



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988

Draft Amendment 100

Knowles Place Alignment

November 2024

Introduction

The National Capital Authority (NCA) is established under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* (the Act). The National Capital Plan (the Plan) came into effect on 21 January 1990. In accordance with the Act, the NCA is required to keep the Plan under constant review and to propose amendments to it where necessary. The object of the Plan is *‘to ensure that Canberra and the Territory are planned and developed in accordance with their national significance’*.

The Plan identifies matters of national significance in the planning and development of Canberra and the Territory. These are:

- The pre-eminence of the role of Canberra and the Territory as the centre of National Capital functions, and as the symbol of Australian national life and values.
- Conservation and enhancement of the landscape features which give the National Capital its character and setting, and which contribute to the integration of natural and urban environments.
- Respect for the key elements of the Griffins’ formally adopted plan for Canberra.
- Creation, conservation and enhancement of fitting sites, approaches and backdrops for national institutions and ceremonies as well as National Capital uses.
- The development of a city which both respects environmental values and reflects national concerns with the sustainability of Australia’s urban areas.

Within the framework of this legislative object or goal, key objectives of the Plan are to:

- Recognise the pre-eminence of the role of Canberra and the Territory as Australia’s National Capital.
- Further develop and enhance the Central National Area which includes the Parliamentary Zone and its setting and the main diplomatic sites and national institutions, as the heart of the National Capital.
- Emphasise the national significance of the main avenues and approach routes.
- Respect the geometry and intent of the Griffins’ formally adopted plan for Canberra.
- Maintain and enhance the landscape character of Canberra and the Territory as the setting for the National Capital.
- Protect the undeveloped hill tops and the open spaces which divide and give form to Canberra’s urban area.
- Provide a plan offering flexibility and choice to enable the Territory government properly to fulfil its functions.
- Support and promote environmentally responsible urban development practices.

The purpose of Draft Amendment 100 – Knowles Place Alignment (DA100) is to vary the location of part of Knowles Place as shown in the City Hill Precinct Code of the Plan. The variation in alignment will help facilitate the Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment project.

DA100 to the Plan (set out in Part 2: National Capital Plan Draft Amendment 100 – Knowles Place Alignment) has been prepared in accordance with section 23 of the Act.

Part 1: Context

1.1 Introduction

The ACT Government has proposed the Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment project. The project includes the development of a new 2,000 seat theatre adjoining the existing playhouse to the west, significant expansion of the courtyard studio on the eastern side of the precinct, and upgrades to the existing Canberra Theatre and refurbishment of the Playhouse.

The project site (Block 23 Section 19 Canberra) is located within the City Hill Precinct of the Plan. The Playhouse is located on the southern portion of the block, whilst the remainder of the block is used as a surface level car park. The new theatre complex is proposed on the southern portion of the block, while the northern portion has been identified as a development site, subject to future tender and sale by the City Renewal Authority (CRA).

The City Hill Precinct Code of the Plan requires that a laneway ('Knowles Place') extend around almost the entire precinct. The extension of Knowles Place is intended to improve permeability, enable service access, and create more opportunities for activation through the precinct.

The City Hill Precinct Code of the Plan identifies the permitted land use for Knowles Place and its extension as 'road' rather than land available for development.

The Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment project area includes the land identified as the Knowles Place alignment as part of the development site. Planning and design work underway indicates that the size and shape of Block 23 Section 19 Canberra, and functional requirements of the new theatre, result in the need to continue the theatre building into the current Knowles Place alignment.

To facilitate the approval of the Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment, whilst retaining the principles of permeability and accessibility embedded in the City Hill Precinct Code, a new alignment for Knowles Place through Block 23 Section 19 City is required. The new alignment will achieve the same urban design outcomes and functionality as the current alignment, including in relation to traffic and movement, activation of the precinct, and general design intent for the City Hill Precinct.

In April 2024, the NCA Board agreed to the preparation of a draft amendment to the Plan to move the Knowles Place reserve northward.

