

CONFIDENTIAL

# THE PANEL'S ADVICE

NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Block 1 Section 38 Wright – First Session

KOKO Lease C



Australian Government  
National Capital Authority



**ACT**  
Government

# NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

## THE PANEL'S ADVICE

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Date issued: Tuesday 23 February 2022

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Project: KOKO Lease C

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Review date: Wednesday 9 February 2022

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Meeting location: Meeting held online via Microsoft Teams

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Site visit: Not held due to COVID-19 social distancing guidance

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Panel members: Catherine Townsend, Chair and ACT  
Government Architect

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Proponent: PK Nominees

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Observers: Representatives from:  
Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)  
Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS)

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Conflicts of interest: None

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Confidentiality of the Panel's Advice: Design review considers concept proposals at various stages throughout the design process that are frequently subject to change and improvement in relation to feedback from the NCDRP. Throughout this time a commercial in confidence status is maintained for proposals that engage with the NCDRP.

In accordance with Section 139 of the Planning and Development Act (2007) (the Act), prescribed development proposals are required to provide a copy of the 'Panels Advice' and the proponent's 'Response to the Panels Advice' in writing when the Development Application is submitted. Section 30 of the Act identifies the design advice and the proponent's written response to that advice as associated documents, therefore the most recent Panel's Advice and the proponent's response become publicly available once a Development Application is publicly notified for community comment.

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MEETING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

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| Property address:                                | Steve Irwin Avenue (Block 1 Section 38 Wright)  |
| Proposal:  | <p>The subject site is located at Block 1 Section 38 Wright and is zoned CZ5: Mixed Use Zone. The Wright Precinct Map and Code, the Commercial Zones Development Code apply to the site. The site is also referenced in the Suburban Land Agency's (SLA) Coombs and Wright Village Design and Place Framework (2021). 'KOKO Lease C's proposed development area is situated within the north-western portion of the overall block and is identified as the 'Stage 3 development site', with a street frontage to Steve Irwin Avenue of approximately 53m.</p> <p>The site has an area of 15,771m<sup>2</sup> and is irregularly shaped with curved frontages to Steve Irwin Avenue and Gornall Street and a straight frontage running parallel with the alignment of John Gorton Drive. A signalised intersection of John Gorton Drive, Steve Irwin Avenue and Fred Daly Avenue is located to the immediate north of the site. The northern-western edge of the site is bound by Steve Irwin Avenue that features a roundabout where it intersects with Banjo Patterson Avenue, with the currently vacant Block 1 Section 39 Wright situated opposite the subject site. To the north-east the site is bound by John Gorton Drive, a dual carriageway with bus and cycleway lanes. This frontage also features a secondary road/slip-in providing access to John Gorton Drive proper from Gornall Street, with this extending to half of the north-eastern frontage. The south/south-eastern edge of the site is bound by Gornall Street, with a mixed of under-construction and completed residential development ranging from two to three storeys.</p> <p>The 'KOKO Lease C' proposal forms a component of the larger KOKO development that is guided by an overall master plan developed and endorsed for the site as part of the Development Application (DA) for Stage 1 (Leases A and B), a mixed-use commercial and residential development. The KOKO Lease C proposal is for a commercial accommodation development comprised of 101 commercial serviced apartments with a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom units. The proposal is planned to share elements of the broader KOKO development, including internal landscaped pedestrian and vehicle circulation and access. The development also incorporates secure basement parking as well as access to on grade parking and the commercial undercroft carpark.</p> |
| Proponents' representative address to the Panel: | <p>The proponent's design team, represented by Dominic Maiuto and Dean Kensit of Oztal Architects, commenced their presentation by noting that the subject proposal, 'KOKO Lease C' will be the third stage in the development of the overall KOKO development on Block 1 Section 38 Wright. Dominic observed that while the site was located within Wright, the site is adjacent</p>   |

a focal point of intense commercial development around the John Gorton Drive and Fred Daly/Steve Irwin Avenue interchange.

Briefly discussing the site context, the proponent noted the site's proximity to amenity offerings including Mount Stromlo and the Molonglo River corridor nature reserve. The overall KOKO site was presented, with the subject site (i.e. Lease C/Stage 3) identified within this. The immediate site context was also described; the north-eastern adjacent site is anticipated for intense mixed use development; the west features a large public park; east and south-east features a range of existing two to three storey residential development.

