

NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

THE PANEL'S ADVICE

BLOCK 6 SECTION 25 AINSLIE
STELLULATA COHOUSING



Australian Government
National Capital Authority



ACT
Government

NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

THE PANEL'S ADVICE

Project: Demonstration Housing – Stellulata Cohousing

Date: Wednesday 12 June, 2019

Meeting location: Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG),
Cnr. London Circuit and Civic Square, Canberra City

Proponent: Stellulata Pty Ltd.

Observers: Representatives from the:
City Renewal Authority (CRA)
Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)

Conflicts of interest: None

MEETING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Property address: 24 Angas Street Ainslie (Block 6 Section 25 Ainslie)

Proposal: The proposed development is called ‘Stellulata Cohousing’ which is a model of cooperative housing designed to provide opportunities for residents to age-in-place. The proposal is intended as a demonstration of how greater density can be achieved through a new typology that respects the expected built form character of low density residential areas. It is presented as an alternative to more conventional ‘downsizing’ housing transitions to apartments or aged care facilities.

The site, Block 6 Section 25, Ainslie, has an area of 1090m² and is located within a RZ1 Suburban Zone. The site is located in close proximity to the Macarthur Avenue and Ipima Street light rail stops on Northbourne Avenue and approximately 350m from bus services on Cowper Street.

The proposal includes four attached buildings, including one covered car park. The proposal is comprised of a communal building (Sallee House) presenting to Angas Street and three attached living units located to the rear of the communal building. Private garden spaces are proposed to the north of each residence with entry access to each residence along the southern boundary.

The proposal is being presented as a Demonstration Housing Project, which is a process being managed by the ACT Government. The Demonstration Housing Project is a collaboration between government, community and industry stakeholders on how to best deliver a housing demonstration project that delivers best practice environmental performance. In this regard, the development proposal includes a proposal for a dispensation to allow the development of three attached dwelling units and to unit-title the proposed development.

Proponents’ representative address to the panel:

The proponent opened the presentation by briefly outlining the proposal’s underlying design philosophy. This included underpinning social and legal arrangements that had been negotiated between parties. The proponent also reflected on Stellulata as a development model, noting the proposal can effectively serve a wide range of demographics.

It was noted that the proposal was designed to provide three houses on the block, without detriment to the adjoining neighbours. It was also noted that the proposed massing, design and scale is in keeping with the existing streetscape and suburban character.

The Architect (Brett Lowe) then proceeded with the formal presentation outlining the site, its context, the concept development process across all detail levels. Key design elements included the main house layout and purpose, sustainability measures such as cross-ventilation, stormwater and solar harvesting, materials selection, landscaping and site circulation.

Recommendation: Based on the documentation provided prior to the design review panel session and the proponents presentation, the following comments and recommendations are provided:

The panel congratulates the proponent and design team for presenting a development proposal that is sensitive to the surrounding suburban character and context. The panel also commends the proponent for the spirit in which the team has engaged with the panel.

Generally, the panel considers the proposal to be a clever offering that will provide high levels of amenity for future residents with an appropriate consideration of the built form in this location. The panel supports and congratulates the proponent for developing a proposal with a highly successful residential floor layout, appropriate building scale and architectural expression and a successful streetscape response. The panel also notes that the generous floor to ceiling heights will contribute to high quality internal living spaces for the future residents.

In the next iteration of the design development, the panel encourages the proponent to explore how circulation within the site could be further resolved, notably the location of the main entrance through the communal building to the residential houses to the rear. In this regard, further consideration and refinement of the internal layout of the communal building (Sallee House) could be made to improve visitor wayfinding and its overall functional role to the development proposal.

The panel also notes that while the development as a whole is considered to be successful, the design detail of this proposal will be important to the success of the proposal for a future community within this landscape setting.

The panel recommends that the key issues and recommendations outlined in this advice are addressed by the proponent. While not required, the panel welcomes further collaboration with the proponent to assist in identifying the best possible outcome for the site.

Key Issues and Recommendations

The *Key Issues and Recommendations* provide detail advice to the proponent, consistent with the above recommendation.

To achieve the best possible design outcome for the proposal, the proponent is encouraged to consider the following issues through the next stages of the design development:

1.0 Context and neighbourhood Character

1.1 The panel commends the proponent's consideration of the site's functional intent and its appropriateness to the neighbourhood context as demonstrated by the mode of habitation as a communal living arrangement. The panel also acknowledges the proponent's consideration of neighbours in the built form's site response.

2.0 Architectural response, scale and sustainability

- 2.1 The panel commends the efficient use of space to accommodate the three proposed residences on the existing site. The panel acknowledges the proponent's intention to provide a clear transition from public to private space through the placement of a common use structure at the site's street frontage. However, the panel encourages the proponent to further explore how improvements could be made to improve wayfinding for future visitors. This includes refinement to or relocation of the proposed front door to the communal building (Sallee House) to support a clear and obvious entry to the proposed development.
- 2.2 The panel commends the proponent's utilisation of roof pitch and location of opportunities to maximise solar access and cross-ventilation. Additionally, the panel supports and congratulates the proponent on the proposal for integration of rainwater harvesting and storage into the proposal.

3.0 Communal building (Sallee House) and wayfinding

- 3.1 The panel suggests further consideration and refinement to the Sallee House floor layout be undertaken to provide a level of flexibility for the long-term usability of this building. As noted in the presentation, there is a degree of uncertainty about the possible future use and frequency of use by the residents. Ensuring that Sallee House could be easily converted for communal purposes or as a residence in the future would strengthen this proposal.
 - 3.2 The panel recommends that the entrance to the communal building (Sallee House) be reviewed to provide a single and clearly identifiable entrance to the development proposal. The panel is concerned that the two entrances to the development proposal may create confusion for the address of the development, particularly for visitors and deliveries to the future residences. Consideration could be given to shifting Sallee House closer to the southern block boundary to consolidate the two entrances to one, providing a property 'control' through Sallee House to the proposed residential units to the rear. Parking access and vehicle turning circles will need to be reviewed at part of these considerations.
 - 3.3 The panel notes the current approach to the southern access way to the residential entrances is narrow and utilitarian. The panel considers that this space could be enhanced to provide for a more pleasant entrance to each residence and to the proposed facilities at the rear of the block. The southern access way is considered to be an important element to the broader concept of the proposal, as the 'stem of the development', and would benefit by widening this space to provide a greater level of amenity and landscaping to the entrance for each dwelling. The panel considers that this could become even more important in the future, if mobility devices and the like are required by future residents.
-

4.0 Communal landscape spaces

4.1 The panel supports the proposal for garden spaces along the northern boundary to support a future community. The panel recommends that further refinement to the design and function of these spaces is explored to more clearly define the communal and private spaces for residents. Additionally, privacy to each dwelling also requires further attention to ensure that the communal spaces can be used and that a level of privacy to each residence is provided and maintained.