1.2 Location

The City Hill Precinct is located at the apex of the National Triangle astride an important entrance route to the Parliamentary Zone and forms a significant element in the physical structure of central Canberra. The Precinct is the municipal heart of central Canberra and forms the Griffins' symbolic and geographical centre for the City – a corner completing the National Triangle as a gateway to the Central National Area and a hub connecting significant main avenues and vistas.

Block 23 Section 19 City is an irregular-shaped parcel of land in the north-eastern section of the Precinct. The block is bound by London Circuit, Northbourne Avenue, Vernon Circle, and the Canberra Museum and Gallery. Figure 1 illustrates the location of the site.

Figure 1: Location of Block 23 Section 19 City



1.3 Planning considerations

The southern part of Block 23 Section 19 City is part of the Civic Square Precinct, which is entered on the ACT Heritage Register. The following points summarise the heritage significance of the place:

- Civic Square Precinct is significant to the ACT for social and cultural values as an important central location and open space for public use, celebrations and cultural events and for expressions of democratic freedoms through protest.
- It is also significant for its planning and design as a place that put people ahead of built scale by providing an open contemporary and accessible space for them, and for maintaining the Griffins' spatial planning characteristics for City Hill; and for its association with the local administration of the city from inception through to self-government; and with the precinct's designer, Roy McGowan Simpson AO.
- The framing of the Square – by the North and South Buildings and the podium and Canberra Theatre Centre – is significant.

The proposed changes to the Plan will not impact the heritage listing, however the NCA requires that development and ongoing management of heritage places is consistent with their values. Future development within the Civic Square Precinct will need to appropriately respond to its heritage significance.

There are no known environmental matters relevant to Block 23 Section 19 City.

Traffic generation and movement through the site and surrounding area will need to be addressed through detailed planning and design. The NCA will consider traffic impact studies as part of the works approval process for the theatre project.

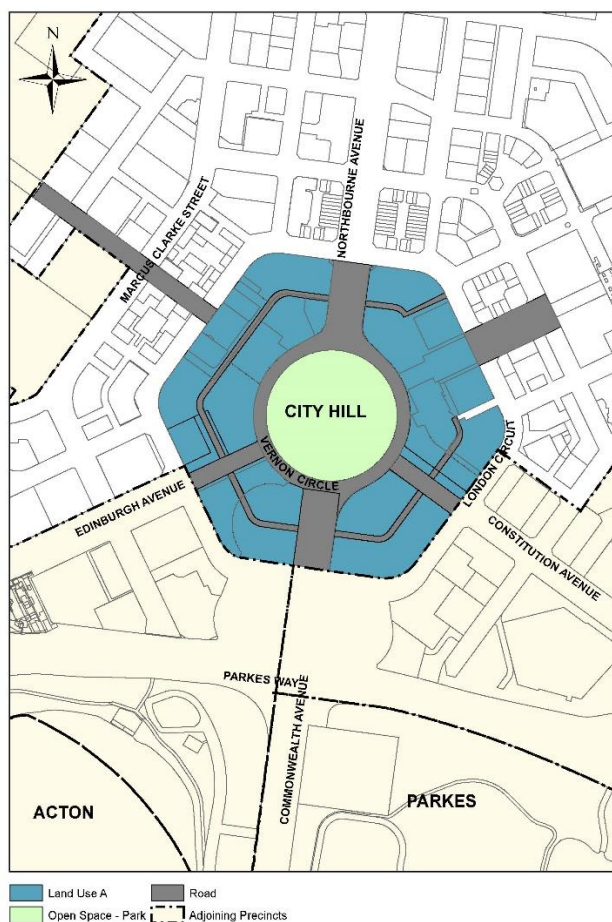
1.4 Explanatory statement

DA100 proposes changes only in relation to the alignment of Knowles Place. The NCA is not seeking comment on other aspects of the Precinct Code or the future of the City Hill Precinct.