The site history including development of the approved master plan as part of Stage 1 was described as involving substantial consultation with ESPDD and various technical consultants. The proponent noted the overall proposal is intended to scale down towards residential development to the site's east, as well as to connect with adjacent sites and movement networks. The overall KOKO development is proposed to feature a shared plaza with pedestrian connections via travelators to upper levels within the development.

The KOKO Lease C proposal was described by the proponent as assuming a wedge shape that serves to frame the internal streets, create an edge to the shared zone as well as responding to the curve of Steve Irwin Avenue. The proposal features units largely positioned to the NW and NE perimeter to enable solar access, with a central circulation space providing access. A central drop off area, connected foyer and service desk are also incorporated. All units are to have basement parking spaces allocated. The proponent presented their typical level plan that is repeated over six levels, noting the mix of one and two bed units that are designed to maximise glazing to the façade to allow for solar access and natural ventilation.

The proponent presented sections and a streetscape perspective render, observing that the proposal seeks to 'scale down' along Steve Irwin Avenue as it approaches lower scale residential development on adjacent sites. The KOKO Lease C proposal was noted to respond in scale to the anticipated development on the block opposite Steve Irwin Avenue.

In relation to architectural expression and materiality, the proponent noted the use of a grid pattern providing rhythm to the façade, while red masonry in select locations is intended to create a marker or point of interest for the site. The proposal seeks to reference elements of KOKO Stage 1 to form a related but unique expression for Lease C.

Solar diagrams indicating the anticipated sun-path were briefly presented, with the proponent noting the building design features large windows to units with balconies to moderate summer sun. The proponent also presented diagrams indicating natural ventilation for the units and for common circulation spaces. The presentation concluded with a brief outline of sustainability measures as identified by the proponent, including bicycle

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|                        | <p>storage, access to natural light and ventilation, onsite water retention, durable and low maintenance material selection.</p>  |
| <p>Recommendation:</p> | <p>Based on the documentation provided prior to the design review session and the proponents presentation, the following comments and recommendations are provided:</p> <p>The Panel is pleased that the development proposal has been presented to NCDRP at this design stage. Engaging with the Panel has provided the opportunity for a meaningful discussion about the key elements of the proposal and to identify how the design concepts could be further enhanced for the benefit of the proponent, future residents and the broader community.</p> <p>The KOKO Lease C proposal, as part of the overall KOKO development, is considered by the Panel to have potential to provide a contemporary mixed use offering that will support a vibrant Molonglo Valley community. To realise the commendable aspirations of the proposal however, the Panel considers that significant further design development is required.</p> <p>It is observed by the Panel that the current site response privileges vehicle movement and car parking at the expense of pedestrian amenity and safety. The proposal also features extensive hard surfaces and minimal landscaping, further contributing to an undesirable pedestrian environment for KOKO occupants and the broader community. The Panel notes that the proposal's success is dependent on a strong community offering, which must be green, active travel oriented and to provide genuine high quality spaces for residents and the broader community. The proponent is therefore encouraged by the Panel to revisit the site planning employing first principles approach, to develop a scheme that prioritises the pedestrian experience underpinned by placemaking, accommodates significant landscape including large canopy trees and permeable surfaces in line with the ACT's Living Infrastructure Plan.</p> <p>The Panel is also concerned that the KOKO Lease C building proposition is unsatisfactory at this stage, with the Panel considering that the internal amenity and sustainability of the building has not yet achieved adequate solar access and natural ventilation, adequate living spaces including sufficient storage, provision of communal amenities and appropriate external shading to manage thermal load to facades. The Panel notes that the proposal must be planned according to robust amenity and sustainability standards and encourages further design development of these elements.</p> <p>In keeping with the community-focused aspirations for the site, the Panel considers that the proposed materiality and expression must be developed to provide sufficient grounding for the proposal and impart a relatable human scale to the proposal. The proponent is therefore encouraged by the Panel to further explore options to develop a material palette and</p> |

