



PO Box 396  
Dickson ACT 2602  
info@northcanberra.org.au  
www.northcanberra.org.au

*Protecting, promoting and enhancing the economic, cultural, social and environmental well-being of the residents of North Canberra*

The North Canberra Community Council receives funding and support from the ACT Government



## Minutes - Committee Meeting 7pm 21 June 2023

**Attendance:** Bruce Smith, Leon Arundell, Joachim Zeal, Ernestine Kirsch, Marcus Hipkins, Marianne Albury-Colless, Simon Clark, Chris Mobbs, Margaret Dudley, Chris Finnigan, Ian Hubbard

**Observers:** Caroline Le Couteur (presenter)

### GENERAL BUSINESS

#### 1. Presentation by Canberra Co-housing, Caroline Le Couteur VP

Co-housing are intentional placed base communities. Caroline suggested that there was a fair bit of informal co-housing in North Canberra. There are questions about legality and future issues that may arise when family circumstances change and there is a requirement to sell. Stellulata is a demonstration co-housing project in Ainslie that has presented to the NCCC.

This presentation is for a 30 unit co-housing project on a 5000sqm block in Section 76 North Watson. It is proposed to comprise approximately 23% 3 bed, 54% 2 beds and 23% 1 bed units, a common house and as much shared green space as the site would allow. Canberra Co-housing is currently waiting for the Request for Tender and the purchase price for the block to be released. The presentation was followed by a discussion.

LA: What is the prospect for getting more of these type of community housing developments?

Caroline: Unlike commercial multiunit developments a big barrier to co-housing developments is establishing the financing model. It is hard to get enough people to commit sufficient investment considering the number of unknowns. There needs to be an agreement with a development partner that the Government would be happy with. A range of upfront costs for advice and services including engineering, architectural designs and legal arrangements. That's before we even know the price of the block.. Because there isn't a well-established model for this type of development in Canberra it is considered a higher risk project. There's no easy way to get this type of development built but I think it would be popular once demonstrated.

CF: This part of North Watson is motorist focussed and unfriendly to cyclists.

Caroline: Hoping that the North Watson cyclists get better cycling pathways but the area wasn't planned for normal residential developments. Trying to get a small medium-density block of land in Canberra is very hard at the moment. So if we didn't seize this opportunity we would have had to wait a long time for another.

IH: What is the business model for the site? Rent or purchase? Who's providing the capital for the purchase and construction?

Caroline: The community doesn't have the resources to do the construction. The units in the development will be purchased and be standard unit titles. There is no other form of title that will enable people to get a mortgage to finance their purchase. But with unit titling the community can't control whose going to be the next purchaser and whether there is going to be a proportion of renters.

The lease purpose clause for the site will be for a 30 unit co-housing development and we believe that this should be significantly lower price than the equivalent commercial development because there's greater risk and uncertainty. And also because we're doing an exemplary environmental development. We'll have first refusal and once we see the price we'll know whether we can afford it and get a mortgage.

SC: Watson Community Association is very supportive of this development. The Garden City Cycle Path is scheduled to run up Aspinall St Watson and, potentially, up the Federal Highway. Money was allocated in this year's budget.

BS: Will there be special planning requirements for this development? Stellulata cohousing had to get exemptions around parking etc.

Caroline: This is likely to be the standard RZ4 multi-unit zoning and with the new Territory Plan we expect to get some grace because of the outcomes focus. Regarding parking, the majority of our community want a carpark. My experience in the Assembly showed that neighbours get upset when their parking is taken up by residents from a development that doesn't provide enough parking for their residents. An issue for us is whether our proposed common house is counted as one of the 30 units.

JZ: Why don't you go underground with your parking which also means storage and cellars?

Caroline: We're currently comparing underground and undercroft. Above ground takes up a lot of space and looks ugly. Basement is expensive to construct and maintain. It often needs pumps to operate due to rain and underground creeks.

JZ: If we are serious about urban densification and permeable surfaces, on ground parking will need to be prohibited across Canberra. It takes up a huge amount of space.

Caroline: Not an expert in this area and there are different views regarding on ground parking. There are permeable surfaces that can be used. It's not a straight forward question and depends on what the planning people will allow, the cost and the environmental impact.