The City Hill Precinct Code of the Plan sets out permitted land uses for the precinct (refer Figure 2). Three land uses or land use categories are permitted within the Precinct:

1. The permitted land use for City Hill itself is Open Space – Park, which allows the land to be used for public recreation, conservation or amenity purposes and may include facilities for the convenience or enjoyment of the public.
2. The permitted land use for the majority of land around City Hill is ‘Land Use A’, which the Plan further identifies as being a mixed use zoning allowing residential, retail, office, café/bar/restaurant, commercial accommodation, cultural facilities, and more.
3. ‘Road’ is the permitted use identified for existing roads – being Northbourne Avenue, Vernon Circle, Commonwealth Avenue, Constitution Avenue, Edinburgh Avenue, Ainslie Place, and part of Knowles Place – as well as the intended extension of Knowles Place around the whole Precinct.

Figure 2: Current land use for the City Hill Precinct



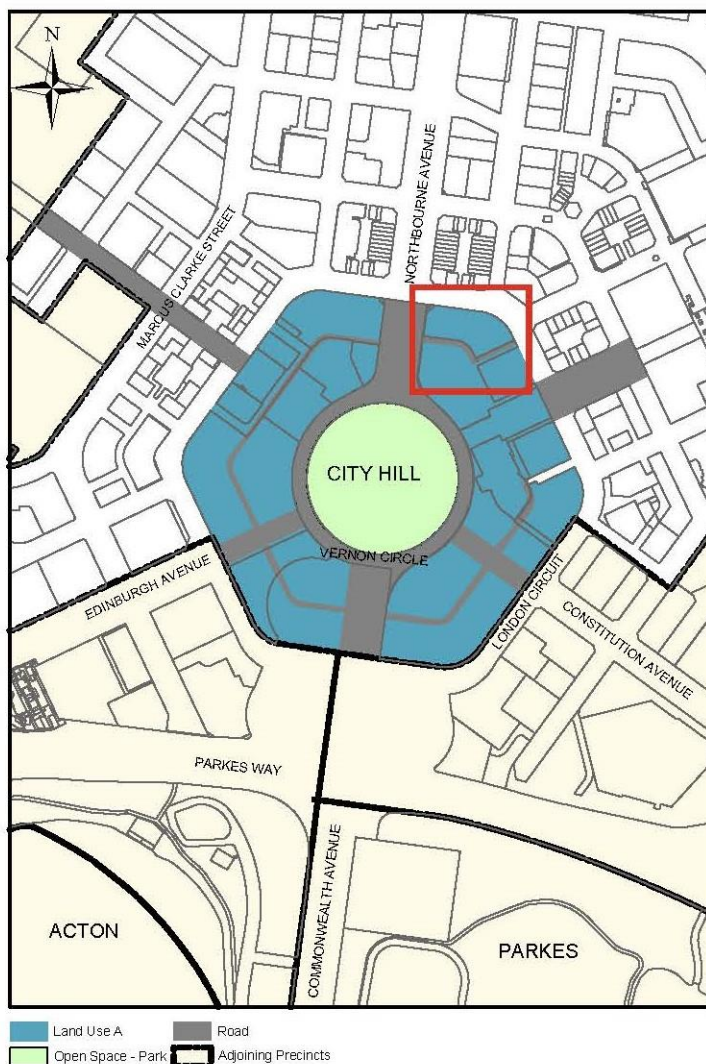
Under the Plan, a road means:

‘any way or street, whether in existence or under reserve, open to the public which is provided and maintained for the passage of vehicles, persons and animals and which may include footpaths, community paths, bus lay-bys, turning areas or traffic controls’.

The land use provisions of the Plan do not permit buildings to be constructed over areas set aside for a ‘road’. To facilitate the Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment, the land use drawing of the Plan must be amended to change the location of the Knowles Place extension in the northern section of the precinct (and east of Northbourne Avenue).