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|  | <p>expression that mediates the scale and intensity of development and creates a cohesive relationship between KOKO's multiple stages and uses.</p> <p>The proponent is thanked by the Panel for their positive engagement with the Panel to-date, with the Panel recommending further design review for this significant proposal as the design proposition progresses.</p>  |
| <p>Key Issues and Recommendations:</p> | <p>The <i>Key Issues and Recommendations</i> provide detail advice to the proponent, consistent with the above recommendation.</p> <p>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:</p> <p><b>1.0 Context and character</b></p> <p>1.1 The Panel is concerned that the proposal has not demonstrated sufficient analysis, interpretation and incorporation of context for the presented scheme. While the Panel understands that contextual analysis was conducted as part of the master plan development, the Panel considers that this has not been meaningfully translated across to the KOKO Lease C proposal. The absence of a strong site response is highlighted, with the Panel observing opportunities to realise the positive aspirations for the site through the built form response. For instance, the Panel observes that much of the site circulation area is vehicle-dominated with minimal provision for pedestrian and active travel throughout, generating a series of pedestrian 'islands' within the site that run contrary to the desired community-oriented development outcomes. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to revisit site planning where possible using a first principles approach, to realise the vision of a legible, well-integrated and thriving community hub.</p> <p>1.2 The Panel also notes that the surrounding future landscape context and vision articulated in the Coombs and Wright Village Plan has not been translated into the scheme, noting the surrounding treed boulevard character has the potential to inform a compelling landscape response for the site. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to revisit the site and context analysis to ensure the design response captures opportunities to provide positive visual and physical connections, spaces and landscaping within the proposal.</p> <p><b>2.0 Landscape</b></p> <p>2.1 Acknowledging the proponent's comments that a landscape architect has been engaged in the development of the proposal, the Panel is nevertheless concerned that no landscape architect has been nominated on forms or drawings provided for review. The Panel highlights the vital importance of a well resolved landscaping proposition to support amenity on site, moderate the visual impact of</p> |

built form and critically, to respond effectively to climate change and urban heat concerns. In this regard the Panel considers that the proposal has not presented a compelling landscaping proposition for the site. The Panel is concerned that the presented plans do not clearly articulate/illustrate how planting on structures and facades will be achieved, including adequate provision of soil volume and depth to support large canopy trees (rather than small or medium), satisfying structural engineering and drainage requirements. The Panel requests that a robust landscape proposition be developed and provided to the Panel as part of a further review session.

- 2.2 The Panel observes that the presented scheme features proposed trees situated in the under-croft spaces. The viability of planting in these locations is queried, with the Panel encouraging the proponent to revisit this aspect of the landscape proposition in consultation with a suitably qualified landscape architect.

### **3.0 Sustainability**

- 3.1 The Panel observes that the proposal has not yet put forth a compelling sustainability strategy for the site, noting that a unified, wholistic approach to sustainability guided by a dedicated sustainability consultant is important to the achievement of sustainability aspirations. The Panel requests that the proponent provide a detailed sustainability strategy that identifies all sustainability measures to be incorporated and that these are accurately represented in plans.
- 3.2 The Panel notes that the proponent identified stormwater retention as an item included in their stated sustainability measures, however the location of these retention devices/storage elements is unclear in the provided plans. The proponent is requested to clearly identify these in future drawings and at next design review.
- 3.3 The current site planning is considered by the Panel to feature excessive hard surfaces that will contribute to the local urban heat island effect, resulting in reduced user amenity and lowering the sustainability and climate resilience of the proposal. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to reduce the extent of hard surface throughout the proposal and to incorporate permeable surfaces and landscaping including large canopy trees, in line with the ACT Government's 30% canopy coverage and 30% permeable surface targets.
- 3.4 Noting the presence of privacy screening, the Panel notes that the current design proposition offers minimal external shading to the significant NE and NW oriented facades. The Panel is concerned that the absence of substantial shading will result in excessive solar gain and uncomfortable internal temperatures. The proponent is therefore encouraged by the Panel to incorporate suitable external shading to

the facades in consultation with an appropriately qualified façade consultant. The Panel notes that dark glazing is not supported as an appropriate design solution in response to these matters.

- 3.5 It is observed by the Panel that building planning has resulted in a large number of units which receive no sun during Winter. The Panel is concerned that the absence of passive heat gain in Winter may lead to significantly higher energy usage and therefore recommends the proponent revise building planning to ensure a more equitable solar arrangement and improved energy outcomes between units.

