



Core & Cluster Planning & Design

FACTSHEETS

Contents

Background and Acknowledgments	3
Acronyms	4
Core and Cluster Refuges and the NSW Planning System Factsheet	5
What is Urban and Regional Planning?	5
Shape Your Vision	6
Zoning – Permissible Land Uses	6
Development Categories & Assessment Pathway – Summary	7
Development Application	8
Complying Development - Group Homes	8
Housing SEPP 2021 - Other Pathway	9
Architect / Building Design Contract	9
Building Contract	9
Trauma-Informed Core and Cluster Crisis Accommodation	
Building Design - Factsheet	10
1 Safety	10
2 Security	10
3 Trauma-Informed	11
4 Privacy / Dignity	12
5 Flexibility / Adaptability	12
6 Accessibility	13
7 Child-Focused	13
8 Sustainable / Operational	13
9 Culturally Appropriate	14
10 Fit for Purpose	14
Land Acquisition for Core and Cluster - Factsheet	15
Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC)	15
Local Government / Municipal Councils	15
Partnering or Entering a Commercial Arrangement	15
Purchasing from the Private Market	16

Background and Acknowledgements

Core and Cluster is a NSW Government program for the establishment of refuges for women and children leaving domestic and family violence.

This suite of planning and design factsheets has been prepared to assist organisations with current Core and Cluster project development and tendering.

These factsheets provide practical information about planning and designing buildings for Core and Cluster procurement.

These factsheets have been prepared through a partnership between Homelessness NSW (HNSW), Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW), Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association (ACHIA), Shelter NSW, and Samantha Donnelly, lecturer in the School of Architecture at the University of Technology Sydney and PhD candidate at Monash University.

Cover and other images by Samantha Donnelly

Acronyms

ACHIA	Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association
ACHP	Aboriginal Community Housing Provider
BASIX	Building Sustainability Index
DA	Development Application
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment
DCJ	Department of Communities and Justice
DCP	Development Control Plan
CDC	Complying Development Certificate
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
DVNSW	Domestic Violence NSW
EOI	Expressions of Interest
EPA Act	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
HNSW	Homelessness NSW
LAHC	Land and Housing Corporation
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
LHS	Local Housing Strategies
NSW ALC	NSW Aboriginal Land Council
RFT	Request for Tender
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy

1

Core and Cluster Refuges and the NSW Planning System Factsheet

Purpose

This factsheet provides an overview of the NSW planning system, including how to navigate it and how the different elements of the system work together. Details of zoning and relevant approval pathways are also provided.

What is Urban and Regional Planning?

Modern day planning was born out of the Garden City Movement (1898) promoting satellite communities surrounding central city and separated with greenbelts. This was seen as a way to capture the primary benefits of the countryside and the city.

These days planning has become the framework that attempts to balance economic growth with social justice and environmental sustainability.

Current Planning Legislation

State Legislation	Authority: Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EPA Act) Some responsibilities are also in the Local Government Act, 1993 NSW
Metropolitan & Regional Planning	Authority: Greater Sydney Commission The Greater Sydney Region Plan - Metropolis of Three Cities (moving to Six) District Plans (Eastern, Central, South, Western and North) Authority: DPE Seven Regional Plans
State Environmental Planning Policies	State Environmental Planning Policy Housing, 2021 (Housing SEPP) State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 (Code SEPP 2008) State Environmental Planning Policy (Aboriginal Land) 2019
Local Delivery	Authority: Local Councils Local Environmental Plan (LEP) Council Zone land uses Development Control Plan (DCP) Council Detailed planning and design guidelines
Local Planning	Local Housing Strategies (LHS)

Shape Your Vision

- Do you want a new dwelling or to make alterations to an existing dwelling?
- Look at what is possible on the land
- Look around your block and see how your dream will fit in

Talk to Council:

- For information on zoning rules
- To request pre-DA meeting particularly if your block is difficult to develop or you need to vary existing development standards.

Environmental Considerations

- Solar access: how the building(s) can best manage sunshine and shade for heating and / or cooling, e.g. north facing windows with appropriate shading, no or minimal windows on the east and west
- Passive design: how the building(s) can use prevailing breezes & ventilation to improve heating and cooling

Standard Land Use Controls

- Shadowing and overshadowing: this is the impact that any overshadowing from the proposed development could have on neighboring buildings
- Check building height restrictions
- Site analysis (e.g. slopes, drainage, easements⁽¹⁾): check to see how the building(s) can be positioned on the site based on the characteristics of the site.