DA100 proposes the following land use arrangement shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Proposed land use for the City Hill Precinct (area of change within red box)



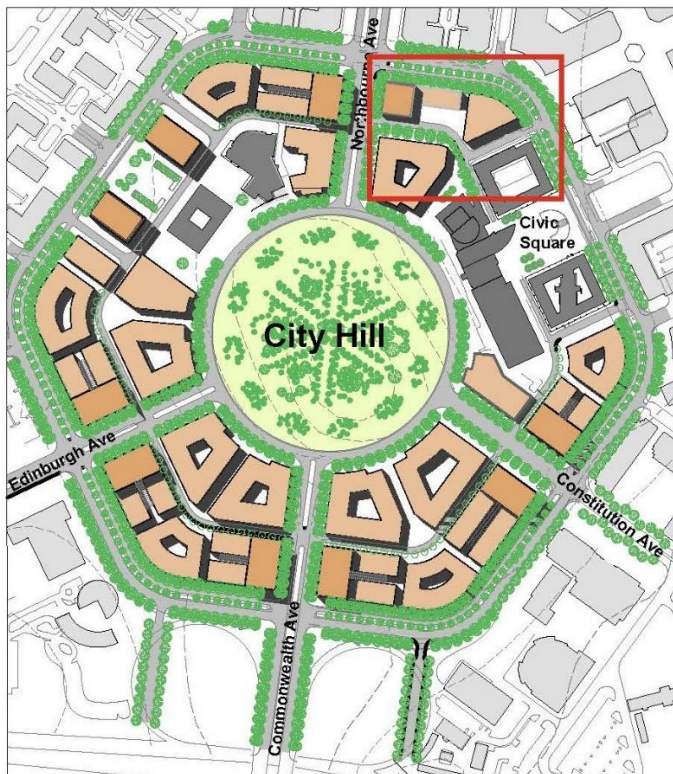
DA100 also proposes to amend other figures of the Plan, including those showing indicative development and indicative laneways. Whilst the drawings are ‘indicative’ only of development outcomes, it is appropriate to revise these drawings to reflect a revised Knowles Place alignment. The current and proposed drawings are illustrated in Figures 4 to 9 below.

Figure 4: Current indicative development drawing for the City Hill Precinct



Indicative Development

Figure 5: Proposed indicative development drawing for the City Hill Precinct (area of change within red box)



Indicative Development

Figure 6: Current indicative laneways drawing for the City Hill Precinct

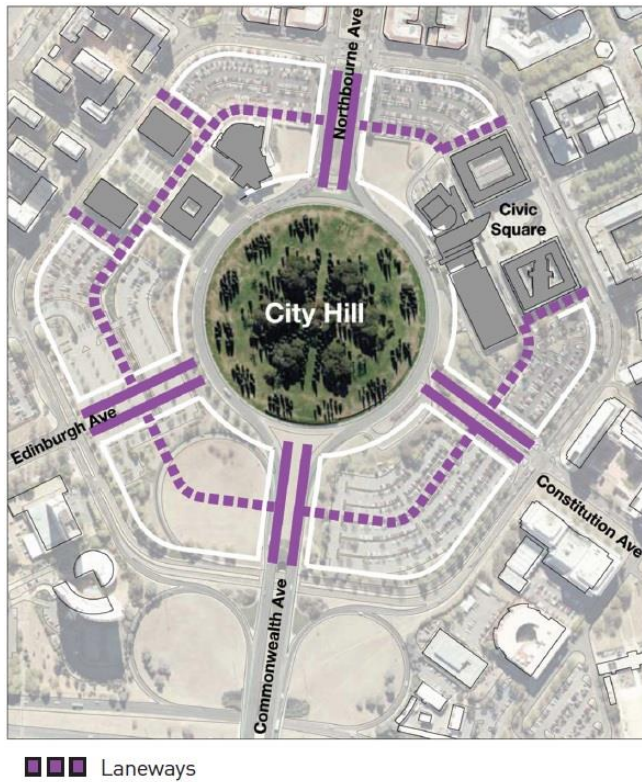


Figure 7: Proposed indicative laneways drawing for the City Hill Precinct (area of change within red box)

