

NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

THE PANEL'S CRITIQUE

BLOCKS 4 AND 5 SECTION 38 CAMPBELL
(FOOTHILLS)



Australian Government
National Capital Authority



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NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

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Project: Foothills - Blocks 4 and 5 Section 38 Campbell

Date: Wednesday 10 April 2019

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

Proponent: Doma Group/Stewart Architecture

Observers: Representatives from the:

Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)

National Capital Authority (NCA)

Conflicts of interest: None

MEETING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Property address: 38 Limestone Avenue, Campbell (Block 4 & 5 Section 38)

Proposal: The proposed development, known as Foothills, is located adjacent to Limestone Avenue and Ainslie Avenue, and is bordered by Campbell High School to the south, environmentally sensitive vacant Territory land to the north, Ainslie Village and Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve in Central Canberra.

The site, Blocks 4 and 5 Section 38 Campbell, is National Land outside Designated Areas and is defined as Urban Areas in the National Capital Plan.

The proposal includes two 8 storey apartment buildings comprised of 112 apartments, a variety of communal facilities on the ground floor and two levels of basement car parking. Additionally, 129 two storey townhouses are proposed across 19 buildings and includes 'basement' style car parking for groups of townhouses.

Proponents' representative address to the panel:

Doma Group opened the presentation noting that the proposal for the masterplan of the site was subject to approval from the NCA. The current Development Control Plan (DCP), dated May 2016, was developed in conjunction with a previous masterplan prepared by Stewart Architecture with a maximum GFA of 60,000m² and a maximum building height of RL617. It was outlined by the proponent that the proposed masterplan is informed by the site analysis and reflects the demands for the current housing market. The masterplan indicates that development will include a mix of medium density apartments and townhouses.

Stewart Architecture outlined the history of the site and multiple masterplan strategies which were explored since 2013, noting the different building typologies and design strategies that were considered. This included consideration of a number of site constraints such as the significant cross fall (approximately 14 metres) across the site.

The proposed layout of the apartment buildings was described by the proponent to provide views and vistas past the buildings and through the site and to give good solar orientation to all dwellings. The orientation was favoured to minimise overshadowing of existing single level houses across Limestone Avenue. Similarly, the layout of the town houses is designed to provide good solar access to living spaces and minimise site cut and fill (where possible). Stewart Architecture described the vision for a predominantly pedestrian friendly environment throughout the development, with resident car parking located below the proposed built form and generally out of sight. Landscaping to the edges of the development were proposed to reinforce the existing native planting character of the surrounding areas, while proposing a more structured and

formal planting character for the internal streets and open spaces, with exotic species.

The proposed architectural character was described as being in its conceptual phase, however the materiality and colour pallet presented draws from the Australian War Memorial with light stonework as well as mid-century architecture use of stone, brick and timber. Additionally, the architectural expression was described as providing strong base and light upper floors for the apartment's buildings. A more domestic scale was proposed for townhouses, which included variations of pitched and flat roof forms.

Site visit: Wednesday 10 April 2019

Recommendation: The panel appreciates that the proposal has been presented to the NCDRP at the early design phase of the masterplan. The panel also takes this opportunity to thank the design team for delivering a clear and informative presentation.

Based on the documentation provided prior to the design review panel session; a site visit by the panel; and the proponents presentation, the following comments and recommendations are provided:

The panel supports the proposal as a predominately low scale medium density residential development in this location as it provides a unique opportunity for residents to live close to Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve and within walking distance to the city centre. The panel considers that the proposed built form that transitions from two storey townhouses at the rear of the site to the medium rise apartments addressing Limestone Avenue, provides an appropriate scale and gesture to the surrounding native landscape setting. Due to the significant cross fall across the site, the panel has identified the opportunity to increase the height of part of the development in the centre of the site to achieve a transition of built form height from Limestone Avenue to the foothills of Mount Ainslie. Accompanying the exploration of additional height, we would encourage a "loosening" of the masterplan figure ground, thus affording greater retention of natural landscape features. This is discussed further below. This should be informed through further visual analysis for the proposal and ensure that due consideration for any overshadowing on neighbouring residential, the Campbell High School playing fields and adjacent public spaces has been appropriately minimised. This visual analysis should seek to understand the visual effect of development, particularly as it relates to height, bulk and mass, when viewed from the hills and ridgelines surrounding the central Canberra valley, including views from Red Hill, Black Mountain and the O'Connor ridge.

The panel was encouraged to hear that engagement with adjacent lessees has commenced and encourages the design team to continue to undertake further engagement with nearby residents and Campbell High School. In the panel's view, the proposal should seek to limit any overshadowing of the schools

playing fields and nearby residential dwellings as tested on the winter solstice from 9am to 3pm.

The panel considers that there are further opportunities to explore and refine the integration of the proposed development into the broader landscape context. This includes how the proposed master planning for this site could better integrate and capture the highly valued 'bush capital' elements, such as the rocky outcrops within the site and a 'blending' of the native vegetation at the edges of the site. The panel had noted that earlier iterations of the masterplan retained the existing rock outcrop within the site and that this was considered to be a desirable outcome. This is considered by the panel as a fundamental design issue that requires addressing in the next iteration of the masterplan.

The panel acknowledges that the proposal presented by the proponent is in the early design phase of the masterplan and as such did not provide comments regarding the architectural expression. However, the panel considers that the proposed materials, colours and massing indicated at this early stage is appropriate to the site and its location.