#### **4.0 Functionality and build quality**

- 4.1 It is observed by the Panel that the presented plans do not incorporate a consistent structural grid across presented plans, with the suitability of spacing in respect to basement carpark and internal unit planning queried by the Panel. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to ensure planning employs a suitable structural grid at an early stage to ensure presented designs are feasible. The Panel requests that the structural grid be shown in unit plans.
- 4.2 The Panel observes that the proposal currently features 3m Floor to Floor heights and considers that, in concert with narrow unit layouts, that this is unlikely to facilitate the achievement of acceptable internal spaces or construction. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to revise the scheme to achieve a minimum 2.7m Floor to Ceiling for the entirety of the units to facilitate greater solar penetration and ventilation, as well as appropriate acoustic and waterproofing outcomes. The Panel also notes that increased floor to floor heights will also improve adaptability of the building.
- 4.3 The Panel queries the Floor to Floor heights proposed for the basement (4550mm as stated on sections), noting that servicing is proposed for this area. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to consult with TCCS regarding minimum requirements to ensure the basement is fit for purpose.

#### **5.0 Diversity and amenity**

- 5.1 Acknowledging the proponent's assertion that the proposal is commercial accommodation (serviced apartments) and therefore not subject to amenity standards required for multiunit housing, the Panel observes that there is some ambiguity as to the anticipated duration of occupation for the commercial accommodation units (i.e. it is unclear whether occupants will be staying for days, weeks, months or years). Given this ambiguity, the Panel considers it appropriate to review the units with a degree of design scrutiny and design standards that will yield a high quality living environment for a broad variety of users. The Panel considers that the units currently do not offer appropriate levels of amenity, including access to natural light and

ventilation. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to revisit floor and unit planning from a first principles approach, emphasising achievement of high standards of internal amenity. In this regard the Panel highlights the following concerns to be addressed in revised planning;

- 5.1.1 The proponent is encouraged to reduce the number of units per floor to allow more flexibility and generosity for unit planning, noting the current proposal appears overburdened on each floor.
- 5.1.2 The proponent is encouraged to reduce the substantial number of south-facing units, noting poor amenity anticipated for these units.
- 5.1.3 Inadequate internal storage is observed across all unit types. Unit planning should provide adequate internal storage to ensure the units are functional for diverse user groups and duration of stay.
- 5.1.4 Two bedroom units featuring 'snorkel' configuration bedrooms are not supported by the Panel, as these result in poor amenity and low or non-functional use of space within units. The proponent is encouraged to revise unit planning to remove all snorkel and wholly internal rooms.
- 5.1.5 Excessive apartment depth is observed, particularly for one bed units that will result in poor access to natural light. The proponent is encouraged to explore reductions in apartment depth, increases to ceiling heights and widening of units.
- 5.1.6 It is observed that use of external architectural screens to address privacy concerns will further impact the available light for units (i.e. screens blocking snorkel bedroom daylight access). The proponent is encouraged to revisit the application of screens to ensure they do not adversely impact amenity.
- 5.1.7 The Panel does not accept the proponent's assertion that the single aspect units will achieve effective natural ventilation, as was suggested by U-shaped ventilation diagrams in the provided materials. The proponent is requested to provide a report by a suitably qualified technical consultant that demonstrates the efficacy of the proposed design. The proponent is also encouraged to seek technical advice on how effective natural ventilation outcomes may be

achieved, including but not limited to modulation of the façade.

5.1.8 Planning of communal circulation space on each level is considered inefficient and of low amenity, with lifts opening directly in front of unit entries in some instances. The proponent is encouraged to revise the internal circulation to provide greater usability and amenity, exploring opportunities to provide communal facilities (e.g. meeting rooms, exercise spaces)

5.1.9 The Panel encourages the proponent to consider alternative locations for AC units, noting the stated location on balconies is anticipated to detract from the amenity and useability of these spaces. In all cases, condenser should be screened from view and well-integrated into the appearance of the building.