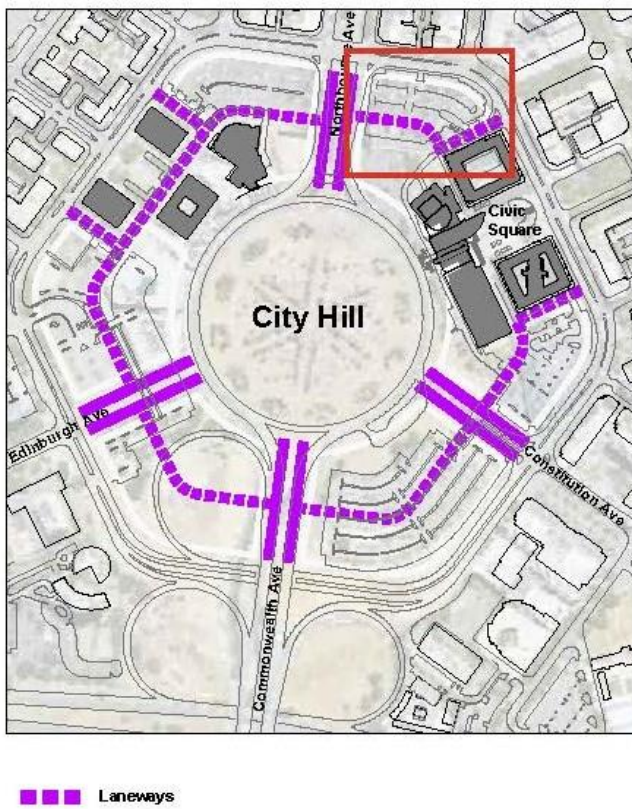


Figure 8: Current indicative building form, height and landmark buildings drawing for the City Hill Precinct

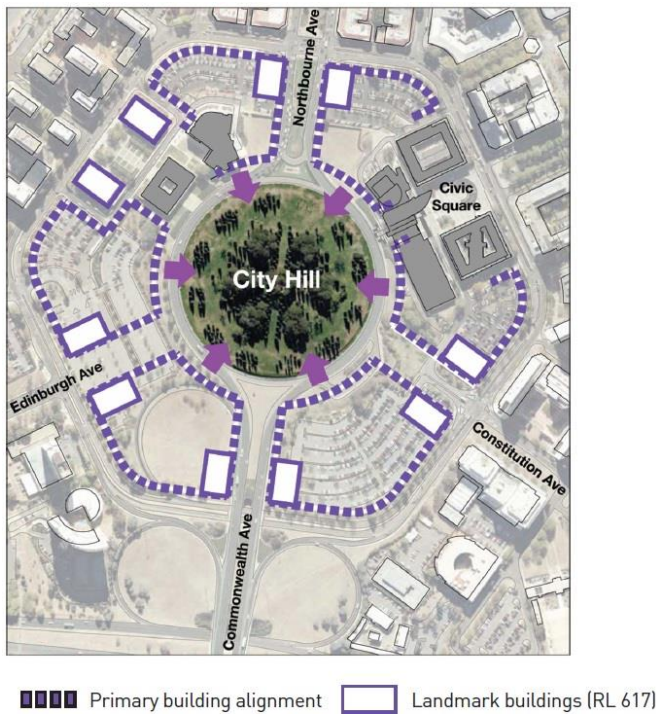
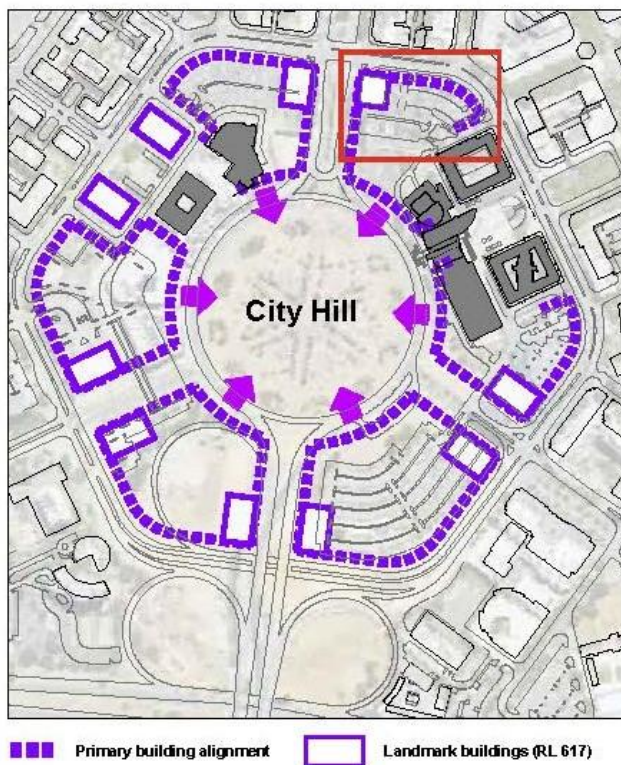


