.

MS TOUGH: With the light rail coming into the inner south, it is creating more public transport options so there will be less need for some people to have cars in the area. Both residents and people coming into the area will have better public transport options.

Mr Walters: We do not see it that way because there are so few access points to light rail in the inner south, particularly if the government decides, as the officials last week told me they are likely to, to have the State Circle route rather than the route that goes through Barton. In those circumstances, anyone from the adjacent suburbs will have a hell of a trek to get up to a station on State Circle. It does not really look as if it is going to be much use to people in the inner south at all.

MS TOUGH: Why would that increase the parking? If people are not driving there to get on the light rail because there is no access, why would there be increased traffic?

Mr Walters: I am saying I do not think people will have much walking access to the extent to which people will use it. If you live in Griffith or Narrabundah, you are going to have to drive to the station and find somewhere to park around there. There are no new car parks being provided for park 'n' ride around the stations as far as I know. We have not been told of any new parking facilities near the few stations that there will be in the inner south.

THE CHAIR: I think we do have dedicated parking areas along light rail in Gungahlin.

Ms Goodbody: Yes, you do. But they have not decided them for us.

MS TOUGH: Yes, but they were not decided until they were much further along in that process.

MR CAIN: Obviously light rail is a little speculative and hypothetical; we do not know what is going to happen yet or where it will go. Obviously it is up to the government to make clear their plans and vision for that. How confident are you under the new planning system, the outcomes focus, that that process is going to produce acceptable outcomes around our community to preserve our bush capital character and our garden city suburbs?

Mr Johnston: I reiterate in a slightly different way perhaps what I said before—I think it is a lot safer to apply a residential zoning because of the safeguards built into the controls in the residential zone than it is to go for a mixed use commercial zone. The unexpected, unintended consequences of a mixed use zone can be pretty horrific.

MR CAIN: But ultimately this is up to the final approval for the development. If there is residential on top of a cafe, that is not a significant commercial component and really preserves the overwhelming residential character. So it really does depend on the confidence in that final approval for an actual development.

Mr Walters: We have been sceptical about this approach from the start. When we gave evidence to this committee that was looking at it a few months ago I made the point that it is going to leave staff highly vulnerable to pressures from developers. The developers will say, “Look, this is a good outcome. What’s more, it was approved in Gungahlin last year or Belconnen last year.” You will see an escalation whereby the staff are pressured into approving something that bends the rules because it is supposedly a good outcome. At the end of the day, who says what a good outcome is?

Mr Johnston: From the limited number of development proposals we have seen under the new system, I have no confidence that we will get better outcomes. They appear to be more inclined to ignore even the basic outcome statements and that sort of thing that are in the Territory Plan. There is a huge amount of scope for interpretation, if you like, of what is permissible and what is not.

Ms Goodbody: We are all concerned about the outcomes basis because it seems to have lost track sometimes of rules and standards and things along the way, and people take advantage of that. We are concerned that this allows for a precedent of things that could be detrimental not only to us in our area but to others elsewhere in Canberra who may be suffering the same thing if this precedent were potentially accepted by the government to put elsewhere.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. That brings us to the end of our hearing. Thank you very much for your time and for your submissions. We will adjourn.

The committee adjourned at 10.02 am