The panel supports the proposed residential car parking strategy which minimises the visibility and impact on pedestrian amenity of vehicles within the site. The proposal and approach for waste management that excludes waste trucks from the rear of the site is also supported. These strategies are considered by the panel as contributing to the minimisation of cut and fill on site and facilitating a high quality pedestrian realm at ground level. The panel also indicated cut and fill could be further refined to better reflect the topography. However, the proponent is encouraged to further explore the quality of both vehicle and pedestrian zones and how the design of these spaces could further contribute to the vision for a pedestrianised internal street network. Specifically, the panel recommends that the proponent prepare plans that clearly illustrate and resolve the hierarchy of the pedestrian network, including legibility, character, activation and opportunities for social interaction.

Noting the early stage of the masterplanning process, the panel recommends that the key issues and recommendations outlined in this advice are addressed by the proponent and welcomes a further review by the panel for an amended proposal, prior to lodging the proposal for works approval.

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 Site context and the Bush Capital

1.1 The panel considers that the sites location and surrounding context provides the opportunity to acknowledge and reflect the 'Bush Capital' character of the hills and surrounds. To achieve this, the panel strongly

recommend that the proponent undertake a visual analysis of the site to inform how the proposal could better respond to the landscape context.

1.1.1 At the macro level, the visual analysis should identify significant views into and out of the site (such as views to the site from Red Hill, Black Mountain, O'Connor Ridge) with the proposed development superimposed to further understand the visual impact of development on this significant site and how it relates to its context. The visual analysis will also assist to better understand the site's topography, landscape character and opportunities to lift building heights in appropriate locations across the site.

1.1.2 At the macro level, a visual analysis is recommended to be undertaken to demonstrate how the proposal relates to nearby significant sites, including the War Memorial, and how the development can provide a transitional landscape from Mount Ainslie and to the suburban area of Reid. In terms of the landscape, the panel appreciates that there have been some references to native plantings, however the site would benefit from drawing through the native landscape from the foothills of Mount Ainslie further into the site to create a 'blending' of the surrounding landscape at the edges of the site. The current strip of perimeter native landscape is considered to be more of a token gesture, rather than providing an appropriate response to the site context.

1.2 The panel considers that the inherent qualities of the site have not yet been realised in the proposed landscape design, specifically retention of the large remnant eucalypts and the existing limestone outcrops. The panel recommends that the proponent further explore opportunities to integrate these existing site features as part of the common open space network through the site. Additionally, opportunities to provide a more integrated transition planting at the edge of the site should be further explored, investigating how existing trees could be retained on the site and integrated as part of the open space network.

2.0 Streetscape, public domain, landscape and interface

2.1 The panel requests that more detail work be undertaken to illustrate how the landscape transitions from the Limestone Avenue verge to the proposed buildings. Details should clearly indicate existing trees to be retained, proposed plantings, levels and grades, structures, communal facilities and dimensions. This work will inform whether an encroachment for the basement and swimming pool is an appropriate outcome in this location, and the suitability of the landscape treatment and interface with the avenue.

2.2 The panel supports the design principle to minimise vehicle movement through the site. However, the pedestrian network could be further developed with a legible hierarchy within the pedestrian network and

understanding of the character for each space. Further exploration of the internal main street and hierarchy of the pedestrian network throughout the development is encouraged and demonstrated through the preparation of a diagram illustrating pedestrian movement. Clearly articulating the pedestrian network and character of these spaces will assist in achieving high quality outcomes for the pedestrian realm. The relationship of buildings to the proposed central "street" needs careful consideration, as the plans currently suggest side walls facing this street, and not entrances or windows. Strategies to further exploit the central "street" with an activated edge are encouraged. Exploration of communal, studio, work at home and the like; spaces catering to the project's demographic, which might enjoy "street" edge prominence. Identifying areas of deep root planting zones will also assist the panel to understand the opportunities for high quality pedestrian amenity and outcomes for the development.

- 2.3 The panel considers that alternative approaches should be explored to provide better integration between the proposed development, the landscape buffer and the surrounding landscape setting. This includes how plantings, materials and other landscape elements to the open spaces could contribute to a gradual 'blending' of a native landscape character into the site, providing a place specific response.
- 2.4 The panel understands that there are EPBC requirements for the site that limit opportunities for pedestrian access along the northern boundary. However, the panel is also conscious that this requirement will need to be balanced so not to create a gated community in a location that is considered to be highly walkable to the city centre and Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve. In this regard, the panel encourages the team to continue to review how the site could better interface with the adjoining open spaces and streets, and to promote high levels of pedestrian access to the site.

3.0 Sustainability and solar access

- 3.1 The panel supports the proposed arrangement of the two apartment towers to Limestone Avenue, noting the increased solar access to Limestone Avenue road reserve, protection from the south-west winds, good solar orientation and provision of vista opportunities between the buildings. However, the panel note that the solar diagrams illustrate the solar access to the single residential development on Limestone Avenue (Section 18 Reid) from 9:30am. The proponent is requested to demonstrate the overshadowing from 9am and to further engage with the lessees. Given the size of the site and opportunities for a range of development types, the panel does not support overshadowing of the adjacent existing houses on Limestone Avenue, as tested on the winter solstice from 9am.
 - 3.2 The panel acknowledges the solar encroachment to the Campbell High oval and playing fields is not currently compliant with the DCP requirements. The proponent is encouraged to explore opportunities to reduce overshadowing including opportunities to redistribute building mass to achieve a gradual transition from apartments to townhouses
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whilst not overshadowing the Campbell High School oval. Alternative approaches for the interface between the proposed development, the landscape buffer and the school should also be explored in consultation with the school.

4.0 Car parking and access

- 4.1 The panel is supportive of the vehicle parking, waste management and access strategies proposed. However, the panel has concerns for the potential interface outcomes between pedestrian pathways and how they interface with the proposed vehicle parking. The proponent is requested to provide details demonstrating how the interface and relationship between dwellings in vehicle zones will be designed and managed to promote a high quality pedestrian environment in the site.
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