Figure 9: Proposed indicative building form, height and landmark buildings drawing for the City Hill Precinct (area of change within red box)



1.5 Draft amendment process

The process for making an amendment to the Plan is outlined in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Outline of the National Capital Plan draft amendment process

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE
Proposal by the NCA of a Draft Amendment to the Plan ▼
CURRENT STATUS
Public consultation on a Draft Amendment ▼
WHAT IS NEXT
Submission to Minister
Action by Minister
Parliamentary scrutiny
Expiration of disallowance period

1.6 Public consultation

The NCA welcomes written comments on DA100 from interested parties as part of the consultation process. All responses received will be considered before DA100 is submitted to the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Hard copies of DA100 are available on request by contacting:

National Capital Authority
Ground Floor, Treasury Building
King Edward Terrace
PARKES ACT 2600

02 6271 2888

Between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday

Get involved

Options to get involved or obtain further information include:

- Send your questions to draft.amendment@nca.gov.au. NCA officers will provide a written response, alternatively please indicate if you would like an NCA officer to call you to discuss your questions.
- Check the website and the NCA's social media channels regularly for further updates and responses to key questions and comments being received.

- If you belong to a community organisation or business, please email draft.amendment@nca.gov.au to organise a meeting or teleconference with NCA officers.

Submissions

Submissions to DA100 can be:

- emailed to draft.amendment@nca.gov.au
- mailed to Chief Planner, National Capital Authority, GPO Box 373, Canberra ACT 2601
- delivered to the National Capital Authority, Ground Floor Treasury Building, King Edward Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600.

Submissions are invited until close of business on 27 November 2024.

Permission to disclose name and address

The NCA seeks an open and transparent draft amendment process. Following public consultation on the draft amendment, the NCA will prepare a Consultation Report which will be published on the NCA website. This report will include a summary of each submission. The NCA intends to publish the name of each person making the submission, but will not publish contact details (such as physical address, email or phone number).

If you have a concern about having your name published on the internet or wish to make a confidential submission, you must make this clear when submitting your comments. Say why you want your submission to be kept confidential.

The NCA will consider requests for confidentiality, but cannot make promises in advance. If you have concerns about confidentiality, please contact the NCA to discuss before making a submission.