Zoning – Permissible Land Uses

You can enter your property address into the NSW Planning Portal and it will tell you what the zoning rules are for a particular property.

www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/spatialviewer/#/find-a-property/address

Pre Lodgement Preparation

You will need to engage professionals to provide advice on your project and prepare your application to council. This will help ensure that:

1. Your project meets all of the requirements
2. Your project meets development standards
3. All the required supporting documents are included in the application

¹ An easement is an interest or “right of way” attached to a parcel of land that gives another landowner or a statutory authority a right to access or use a part of that land for a specified purpose. The easement is registered on the title of the property and affects a defined area of the land.

NSW GOVERNMENT

Property Report

99-133 FORBES STREET WOOLLOOMOOLOO 2011

Property Details

Address: 99-133 FORBES STREET
WOOLLOOMOOLOO 2011

Lot/Section /Plan No: A/-DP390961

Council: COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SYDNEY

Summary of planning controls

Planning controls held within the Planning Database are summarised below. The property may be affected by additional planning controls not outlined in this report. Please contact your council for more information.

Local Environmental Plans	Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (pub. 18-2-2022)
Land Zoning	B4 - Mixed Use (pub. 14-12-2012)
Height Of Building	22 m
Floor Space Ratio	2.5:1
Minimum Lot Size	NA
Heritage	Woolloomooloo Significance: Local
Land Reservation Acquisition	NA
Foreshore Building Line	NA
Acid Sulfate Soils	Class 5
Local Provisions	Category B Category F Residual Lands

Detailed planning information

State Environmental Planning Policies which apply to this property

State Environmental Planning Policies can specify planning controls for certain areas and/or types of development. They can also identify the development assessment system that applies and the type of environmental assessment that is required.

The types of professionals who can assist you include:

- Architect or building designer
- Planning consultant
- A building certifier

Other specialist consultants may be needed, depending upon your site and your proposal. They may include an acoustic engineer, arborist, heritage consultant and/or drainage engineer. Your architect / building designer can help with engaging other consultants.

Development Categories & Assessment Pathway – Summary

	Exempt Development	Complying Development (CDC)	Development Consent (DA)
Definition	Some minor building renovations or works don't need any planning or building approval. This is called exempt development.	Complying development is a combined planning and construction approval for straightforward development that can be determined through a fast-track assessment by a council or an accredited certifier.	A DA is a formal application for development that requires consent under the EPA Act. It is usually made to your local council and consists of standard application forms, supporting technical reports and plans.
Examples	Minor alterations such as a shed or carport	Residential Homes, Group Homes	More complex developments that can't be dealt with as Exempt or Complying Development
Requirements	Must comply with pre-set conditions No approval required Developments that have Minimal Impacts	Must comply with pre-set conditions	Council consent required
Assessment and approval process	Nil	Complying Development Certificate (CDC) issued by Council or a Private Certifier. This is simpler and quicker than a DA.	Development Application, approved by Council

Development Application

Development Application (DA)

Developments that need DA consent will require the following:

1. DA form – a description of the development and estimated cost
2. Plan of the land
3. Level & location survey
4. Shadow diagrams
5. Sketch of development
6. Environmental assessment e.g., statement of environmental effects.
7. Landscape plans
8. Drainage plans
9. BASIX Certificate if it is a new house or alterations and additions

Where possible it's best if buildings meet existing development standards – this generally makes approval simpler and quicker. If the development includes variations to current development standards a report justifying the case for the need for variation is likely to be required. This type of report would typically be prepared by a town planning consultant. Architect's / building designers may also be able to help.

May also need:

1. Arborist report
2. Heritage report
3. Acquisition (noise) report

Complying Development - Group Homes

Group Home is a technical term used in NSW planning instruments and it is the easiest approval pathway for Core and Cluster Developments.

The Housing SEPP (2021) states that the development of a permanent group home or a transitional group home can be undertaken without council consent (i.e. via a CDC not a DA) if the development:

1. does not result in more than 10 bedrooms being within 1 or more group homes on a site.
2. Is carried out by or on behalf of a public authority, or
3. Otherwise with consent (DA) by Council

The proposed project will still need to satisfy the requirements for complying development specified in the planning instrument.

