
7.2 Metres or storeys

(i) What is the issue?

It was submitted that heights should be assessed in storeys.

(ii) Evidence and submissions

Council submitted:

The request to introduce the number of storeys in addition to the maximum building height i.e. maximum height of 9 metres and 2 storeys is problematic for several reasons. Clause 72 Definitions, defines a 'storey' as: 'That part of a building between floor levels. If there is no floor above, it is the part between the floor level and ceiling. It may include an attic, basement, built over car parking area, and mezzanine'.

Given that Manningham's topography is particularly hilly, many residential buildings incorporate basements, and in some cases mezzanine features, so whilst a dwelling may present as a two storey building, it is by definition of the Manningham Planning Scheme a three, or more, storey building.

(iii) Discussion

Specifying maximum building height in metres minimises ambiguity.

There is considerable debate about whether heights should be expressed in metres or storeys. Part of the confusion stems from the fact that a different floor to ceiling height might be appropriate in different circumstances, depending on use. Where protection of views or the creation of a consistent built edge is required then specification in metres is appropriate. When the issue is one of pedestrian-friendliness or maintaining low scale development, then perhaps specification in storeys is appropriate. In some cases, it may be necessary to specify both.

I note that the statutory provisions in the DDO8 control, and the Municipal Strategic Statement (Clause 21.05), make reference to number of storeys in addition to a maximum building height specified in metres. The use of storeys to give the community and designers a visual impression of the height of development that is promoted in each sub-precinct is appropriate.

For mandatory controls stipulating a maximum building height in metres is more precise and minimises ambiguity. In comparison, the word 'storey' is less specific, as the floor to ceiling heights of a building can vary considerably. For example, a building may be two storeys, but the floor to ceiling heights are such that the overall height may be greater than 9 or 10 metres.

(iv) Conclusions and recommendations

The Panel finds:

Height should generally be specified in metres, with an additional commentary on the number of storeys permitted to help communicate the intent or outcomes of controls.