

ECOVILLAGE RESIDENTS' BULLETIN

21 December 2022

#9



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE ECOVILLAGE COMMUNITY?

Ecovillage office closed for the holidays

The Ecovillage team, like so many of you, will be taking a good long break to recharge our (solar) batteries and soak up that summer sunshine.

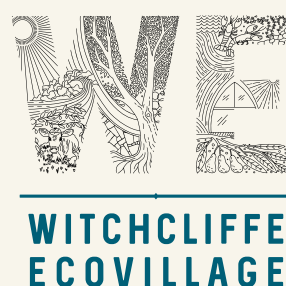
The Sales Office will be closed for a month from today (Friday, 16 December 2022 at 5:00pm) and reopen at 9:00am on Monday, 16 January 2023.

There will be a skeleton staff operating from the office periodically during this time. If there is an emergency on site, such as a broken pump or a major leak that is WEV's responsibility to fix (not a Strata's), we ask that you first call the office on (08) 9757 6688 to reach a staff member. If the office is unattended, voicemail messages are automatically forwarded to our info@ecovillage.net.au email and we will pick it up there.

We wish all our Ecovillage residents a super relaxing break and wonderful family time over the holidays. Happy gardening and enjoy all that delicious fresh produce pumping out of the EUAs!

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Christmas parties in the Ecovillage

The Cluster 1A Christmas get-together is on Friday, 23 December starting at 4.30. Bring a plate to share, and your own drinks and chairs. Everyone welcome.

A note from the WEV office

As you can imagine our office receives a significant number of emails each day. It would be so helpful if you could state your lot number and cluster number each time you email. This saves us looking through a number of residents' lists to search for your details. Thanks for your assistance.

WEV office now located in the Community Centre

The WEV team is utterly thrilled to have moved our office into the bright and shiny new Ecovillage Community Centre earlier this week.

It's a wonderful reminder of just how much good design can positively impact your mood. We've enthusiastically ditched our electric blankets and are reveling in our spacious, light-filled, insulated, well-designed new office: the complete opposite of what we moved from.

Huge kudos and thanks to the inimitable Jodie Passmore without whom we would still be in utter chaos. She co-opted her affable husband Aron Dyer into giving up his weekend and appointed Dex Ezekiel our IT saviour, thank



[CHECK OUT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE VIDEO HERE >>](#)



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you both. Our appreciation also goes out to architects, Coveney Browne Design, the Tate Construction team, and everyone else who contributed to the design and construction of this magnificent building.

The Community Centre will be home to the Ecovillage office until the development is wholly completed. This extraordinary asset will then be gifted to the community by the developer and owned by Ecovillage Commons Limited, which means all Ecovillage residents will share the ownership and management of this valuable building.

It includes a beautiful community hall, which can be divided into two with sound-proof panels, an office, ablutions and a wonderful commercial kitchen.

We're happy to have moved closer to the existing Ecovillage community and look forward to the casual chats at lunchtime with passersby. We're looking forward to a party to celebrate the completion of the Community Centre in the new year, but we'll get ourselves settled first and confirm a date when back at work in mid-January.

Energy Update

We're very pleased to report that Western Power has finally approved the solar systems and in particular the commissioning process for Stages 1A, 1B and 1C for the Ecovillage, with the additional stages to come through in the new year (up to 215kW in each cluster, as originally designed).

The process of enabling each solar system to be turned on is now at hand and we expect that Integrated Electrical will start the data acquisition/logging for the commissioning process as required by Western Power within the next week or two, with final approval to turn

on the systems commencing soon thereafter - phew! We're also excited to announce that Integrated Electrical has turned on the first Tesla Powerpack battery (2A, due to no solar being connected yet) as part of the testing phase, which will be monitored by Tesla for a couple of weeks before turning on the initial set of batteries in January. Amazingly, the battery still had 49% charge after being charged to around 50% when leaving California over a year ago!

Also on the energy front, our energy retailer, Delorean Energy, has assigned all of its retail business to Amanda Energy, who are based in North Fremantle. We met with Amanda Energy on Friday. They love what we're doing here and are very excited to be a part of it. We will be meeting with them again in late January to negotiate rates and contract terms.

Our Energy Handbook is also in the process of being updated to align with recent changes required by Western Power.

Sadly, Solar Watt, the supplier of our first container load of PV's have made the decision to leave Australia, as they simply can't keep up with demand in Germany. As such, we're unable to supply any more of their panels. Integrated Electrical are able to continue with their current supplier deal pricing with another brand of PV. Please contact them to discuss, when you're ready to order your solar system.

As most of you are aware, Western Power now require inverter controls for all new solar systems. As such, we have found a solution that will supply these controls as well as reading your meters to enable energy trading and invoicing. This solution is called a SwitchDin droplet. Our engineers are currently working with Integrated Electrical, SwitchDin, Tesla and Fronius, to confirm the best installation methodology.

Building Design Guidelines are essential to the Ecovillage

The WEV team has been asked recently if it can dilute the sustainability requirements of the Building Design Guidelines (BDGs) in order to address the increased building costs lot owners are currently facing.

