

Letters to the editor: Urban swamp needs draining

Published: February 17, 2017 - 8:39PM

The ongoing saga of the proposed redevelopment of a heritage building near Manuka Circle ("Manuka residents knocked back in bid to stop development in Forrest fire station precinct", canberratimes.com.au, February 13), demonstrates the deficiencies of the ACT's planning regime.

This Byzantine system needs urgent reform if community interests and heritage values are to be respected and enforced.

At every point in this sorry episode, the system has been stacked against the residents who sought to raise their concerns about this redevelopment.

Despite the best efforts of the presiding member, ACAT's consideration of the case deteriorated into a lawyers' picnic – so much for cheap and fair access to justice.

The heritage concerns expressed by the residents do not appear to have been given any serious consideration by ACTPLA or the Heritage Council.

And, to cap it off, third party appeal rights in relation to this and other heritage precincts and residential areas were abolished by an obscure 2008 regulation.

ACT politicians must honour their election promises to completely overhaul the Planning and Development Act.

It is time we drained Canberra's planning swamp.

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