Group homes- State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021

A group home can be built as complying development in the following land use zones

- (i) R1 General Residential,
- (ii) R2 Low Density Residential,
- (iii) R3 Medium Density Residential,
- (iv) R4 High Density Residential,
- (iva) MU1 Mixed Use,
- (v) B4 Mixed Use,
- (vi) SP1 Special Activities,
- (vii) SP2 Infrastructure,

Your Local Environment Plan may allow group homes to be built under the complying development pathway in other zones that are not listed in the above list from the SEPP.

Land affected by fire or flood will restrict use of the complying development pathway.

Housing SEPP 2021 - Other Pathway

The Housing SEPP provides development pathways for several different development types such as Boarding houses, Co-living and Build to Rent housing in identified zones. These are alternative options that could be considered for your development.

Architect / Building Design Contract

Contracts with architects / building designers may include design and document preparation up to lodgment with Council / Certifier or up to approval being granted by Council / Certifier. It is recommended to have a contract that includes the development proposal being approved not just submitted. This may mean a higher cost up front but provides cost certainty and places greater responsibility on the architect / building designer to address planning requirements.

Building Contract

When engaging a builder the two different contract types are fixed price and cost-plus . A fixed price contract is an agreed price for the building that can only be varied as indicated by the contract. In a cost-plus contract, the agreement is to pay the builder's expenses plus an additional amount for the builder's profit margin. The advantage of a fixed price contract is that the price of the work is fixed up front and can only be varied in limited circumstances (as per the contract). The disadvantage of a fixed price contract is that the cost may be increased to cover builders' risks. A cost-plus contract is more transparent but the cost may blow out.

2

Trauma-Informed Core and Cluster Crisis Accommodation Building Design - Factsheet

Purpose

This factsheet outlines the basic principles of building design to support the development of Core and Cluster crisis accommodation for women and children accessing domestic violence support services. The factsheet includes strategies for the integration of trauma-informed design that respects principles of trauma-informed practices used by services to support victim-survivors and to maintain the health and wellbeing of staff working in the sector. It is aimed at services seeking to build new accommodation, renovate existing premises or adaptively reuse existing built fabric to create crisis accommodation.

Design Principles

1 Safety

- Provide clear interior views of entrances, corridors, communal spaces.
- Create a layered entry sequence with fencing, security gates, entry gate and front door security screen to enable controlled access of visitors/strangers.
- Provide safe indoor and outdoor spaces for children's play.
- Provide secure connections between internal and external spaces that are screened from the street.
- Encourage access to outdoor spaces for physical and mental wellbeing.
- Identify managed access for services and deliveries.

2 Security

- Install CCTV with back to base monitoring at the entrance, other access points and along the perimeter.
- Install electronic fob access.
- Provide duress alarms in units.
- Provide secure screens to doors and windows in accommodation units.
- Car parking screened from the street.
- Install quality exterior lighting for use of clotheslines and smoking areas at night.
- Consult with security expert on surveillance, lighting, and egress/access points.
- Landscape front yard to define territory, without impeding surveillance.

3 Trauma-Informed

- Consult with specialist domestic and family violence service provider during briefing, design, documentation, and construction stages to ensure design meets trauma-informed practice principles.
- Create a welcoming arrival space to promote safety and privacy. Integrate a private sitting area, consider sensory factors on arrival.
- Reduce or remove excess visual stimuli – patterns, loud colours, objects, clutter.
- Reduce or remove environmental stressors including noise, flickering lights, strong odours, heat, cold breezes, and vibrations.
- Promote connection and access to gardens, natural lighting, and skylights.
- Provide a separate, quiet area for individuals in distress.
- Promote a sense of choice and independence in staff and communal spaces – furniture, layouts that include adjacent seating, window seats.
- Use calm colour schemes that emphasise cooler spectrum colours.
- Ensure adequate circulation space to navigate around furniture/rooms.
- Integrate purpose designed counselling spaces to support trauma-informed practice needs - indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Avoid institutional/clinical atmosphere by creating more home-like interiors.
- Ensure good acoustic separation between rooms in counselling space, for sleeping spaces in accommodation, for staff working areas. Quality doors and windows with seals, insulation in walls and ceilings.
- Provide dedicated controls to ensure adequate heating/cooling for internal rooms.