JZ: I come from a place in Europe where every house has a cellar. I don't get what the problem is here in Australia about going underground for stuff that shouldn't be on the surface. What is the most important thing that the Government or Planning Agency can do to support a project like this?

Caroline: A quick and clear method of purchasing land. It's been 5 years since we put in an expression of interest. You can't keep a community group together and interested with nothing happening for 5 years. Also when Government puts a price on the value of the land it should include a benefit for the good things you're trying to support. If the land is priced commercially you'll get a commercial residential development without the social and environmental outcomes.

JZ: It's a political decision to be made about supporting housing designs that are really important for the whole urban densification debate. If you want the price a developer is prepared to pay

Caroline: That was the origin of the demonstration housing project. It was to demonstrate to Canberrans what these potential designs would look like. Because if you haven't seen it

you're unlikely to want it built next door. Times right for change because people have seen the MacMansion alternative and they're no impressed. Also we need the building industry to calm down. Stellulata have not been able to find a builder willing to quote on their construction. There are so many going bankrupt, it seem that the building industry in Australia is not a good place to be.

JZ: Why are all the Macmansions going up in the older suburbs?

Caroline: A lot are spec builders and they want to make 30% on what they put in. Two other issues we have with our proposal is the ground floor units requiring a minimum personal private space requirement and the large turnaround space required for garbage trucks.

JZ: From the NCCC point of view, we are interested in ideas for how we can make it easier to implement projects like yours. Thanks for your presentation Caroline.

Find more about Cohousing Canberra and the project at <https://www.cohousingcanberra.org.au/possible-projects-in-canberra>

## **2. Chairs Report**

April Committee Meeting minutes confirmed.

Thank you to Jane for organising the NCCC Dinner in May.

Deputy Chair position has been vacated. Chris Finnigan has a new job and is sensitive about any conflict of interest issues that might arise. Thank you Chris for your participation and hard work for the NCCC. We wish you all the best in your new position.

Chair requested that Committee members consider volunteering for this role

Next steps in Planning Review

Rachel Stephen-Smith, Kurrajong MLA, has advised:

“It is likely the interim Territory Plan and District Strategies will be available in late August for the Assembly to consider the Territory Plan. This would mean it would be operational around early November.”

Jo Clay MLA, Greens Planning Spokesperson, has provided the following advice:

“The interim Territory Plan will be presented to the Assembly (and the public) for us all to have a look at. We don't know when that will be, but this will be in the coming months. The interim Territory Plan will not come into effect until it is considered and agreed to by the Assembly. This won't happen until members of the Assembly and the public have had a chance to look at the new package.

There will be a motion in the Assembly to approve the interim Territory Plan later in the year. If it is approved in interim form, the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services will commence an inquiry, having already committed to an inquiry into the Territory Plan because of community concern expressed. The ACT Government will then have to respond to the Committee's recommendations, and the Assembly will have to actively pass a motion to approve the new Territory Plan (as amended after the report, or not). In summary – there is still quite a way to go before the ACT Planning Review and Reform Project is complete.”

Open Space Management Plan (TCCSD) consultation closes 15 8 2023.

Review of Heritage Legislation (Marianne and Joachim attended the Standing Committee Hearing)

Northbourne Ave developments and Yowani focused interview [ABC]

The health implications Woodheaters to be discussed at July General meeting.

Big Ideas: Pathetic Recycling in Canberra discussion for another meeting.

Discussion of NCCC Principles – how we store ideas for a policy platform. Example: NCCC position on Yowani, Thoroughbred Park, Ainslie Volcanics, Monash Drive etc. Position paper on these issues published on the website. Position on climate change and resilience for both housing and the environment. Evidence based policy paper.

NCCC Principles agreed by the Committee as a living document that can be modified over time. It was agreed that they be incorporated in an NCCC Policy Platform which will also include NCCC policy positions on a range of issues. The first position paper to be Monash Drive. [Bruce and Chris]

### **3. Treasurer's report**

Bruce circulated the NCCC financial report and discussed a number of issues including additional spending. It was agreed to provide the Reid Residents Association with additional funding of \$649.16 to cover the costs of their newsletters and website for 2022-23.

### **Meeting closed 8.50pm**

Committee meetings and general meetings are currently held on alternative months. The next meetings are 20/07/2023 General, and 18/8/2023 Committee.