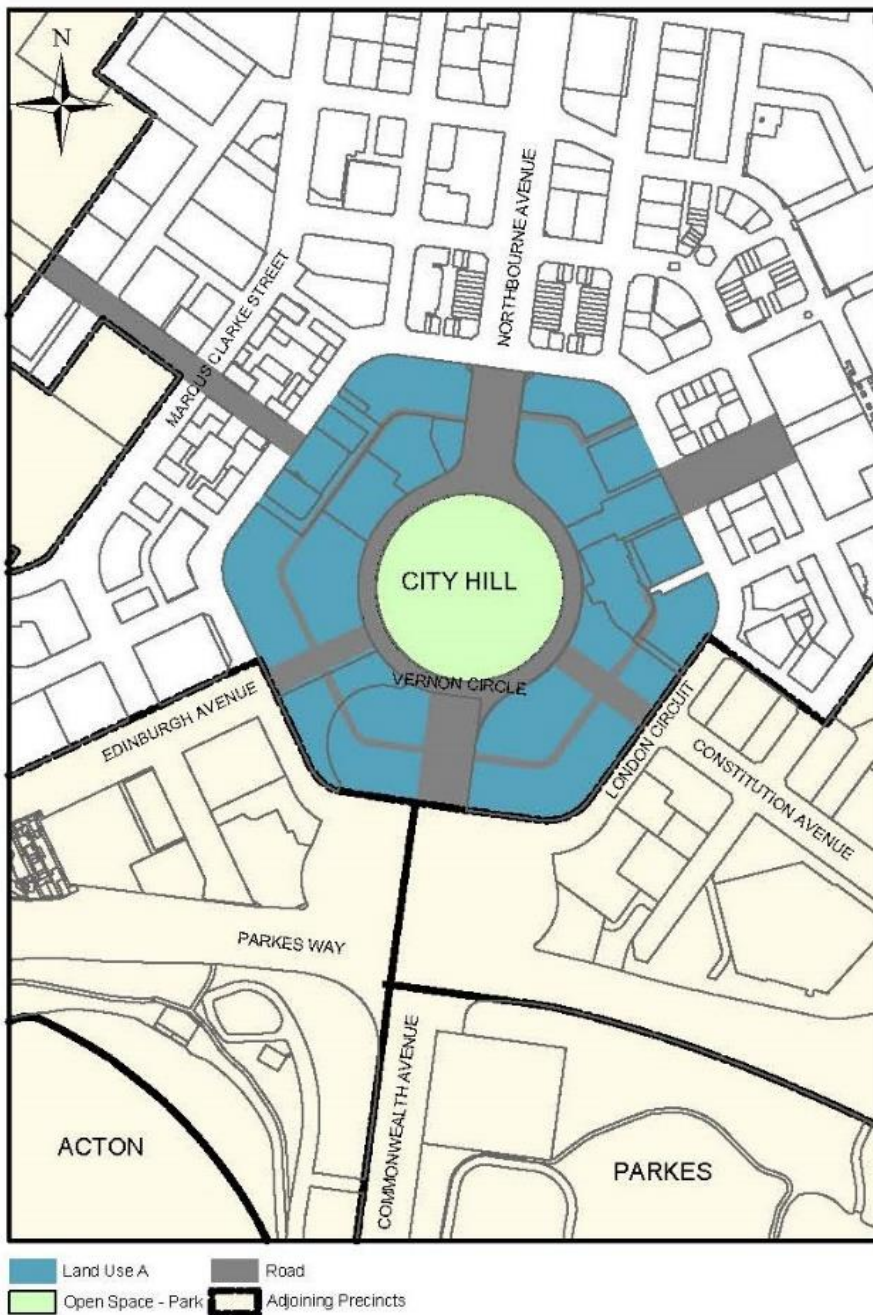
Part 2: National Capital Plan Amendment 100 – Knowles Place Alignment

The National Capital Plan is amended by the following:

