

A 4 unit, two storey, Manor House with 9 carparks next door to you!

The Demonstrated Housing Project - the thin edge of the wedge?

The ACT government is proposing to change the Territory Plan so that one 4-unit 2-storey Manor House with 9 car parks can be built in Griffith on a block zoned for low-rise, low density residential housing (RZ1). This type of building is not currently permitted in RZ1. The change is being proposed under the umbrella of the ‘Demonstrated Housing Project’, which aims to deliver medium-fill demonstration housing proposals that could be used for ‘high quality medium density infill’.

The project is supposed to “test the effectiveness of different housing types through real examples and future review through post -occupancy modelling.”

The cost to the ratepayer of this project, how or when the testing will be done, or what criteria will be used for evaluation has not been revealed.

According to the government’s own words:

“One off or site-specific Variations to the Territory Plan are not generally supported unless it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding public benefit or good and that it is consistent with the planning objectives of the ACT Government. Rezoning of residential areas generally occurs as part of a wider review of planning policies rather than on a block by block basis. This ensures broader strategic planning practices and outcomes are implemented and realised.”

Why we don’t support it

- The largest investment for most families is the purchase of a home. It is crucial they know what could be built next to them. Families need certainty and trust in the planning system. They do not want the surprise of a four-unit two storey, apartment-style dwelling with 9 car parks built next door and impacting on their privacy and amenity.
- The Inner South already has the highest ratio of high-density dwellings in Canberra’s 8 Districts. There are over 2000 new dwellings in the pipeline here and the population is set to rise by 20% in 6 years. Why do we need more intensification? Any single block rezoning should wait until the review of the Territory Plan is completed as per the government’s own words.
- Once the precedent has been set for rezoning random blocks, there is little to stop most of Griffith and other suburbs becoming higher density areas. In effect, turning RZ1 zones into Swiss Cheeses, with no one able to forecast where the next hole will appear.
- Many residents in the Inner South, are concerned that changing the rules to allow for the construction of units will reduce the value of existing houses and increase the noise and local traffic in the streets.
- It is wrong for the ACT Government to change the residential building regulations for one block, based on the pretext of running an architectural design project.
- Canberrans need certainty and trust when purchasing the family home, not government-driven spot rezoning in their backyards.

What should happen

The project should be undertaken in an RZ2 zone. In the meantime, the Variation should be withdrawn until the Planning Review is completed.