4 Privacy / Dignity

- Provide acoustic privacy for both accommodation units and staff areas.
- Provide communal rooms for meetings, interviews, group activities.
- Provide areas for private or semi-private retreat within communal areas.
- Consider accessibility and inclusion in furniture, finishes, and lighting.
- Arrangement of levels and furnishings to create areas of individual or family privacy without isolating users.
- Provide operable window and door coverings for visual privacy.
- Screen views from neighbours by using landscaping and appropriate fencing.
- Provide spaces in the garden for private conversations.
- Separate office and counselling areas from dwelling areas.
Ensure abundant natural light, ventilation, and views to outside for all rooms.
- Provide good storage options for personal belongings, food, donations, and toys.
- Provide easy access to communal bathrooms/toilets.
- Ensure well-designed, easy-to-maintain landscaping and access to exteriors.



5 Flexibility / Adaptability

- Provide accommodation units that are adaptable to suit variations in family size, needs, and levels of risk.
- Integrate adaptable furniture, interconnecting rooms, moveable walls for staff areas and accommodation units.
- Communal areas should include smaller, adjoining breakout spaces for withdrawing without being excluded from a communal activity.
- Provide flexibility in dining rooms – adaptable furniture to suit families, groups
- Provide flexibility in the layout of sleeping and living spaces for diverse family groups. Dual key units should have two doors at point of connection between units, to maintain safety/privacy of residents. Staff control access to these doors.
- Generous and diverse storage options in staff and accommodation units.
- Consider modular building types for future expansion (units and staff zone)

6 Accessibility

- Provide accessible accommodation units and staff areas considering Universal Design principles and Liveable Housing Australia Guidelines.
- Consider the design of thresholds, steps, doors, and bench heights according to access issues and AS1428.1:2009 in Core, accommodation and staff areas.
- Integrate seating arrangements in communal areas to suit diverse users' needs.
- Provide internet access in staff and accommodation units and access to a computer for residents.
- Provide safe yards in units to accommodate pets where possible.
- Provide clear, consistent wayfinding and signage that is culturally inclusive and aids cognitive impairments and other disabilities for staff and residents.
- Communal spaces designed to be accessible to individuals and groups from the community, without compromising the safety of residents.
- Provide access for a range of physical needs, with accessibility standards for all common areas and at least 1 unit.

7 Child-Focused

- Provide indoor spaces designed specifically for children that promote safety, independence, play, entertainment, and agency appropriate to age and needs.
- Provide outdoor play areas for different aged children.
- Integrate children's play space in counselling/meeting rooms.
- Integrate children's crèche for occasional childcare.
- Ensure ample clear sightlines between staff, accommodation, and communal spaces and play areas.
- Provide spaces that allow for mother-child interactions and easy supervision.
- Consider younger children's needs— pram storage, change tables, baths.
- Provide individual kitchen/dining spaces for family meals.
- Provide focused homework space for school-aged children.
- Provide adaptable accommodation with spaces for older children to retreat/private space for teenagers/place for homework, study.
- Provide communal retreat/gaming space for teens.
- Flexible furniture to support multiple types of activities and age groups.
- Integrate appropriate colour, art, natural materials.

8 Sustainable / Operational

- Provide built spaces that respond to solar access and wind prevalence specific to location.
- Provide staff and residents with instructions on how to maximise thermal comfort including open/close windows and by the use of heating/cooling equipment.
- Design internal rooms for natural daylight access, ventilation, and thermal performance.
- Select sustainable local materials, fixtures, and furnishings to maintain physical condition of the refuge and psychological wellbeing of the users.
- Locate trees or shade devices to west- and east-facing openings to control heat load in summer.
- Create sustainable, low-maintenance garden spaces to extend living area potential for all users and improve sense of wellbeing and mental health.
- Consult with service or housing provider on operational needs – to understand building maintenance issues, strategies, facilities management, and performance management.
- The design should ensure maximum end value and future alternative use options
- Consider minimum 7-star Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme. (NatHERS).