## **6.0 Community and public domain**

6.1 While the premise of a central, pedestrian-focused plaza and thoroughfare is encouraged, the Panel considers that the proposal is yet to realise this concept in the presented plans. The Panel observes that the proposed plaza space reads as a heavily vehicle dominated space with minimal pedestrian safety and amenity, given the quantum of parking and minimal space provision for pedestrian circulation, street furniture and landscaping. It is also observed that the current arrangement offers poor visual connections and legibility, as it is enclosed on three sides by the built form. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to explore revision to the design including increased setbacks to provide a more generous space that delivers a high quality pedestrian focused environment including deep soil zones with large canopy trees, reduced overshadowing and provision of sightlines that offer orienting views (i.e. both distance views and views into the site). The Panel also observes additional planning of commercial spaces (such as eateries) may also serve to further enliven the space. In this regard the Panel recommends the proponent considers the 'Brickworks' Burwood development by Frasers Property as a precedent for reference.

6.2 The Panel observes that the community and public nodes of activity are all situated within the ground plane and that there is an opportunity to redistribute some activity in a vertical plane (i.e. at upper levels of KOKO Lease C, at the façade) to provide greater sense of activation to the proposal. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to explore opportunities to introduce communal and public amenities at upper levels to enliven the overall development.

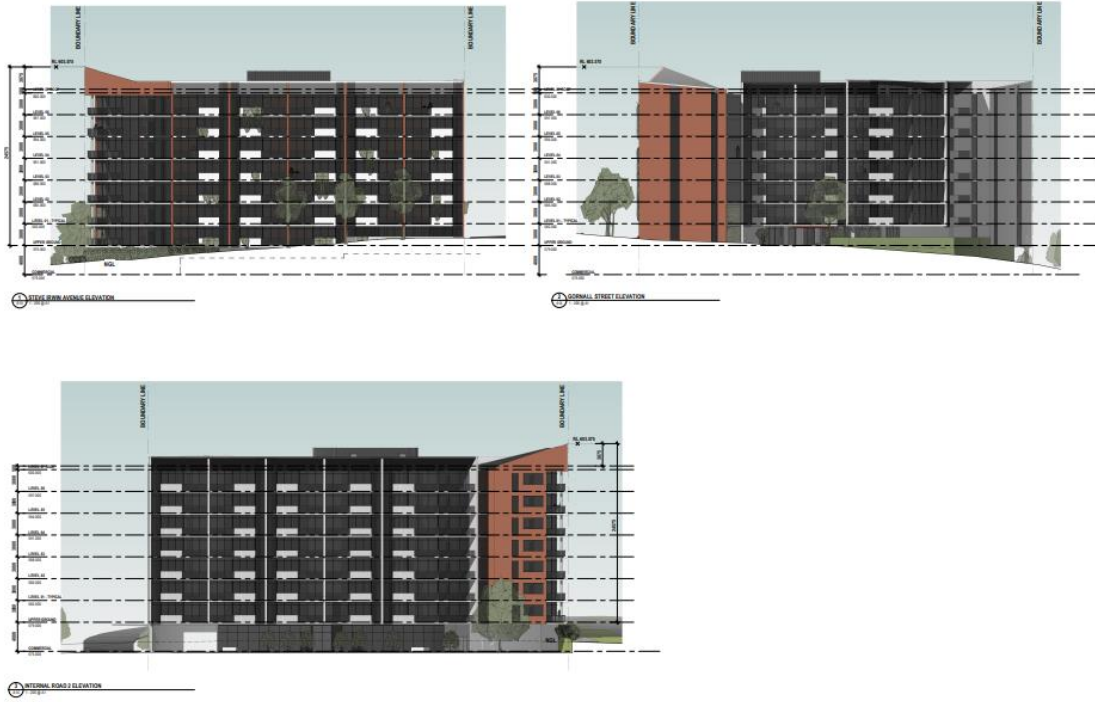
6.3 The Panel is concerned that connectivity of public domain is constrained and often relies on contrived means of egress. In

instances, visual and physical connections are inhibited unnecessarily, such as by virtue of the fire exit being located at the northern end of the 'Hub'. The proponent is encouraged to further interrogate connectivity to and across site with a view to offering instinctive and equitable links.

**7.0 Visual appearance**

7.1 In relation to materiality, while the Panel is supportive in-principle of use of face brick, the current application is observed to have a 'thinness' that is incongruous with the nature of the material. The proponent is encouraged by the Panel to ensure that any proposed use of brick is genuine brick and that the application of the material is used to develop a visual relationship to the adjacent townhouses (e.g. through application of brick up to a certain common height datum). In this regard the Panel notes an opportunity to use high quality materials to establish a unique identity for the proposal.





Above: Elevations  
Below: Perspectives