Many of you may not be aware of the history of the BDGs and their place in the complex planning approval journey that we took in order to create the Ecovillage, so we thought we would provide a bit of background.

The BDGs are an important element of the planning commitments we made to the West Australian Planning Commission, the Dept. Planning Lands and Heritage, the Augusta Margaret River Shire and the local community during the various planning processes that we had to undertake to re-zone the Ecovillage land from Priority Agriculture to Residential, subdivide the land and eventually provide you with titles to your lots:

- Witchcliffe Village Strategy amendment
- Structure Planning application
- Local Planning Scheme Amendment
- Subdivision application
- Clearance of subdivision conditions
- Lodgement of strata schemes

Part of that rezoning process involved convincing the Shire and local community that we were not just using the term “Ecovillage” to greenwash a conventional development through the system. It was not enough for us to have good intentions, we had to back them up with solid, non-negotiable planning documents. You can read the strict provisions that govern the development of our site (SPA 34) in the

AMRS Local Planning Scheme 1. We wrote the provisions in accordance with our vision statement, the Shire and WAPC approved them, and they are now only changeable through a Scheme Amendment.

One of those provisions requires us to have bylaws or covenants to ensure that every home in the Ecovillage abides by the sustainability requirements of these provisions, and we had to provide a draft copy of our strata bylaws and the BDGs to the Shire for approval as part of our subdivision conditions to begin construction of Stages 1 - 3. We spent at least a year working on our BDGs. We researched them extensively and had input from an experienced planner, several architects, a designer, a thermal engineer, a life cycle analyst, a builder, an electrical engineer and several future residents. Our aesthetic principles are generally in accord with the Shire's Rural Hamlet Design Handbook, which was a guiding document when we began our Structure Planning process.

Your compliance with the BDGs ensures that the most important elements of the Ecovillage—its homes and households—meet the sustainability and aesthetic objectives that we promised to achieve in our planning documents, and will ensure that your home is a healthy, accessible, thermally efficient, carbon negative home.

The strata bylaws allow us, as managers of the formal approval process, to make minor changes to the BDGs, and we have already done that a number of times as we live with the BDGs and see how they are working. For example, we added Hardie fibre cement board early on as an alternative cladding material to provide a lower cost material, but we made sure it still achieved the negative carbon life cycle analysis required. We recently reduced the R-value of walls from R-3 to R 2.8, on



advice from builders that this would significantly reduce the cost of wall framing. But we also checked with a thermal engineer to ensure that this would not have too much impact on thermal efficiency (and we still advise that you try to achieve R-3 or higher if you can.)

Having said all this, the BDGs have an in-built innovation clause, so if you think that you have come up with a clever way to reduce building costs and still achieve the BDGs sustainability and aesthetic outcomes / principles, please let us know.

We hope that the market pressures we are currently facing are a comparatively short-term situation in the context of the longevity and sustainability impacts of this model development. The benefits derived from the guidelines we believe will far outweigh the short-term pain of house prices now. We also strongly believe, and current valuations concur,

that the value inherent in our high-quality, sustainable homes within this world class development will increase substantially over time, leading to higher property values paired with lower running costs.

Making small tweaks and concessions to the design guidelines will not decrease house pricing to a degree that would have any sizeable impact, as it is the shortage of skilled labour and material cost increases that is the biggest pain point for builders at the moment.

And finally, our community has bought into the ethics and principles of the Ecovillage of which these guidelines form a major part, and it would be unethical of us to water them down. The BDGs are a fundamental guard against “greenwashing” and are part of a long-term goal to lift the standard of building and create a model of sustainability that we hope other developers around the world will follow.



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We understand that the significant inflation in building costs is really impacting a lot of us, but we need to remember the reason we are all drawn to the Ecovillage, and a big part of that is to walk our talk, and live in comfortable, healthy and efficient homes, that are carbon negative over the life of the home. For this we can all be very proud.

Stage 4 lot titles on track for issue in February 2023

Our ongoing communication with various stakeholders has confirmed that we're still on track for Landgate to issue titles on lots in Stage 4 in February 2023. We don't know when in February but the clearance process is proceeding as expected. We will keep you updated as and when we learn more.

Removal of Preferred Supplier page from website

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage project is unique and Sustainable Settlements is no ordinary land developer, that's clear. Land developers as a rule do not get involved with residential building. While WEV has always tried to maintain its distance from the building process, it is a complicated relationship, especially given our enforcement of the building design guidelines through the design review process.

When we first started lots, we received repeated requests from buyers for referrals, primarily for builders and designers. In the spirit of offering information, support and guidance to our lot buyers, we created a Preferred Suppliers page on our website of service providers such as builders, architects, designers, engineers, thermal assessors and building surveyors. We explicitly set out the terms under which we listed these service providers, making it

clear that we were not to be held responsible for their workmanship or conduct. However, during this difficult period in the housing market when builders, in particular, have been under increasing pressure, these referrals have sometimes come back to bite us, despite our lack of involvement.