9 Culturally Appropriate

- The value of culture should be made visible. It should be central to all stages, from project formation, design, planning, refuge maintenance and service delivery.
- From the earliest stages of your project idea right through to day-to-day service delivery in the refuge, understand how the design and your service connects with Country. Engage with your local Aboriginal community to speak about Country in a way that feels comfortable to them and be informed by the Government Architect New South Wales Designing with Country series.
- Consult with local migrant and refugee communities during design and development phases
- Consult with service provider to understand types of site-specific cultural needs in staff and resident areas.
- Create a welcoming entry in staff area and communal spaces
- Exterior and garden areas including covered outside seating to encourage connection to landscape and Country
- Provide private areas and social spaces in the garden for quiet relaxation for both individuals and groups (yarning circles, seats around trees)
- Adaptability for different users' requirements — sleeping or eating arrangements for diverse cultural needs.
- Integrate local and culturally respectful art, colour, murals.
- Consider integrating local/native species, and cultural landscape variations
- Include religious and spiritual needs
- Consider dietary requirements – food preparation and storage

10 Fit for Purpose

- Collaborate with service provider during briefing, design, and documentation stages to ensure built outcomes meet user needs
- All staff areas need to be fit for purpose and trauma-informed.
- Consideration of built form, urban context, and streetscape.
- Materials selection that reflects location, and natural landscapes.
- Design with the ability to adapt to meet the changing needs of clients.

References

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2. Donnelly, S (2020), Design guide for Refuge accommodation for women and children. UTS, www.apo.org.au/node/313257
3. Housing Plus & Custance Architects (2022) Design Guide: Best practice design standards and features to create exceptional accommodation for those affected by Domestic and Family Violence www.housingplus.com.au/about-us/media/publications/
4. NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Domestic Violence Crisis Accommodation Functional Design Brief www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/508704/Domestic-Violence-Crisis-Accommodation-Functional-Design-Brief_Accessible.pdf
5. Government Architect New South Wales (2020). Better Placed: Draft Connecting with Country. A draft framework for understanding the value of Aboriginal knowledge in the design and planning of places. Issue no. 01 www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/designing-with-country

3

Land Acquisition for Core and Cluster - Factsheet

Purpose

There are various options to acquire land to build Core and Cluster crisis accommodation which are described in this factsheet. This information is provided to assist organisations seeking land / property to develop Core and Cluster projects.

Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC)

LAHC owns land across NSW and can sell or lease their land for Core and Cluster projects. LAHC also owns and maintains existing social housing properties and buildings used as Specialist Homelessness Services.

LAHC has an online form for enquiries about land dealings including purchasing, selling, or redeveloping a property and for proposals from community housing providers to purchase, sell or redevelop a property. See link - [Contact us | NSW Land and Housing Corporation](#)

Enquiries can also be directed to Adam Thompson, Director, Partnerships and Communications adam.thompson@fac.s.nsw.gov.au

Local Government / Municipal Councils

Local Councils may contribute land to be used for Core and Cluster projects either gifted or via a partnership arrangement. Council may have identified emergency accommodation for women and children leaving violence as a priority or there may be a community services area that supports work in this area. Please contact your local Council directly to discuss support for your Core and Cluster project and options for land provision. See Core and Cluster [Local Government Webinar](#).

Partnering or Entering a Commercial Arrangement

Organisations that may own land include:

- a. Charities
- b. Community housing providers
- c. Developers who may be open to provide land at a reduced cost or as a gift
- d. Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs)

The network of Local Aboriginal Land Councils make LALCs collectively one of the largest land holders in NSW. Aboriginal Land Councils may be an option if there is a suitable site and the proposal aligns with the Land Council's strategy and Community, Land and Business Plan. Engagement and due diligence processes should commence early with the Land Council CEO and Board. The Land Dealing process includes approval from LALC members and the regulatory body, NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

See link - Land Council - NSW Aboriginal Land Council https://alc.org.au/land_council/

Purchasing from the Private Market

The sequencing of events with grants and the private land purchase can be tricky: a purchase requires confirmation of a successful grant, and a grant application requires confirmation of land. Therefore, it may be useful to negotiate an Option to Purchase the land. This is an agreement between parties that gives one party (the purchaser) the right to take up the option to purchase property, goods and/or land from the other party (the vendor) at any time within a specified period. There may be a fee for an Option to Purchase.

