

Curtin Residents Association Inc. *Newsletter*

6 January 2017

Development proposal for 41 Curtin Place (the 44 Curtin Place project)

In mid-December the Haridemos family lodged the formal DA (Development Application) with the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate. The proposal is to replace the block of shops on the north-western side of Curtin Square (the whole building that houses the chemist, bookshop, greengrocer, milk bar, etc.). The proposed development is for a six-storey building, including a double-height retail ground floor and five residential floors, with three levels of car parking underground. The total height above the square is 24 metres.

Because the proposal does not comply with the planning criteria for the CZ1 zone it has to be considered on a Merit track. The developer has to argue the merits of their proposal under each element of a large number of rules and criteria. The public has to be notified—as it was in mid-December—and public responses called for. The deadline for our responses is now 31 January.

Why do we object?

Many people in the community who use the Curtin group centre are not in favour of this proposal. It does **not** meet many of the principles and constraints embodied in the Curtin Group Centre Draft Master Plan. This Master Plan came from consultations with the Curtin community in 2015—and the community still believes in this. Many residents of Curtin and nearby suburbs came and talked to us in Curtin Square before Christmas. The strong swell of opinion was that this development is far too large for this position. Many people, though not everybody, agree that some development is needed: the existing building is old and worn.

But overwhelmingly the Curtin community feels that adding 50 apartments to the square will not improve it.

In fact, there is very strong feeling that a large building will loom over people and overshadow the square, blocking the sun and making the square far less pleasant than it is now.

The community also feels strongly that apartments in the Curtin group centre will put more pressure on car parking—already uncomfortably full—and surrounding streets.

The developer says that some of the reasons for developing this block as residences with ground floor retail businesses are to add more people to the centre, following government policy to increase the

Action

- Make a submission to the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate.
- Come to the rally in the Square—Saturday 21 January at 11 am.
- Sign the petition and get your friends and neighbours to sign (see us at our table in the Square, or sign at BeyondQ bookshop).
- Write to or email an MLA: the local members for Murrumbidgee electorate are Bec Cody, Jeremy Hanson, Giulia Jones, Carolyn le Couteur and Chris Steel; and to Gai Brodtmann, the local federal MP, as well.

population density in group centres, and to bring more people, both into the square as customers and above the square as onlookers to improve safety. Redevelopment will revitalise the tired buildings, the developer says, and provide an architectural statement. Combining the building of new residential upper storeys with the redevelopment of the commercial block has commercial reasons that were not explained.

What do we want?

We would like to see some redevelopment of the Curtin shops that preserves and develops the very real community character of the centre. That character is founded on some of the existing shops, and on the human scale and activities in the square itself: people crossing and meeting, eating and drinking and talking, children playing in winter sunshine and summer shade. The square works well right now! The character of the square is evident: it's a small place with trees, with wide, low awnings around its active buildings which are one and two storeys high, with roofs well set back.

The scale of any buildings around the square should be similar to the existing ones. As the Draft Master Plan says, this should be two storeys, with four storeys only at the southern end, outside the square. The position of any buildings should allow sunshine into the square in winter.

The alternative to this proposal is not for the developers to do nothing, and we encourage them to think of a better proposal than this one, making changes that really consider community concerns. The building's height and bulk and the number of flats are problems.

The solutions seem obvious: to reduce the number of floors of flats. Or to replace the shops with modern versions, and develop residential flats in a better position, off the square. Or to move the block to the south-west and open up the northern end of the square, broadening the tight laneway between the current milk bar and the café and bakery. This solution could swap the land currently used by some surface car-parking spaces, and open new spaces where there is currently grass.

Where should redevelopment start? We think that all of the buildings around the square should be considered as a whole, with a cohesive plan and aesthetic.

The DA process and making objections

The process for the Planning Directorate to assess and approve development applications of this type requires public notification followed by a period for the public to make 'representations'—comments and objections. The more we can demonstrate community interest and objections, the more effect we can expect to have on the application.

When the DA was first notified, the time for making comments and objections was set to end on 18 January. Following many letters from the Curtin Residents Association, residents themselves, and a politician, the date was extended to 31 January. This gives time for many more people to make their views known.

You can write to the Environment and Planning Directorate or lodge an electronic form. Go to www.planning.act.gov.au/development_applications/pubnote/development_applications_ordered_by_district#W

then scroll or search for Curtin Place and click through to the form. Perseverance is needed! It's not a friendly website.

The more comments that people make, the better. Objections are best if they respond to some of the criteria in the planning regulations. Our next newsletter will include some short points that may help you to write your response.

The Directorate has to make a decision after submissions close on 31 January, and then has to inform the developer and the people who have made representations. We hope that the Planning Directorate, having received our many comments, will negotiate a more acceptable proposal with the developer.

Community support—objections, petition, rally

Since the DA went public the Curtin Residents Association has been active in informing residents and users of the group centre. You may have seen us at a table in Curtin Square in the week before Christmas, and volunteer members have letterboxed every house and apartment in Curtin, as well as some in neighbouring suburbs. If you want more leaflets, or know of someone who has missed out, let us know by email (see below for email address).

The Association is talking to ACT politicians in the Legislative Assembly and Federal Parliament. We are getting the support of nearby community groups—the Woden Valley Community Council, and the Deakin and Yarralumla Residents Associations.

We have started a Facebook page; look at www.facebook.com/CurtinResidents. It is a 'group' page, so ask to join (click on the link on the page).

Over 200 people so far have signed a petition to the Legislative Assembly, asking the Minister to stick to the height restrictions of the Draft Master Plan. See us at our table in Curtin Square, many mornings and occasional afternoons, over the next few weeks. Sign the petition, look at our printouts of the DA, or chat to us about the development proposal. We're interested in your views.

And we are going to hold a Rally in the square to show how strongly the community feels about our group centre. Saturday 21 January, 11am. Can you be there?

Other Curtin news

Curtin has been an active place for community this summer, from Carols on the Block to a book launch.

The book on Curtin's history—50 years—was launched in the square in December, and has been selling very well. You can buy a copy at the authors' occasional table in the square, or at Beyond Q bookshop or the post office.

The Curtin Shops Garden Group held a successful stall and has raised the money needed to pay for landscaping and brickwork in the John Curtin Memorial garden. This garden is at the shops, on Carruthers Street, with the stone wall and portrait of John Curtin. The Garden Group has more projects in mind to improve the area around the Curtin shops. For information contact Evan Mann on evan.mann@netspeed.com.au.

Contact us

Curtin Residents Association

Email: info@curtinresidents.asn.au

Website: www.curtinresidents.asn.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CurtinResidents

Mail: PO Box 261, Curtin, ACT 2605