

Q&As: Draft Amendment 97 (DA97) to the National Capital Plan – Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla (former Australian Forestry School)

1. What is Draft Amendment 97 (DA97) to the National Capital Plan (the Plan) all about?

DA97 proposes to change the land use policy for Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla, previously occupied by the former Australian Forestry School and CSIRO, from 'community facility' to a 'mixed-use' zoning.

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DA97 also proposes to introduce detailed conditions of planning and design to guide future development of the site. Detailed conditions will address matters such as:

- building height and setback
- development footprint
- landscape
- residential apartment design
- environmental performance
- parking, access and movement

Note: The Forestry Oval in front of the site is not included in any redevelopment plans.

2. What are the permitted uses under 'mixed-use' zoning? How is it different from a 'community facility'?

The Plan's definition of 'Community Facility' encompasses a variety of services catering to the community, including educational and research establishments, cultural facilities, health centres and hospitals, and places of worship.

The proposed 'mixed-use' zoning will allow for a range of development types, including residential, social housing, aged care, commercial accommodation, community facility, office, and road, with ancillary commercial uses.

The amendment will contribute to increase housing supply, encourage urban consolidation, and ensure that new development makes efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Specifically, proposed permitted land uses for Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla are:

- Residential – limited to a maximum of 300 dwellings
- Social Housing – any dwellings to be contained within residential dwelling limits
- Commercial Accommodation – limited to the adaptive reuse of Forestry House and addition to the west of Forestry House, to a maximum Gross Floor Area (GFA) of 3500m² combined
- Community Facility (which allows for aged care facilities)
- Office – limited to the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings and a maximum GFA of 2600m²
- Road

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Permitted ancillary land uses for Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla are:

Café, Bar, and/or Restaurant – limited to a maximum GFA of 600m².

3. *Where has the proposal to change the land use of the site come from?*

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Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla (the site) is owned by Gunyar Pty Ltd (Gunyar) as trustee for the Gunyar ACT Properties Trust. The Shepherd Foundation is a charitable institution that supports children with hearing loss learn to listen and speak, and is beneficiary of the Trust.

On 1 April 2021, Oakstand Pty Ltd (Oakstand) of behalf of Gunyar submitted a request for an amendment to the National Capital Plan (NCP) to change the land use policy of Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla to allow for a mix of uses on the site.

4. *What consultation on redevelopment of the site has occurred so far?*

The NCA conducted an initial community engagement process to seek the views of key stakeholders and gauge initial community views on the redevelopment proposal, throughout August and September 2021.

In October 2021, the NCA Board considered the outcomes of the initial community engagement process. As a result of this consideration, the proponent was invited to present a revised scheme that reduced the building scale, and which was consistent with nearby developments (the old Canberra Brickworks). The proponent was also asked to reconsider the mix of land uses.

In May 2022, the proponent submitted a revised development proposition and request to amend the Plan. The plans submitted at this time showed development limited to not more than 3 storeys (plus attic, consistent with the direction provided by the NCA).

In October 2022, the NCA Board agreed that a draft amendment to the Plan could be prepared for Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla to:

- amend the land use from Community Facility to a mixed-use policy permitting residential commercial accommodation, community facility, and ancillary commercial uses
- introduce detailed conditions of planning, design and development for the site including limiting building heights to no greater than 3 storeys plus attic and applying maximum limits on ancillary commercial and accommodation uses.

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In June 2023, representatives of the Yarralumla Residents Association (YRA) presented to the NCA Board their views concerning the proposed redevelopment of the site. Oakstand subsequently presented to the NCA Board at their meeting in August 2023 to address concerns of the YRA.

In October 2023, the NCA Board agreed to release DA97 for public consultation.

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The NCA is now commencing the formal public consultation process required under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*.

5. What objectives are sought for the site?

DA97 proposes to introduce requirements prioritising design excellence, heritage preservation, and environmental sustainability. By allowing a variety of development types, including residential, commercial, and community facilities, the NCA seeks to achieve urban density without compromising the unique natural setting of Yarralumla.

DA 97 aims to:

- Ensure all development contributes to the natural character and landscape setting of the site.
- Retain and strengthen the site's landscape setting, while promoting new tree planting and species that will enrich the site's beauty, shade, shelter, and enhance the built environment.
- Ensure development exhibits design excellence in architecture, landscape architecture and urban design.
- Conserve the heritage significance of listed buildings including areas of associated fabric, settings, and views.
- Maintain public pedestrian access through the site and maintain access to the adjoining public playing field.
- Encourage sustainability as a base requirement for all new buildings and in landscape design and site management.

