

National Capital Authority will not support Yarralumla development as it stands

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An artist's impression of the redevelopment of the Yarralumla Brickworks site.

The National Capital Authority says it will not support the Yarralumla housing development unless the ACT addresses concerns about access to Government House, the impact on historic trees, and the plan for six-storey buildings near Dunrossil Drive.

The authority's chief planner, Andrew Smith, has written to the ACT Land Development Agency outlining a series of concerns about the development, which will see 1800 new dwellings, including townhouses and apartments, in an area south of the existing suburb near the historic brickworks and near the entrance to the Governor-General's residence. The development has attracted widespread criticism from local residents and from others worried about the impact on a historic site and the Walter Burley Griffin plan.

One of the most controversial proposals is to chop off the end of Dunrossil Drive, which currently leads directly off Cotter Road to Government House. The ACT government plans to replace the end of the road with a new "Brickworks Road", which would provide access to the housing estate, and would also meet Dunrossil Drive at a new intersection.

The National Capital Authority has asked the government to rethink the roads. It wants the main access to the housing estate separated from Brickwords Road and moved further south. It doesn't want Brickwords Road to be a through road to the brickworks, but suggests it should stop at Dunrossil Drive, with the section from there to the new "Central Street" removed.

It has also asked the agency to rethink plans for parking on Brickworks Road, saying there should be no parking there.

Mr Smith indicates that the road concerns are shared by government agencies responsible for security at Government House and the office of the Governor-General.

"The use of Brickworks Road as the primary access route to the precinct will result in a significant increase in vehicle movements in and around the entry to Government House," he said in his letter to the Land Development Agency. "The proposed on-street parking along Brickworks Road will give rise to the need for additional monitoring of vehicle activity in the precinct."

The authority criticised the landscape design plans, saying the ACT had an opportunity to establish a "meaningful, high quality landscape" around Government House.

"The significant earthworks required to accommodate the proposal will have a substantial visual impact along the local ridgelines due to the removal of substantial stands of trees," Mr Smith wrote. "Historical plantings along Dunrossil Drive, forming part of the Yarralumla and Surrounds Commonwealth heritage listing, will also be affected ...

"In its current form the proposed landscape treatment, including the loss of established tree plantations, is not supported."

Mr Smith pointed out that the authority had previously raised its concerns about trees and about the six-storey buildings planned for "Park Avenue" to no effect.

Park Avenue will run along the south of the estate near Cotter Road and leading up to the entrance of Dunrossil Drive.

The scale of the buildings appeared to be a departure from the agency's claims that the development would remain secondary to the landscape, Mr Smith wrote, requested a review of the heights of the buildings.

"Until the above matters are resolved, the authority would not support an amendment ... to enable the planning development strategy to proceed," Mr Smith concluded in his April 15 letter.

Mr Smith raised concerns about the project in an interview with *The Canberra Times*, but his letter, now [posted on the website of the Yarralumla Residents Association](#), is more strongly worded and makes it clear that the authority expects change.

Deputy chief executive of the Land Development Agency Dan Stewart said the agency recognised that Government House was "a true Canberra asset".

"We are continuing to work closely with the National Capital Authority on appropriate treatments for Dunrossil Drive to deliver a feasible and long-term solution that maintains the significant entrance to this important Canberra landmark," he said.