Part Four – Designated Areas and Special Requirements

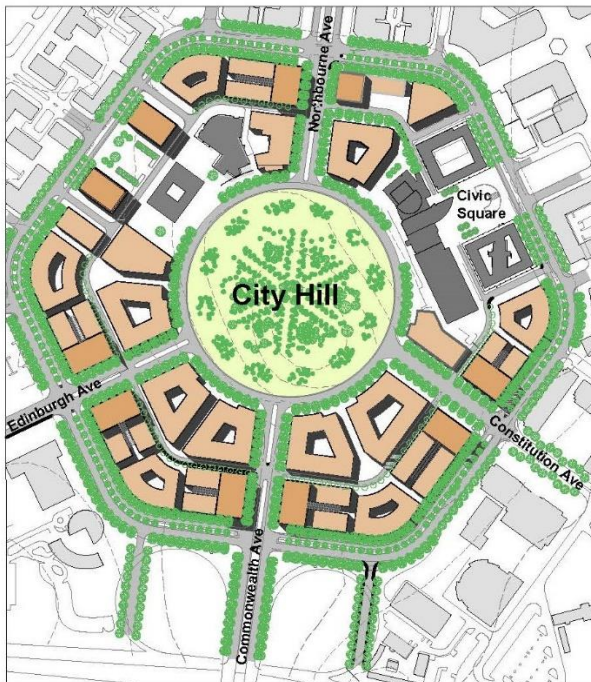
Section 4.6.4 Land Use for City Hill Precinct

1. Delete Figure 39: Land use for the City Hill Precinct and replace with the following:



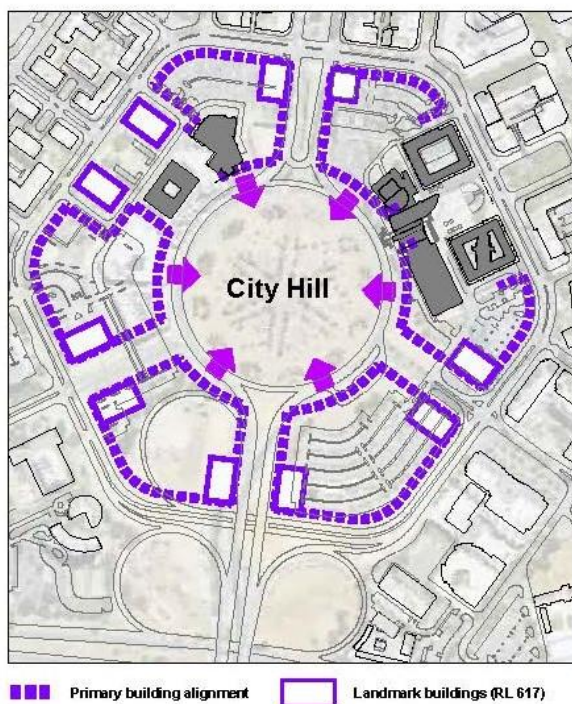
Section 4.6.5 Detailed conditions of planning, design and development

2. Delete Figure 40: City Hill – Indicative Development and replace with the following:

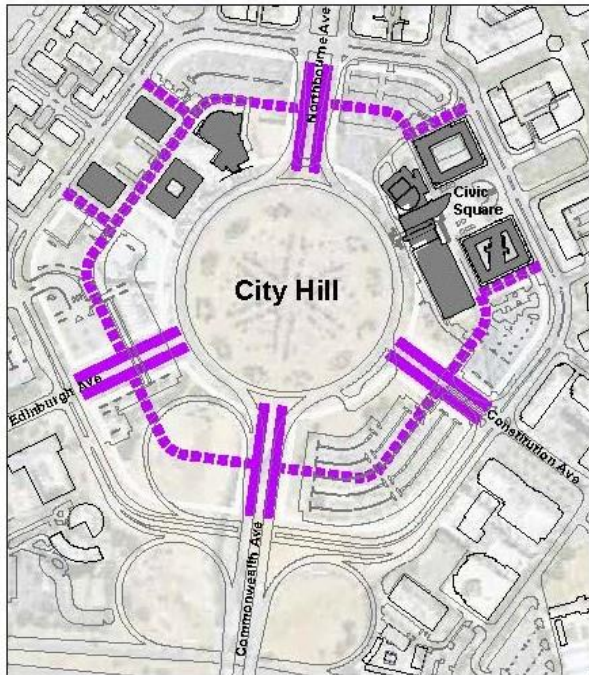


Indicative Development

3. Delete Figure 42: City Hill – Indicative building form, height and landmark buildings and replace with the following:



4. Delete Figure 46: City Hill – Indicative laneways and replace with the following:



Laneways
■ ■ ■ Laneways