6. The site has some significant heritage buildings. How do you intend to protect them?

Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla has significant historic heritage value, recognised by two listings on the Commonwealth Heritage List – 'The CSIRO Forestry Precinct' and the 'Australian Forestry School (former)'. In May 2021, the site lessee referred the proposal to redevelop the site to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. In April

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2023, following DCCEEW's assessment process, the proposed action to redevelop the site was approved with conditions.

DA97 proposes provisions that seek to ensure that heritage buildings are adaptively reused, and that necessary conservation work is delivered through site redevelopment. Development proposals must respond to the heritage context of the site in terms of fabric, setting, curtilage and views.

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7. *What are the parking and access requirements for future development?*

Parking, access, and movement for cars, motorcycles and bicycles should comply with ACT Government planning requirements. These are recognised standards across the Territory and will ensure that parking requirements for Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla are consistent with other developments in close proximity.

Development proposals must show commitment to EV readiness with parking spaces equipped with wiring, covered outlets, and charging points.

No new access points from Bentham Street allowed.

The proposed conditions of planning and design seek to ensure that safe, well-lit and accessible pedestrian and cycle paths to key locations and public transport will be provided, integrating wayfinding and ensuring equitable access.

8. *Are there any restrictions on building height?*

Building height is proposed to be restricted to a maximum of three storeys plus an attic, with basements allowed if they are no more than 1.2 meters above the ground level. Buildings are to be designed to reflect the topography of the site and harmonise with the land.

9. *The landscape character is an important feature of the site. What are the requirements for open spaces and landscaping?*

To preserve the landscape qualities of Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla, new buildings are limited to specific areas, with a maximum area of 41,500m². Development proposals must ensure aesthetically pleasing building facades, adequate open space between buildings for ventilation, privacy, and pedestrian circulation, and open spaces with deep root plantings.

The site's unique tree landscape must be preserved and enhanced through the retention of existing trees and the addition of new ones, with a minimum of 60% of the site designated for open space and 45% for deep soil zones. Existing trees along the site's perimeter should be retained, unless otherwise approved by the NCA.

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10. How have traffic impacts been considered?

Traffic assessments have been undertaken to determine the potential transport implication of development of the site. The assessment included analysis of existing traffic and parking conditions surrounding the site, the adequacy of public transport services, proposed parking arrangement, trip generating characteristics of the proposed development, suitability of future transport access arrangement for the proposal, and the transport impact of the proposal on the surrounding road network.

The site lessee liaised with Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) during preparation of the traffic assessment. TCCS has confirmed with the NCA that they supported the proponent's approach and methodology. TCCS will undertake a final review of the report during the public consultation phase on DA97.

11. How will the NCA consider feedback?

The NCA will consider all feedback received in response to DA97. This will include feedback provided in written submissions and verbally at the public drop-in session. The NCA will also consider responses provided to social media posts and other media articles.

In considering feedback to DA97, the NCA will consider the principles and policies of the Plan, development of the National Capital and good planning practices, and other relevant government policies.

The NCA will publish a Consultation Report once a decision concerning the draft amendment has been made.

12. If DA97 is approved, who is responsible for approving development on the site and when will this occur?

The site is within Designated Areas under the Plan. This means that the NCA is responsible for approving all works on the site, from tree plantings and other landscape works to new buildings. Major development proposals will be subject to further public consultation which provides the community the opportunity to review and comment on detailed plans for the site.

The timing of works approval (development) applications to the NCA will be determined by the proponent.

13. Will redevelopment of the site impact the use of Forestry Oval?

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Forestry Oval is not part of Block 7 Section 4 Yarralumla or subject to DA97. Forestry Oval is managed by the ACT Government and the NCA is not aware of any changes to existing management and access arrangements.

14. *What opportunities are there for community and stakeholder participation during the public consultation process?*

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The NCA invites the community and stakeholders to actively engage in the public consultation process and offer their valuable input.

Options to get involved or obtain further information are available on the NCA's website. Submissions are invited until close of business on 22 December 2023.

Your opinions, concerns, and suggestions can help shape the future of this important site in Yarralumla.

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