Consequently, we have temporarily removed this page from our website while we determine how best to proceed with this.

"Preferred Suppliers" vs "Supplier Deals"

It is worth reiterating the oft-misunderstood difference between "preferred suppliers" and the "supplier deals" page on our website.

The Ecovillage Supplier Deals is an initiative we started to enable us to leverage the buying power and unique sustainable brand of the Ecovillage purely for the benefit of residents. As such we simply ask that suppliers who wish to be listed offer a discount or financial incentive to residents.

The Ecovillage does not have a financial relationship or necessarily any experience with the companies or their products and therefore this listing should not be considered a recommendation. We couldn't possibly offer an endorsement of every product supplier who wanted to supply to the Ecovillage.

Having said this, there is one supplier deal that we strongly recommend, and that's the Reclaim Heat Pump. Please don't let your builder talk you into a cheaper/inferior product. We did a huge amount of research on heat pumps and these (and Sanden) are generally a long way ahead of the competition, and Reclaim provided all of our residents with a huge discount on their standard rates, as they



love our project. They also have an industry best (along with Sanden) six year warranty on the heap pumps and 10 year warranty on the tanks. We have already heard of issues with inferior products.

Drone use at the Ecovillage

WEV is sensitive to the fact there is now an established community living within the ongoing construction of a half-built development. It's the price of being forward-thinking early adopters!

While these are two situations that often do not happily co-exist, the WEV team is doing its best to minimise the impact it has on residents and respect their privacy while still undertaking essential work, including marketing and selling the Ecovillage. Clause 16 ADVERTISING AND MARKETING in your sales contract addresses this.



Drone photography and video has become an essential part of real estate marketing nowadays, especially for a site this large, and we frequently employ operators for this purpose.

We will always attempt to let residents know when we plan to use a drone within the residential clusters within the communication means we currently have. However, please appreciate that this is not always possible due to the dynamic nature of outdoor photography,

which is highly weather dependent. And not everyone will receive every communication in time either.

However, please be assured that we will never use imagery in which people are identifiable unless we have asked their permission first.

The same goes for any amateur drone operators within the Ecovillage. It's important that everyone feels safe here and that their privacy is respected.

Causeway over central dam

Western Power requires us to temporarily drop the central dam water level by 1m so it can complete a power supply point on the side of the causeway. As such we are currently syphoning this water to the southern dam, as well as using the central dam for all current water requirements throughout the Ecovillage.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT IN THE NEWSLETTER...

Redink Homes Southwest joins the Ecovillage

We are delighted to announce that Redink Homes Southwest is joining the Ecovillage guild of builders, commencing immediately.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE >>](#)

All enquiries for Redink Homes Southwest should be directed to Clayton Halloran on 0412 048 387 or email

clayton@redinksouthwest.com.au

Rolling out the community gardens

Our landscape contractor, LD Total,



has been powering along in the past few weeks with turf and playground areas completed in Clusters 2A and 2B. Planting will now proceed with completion expected just prior to the Christmas break.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE >>](#)

Design Review Update: Clarifications and Modifications

By Jeff Thierfelder - Project Manager, Architecture and Planning

Design Review Process

So far, we have engaged in the design review of 115 homes at the Ecovillage, which has helped us to refine our process and confirm our interpretation of certain subjective elements of the design guidelines. The reviews, for the most part, have been positive and fairly efficient to undertake. However, for some designs, we have ended up spending a disproportionate amount of time working with purchasers or designers to arrive at an acceptable outcome.

As you can appreciate with our small team, we must spend our time carefully as there is so much to be done. Accordingly, we are modifying the design review process to motivate the designers to thoroughly review the design guidelines so that when we receive a proposed concept design, it is largely compliant with our requirements. Otherwise, we end up spending lots of time going back and forth to bring a house design into line with the Building Design Guidelines, and we simply don't have time.

Please note the following processes as you work towards formal approval of your design:

1. Concept Review

Conceptual designs are to be submitted to the Witchcliffe Ecovillage design team for review

to establish that the key principals are being met and the proposed design is consistent with provisions of the Local Development Plan and the objectives of the Witchcliffe Ecovillage Sustainable Building Design Guidelines. This review process needs to be completed prior to submitting any plans to the Shire.

Prior to starting the design process, please ensure you and designer have completed a thorough review of the relevant documents, example plans, and checklists.

Please ask any clarification questions before committing to any particular design outcome, as this saves everyone time and energy.

Conceptual design submission requirements:

- Site analysis
- Sketch site plans
- Sketch building plans, cross-sections and elevations
- Proposed solar systems
- Location of tanks
- Car parking location
- Exterior material selection
- Landscaping and fencing concept plans

The WEV Design Team will only undertake a concept review once all of the required drawings and information are provided. We will respond with a detailed email response identifying any design suggestions or areas of concern. If the proposal is substantially consistent with the design intention for the site (as outlined in the applicable provisions), we will issue a Concept Approval email along with any minor comments to incorporate into your Detailed Documentation.

If the conceptual design requires substantial modification due to non-compliance with the Local Development Plan or Building Design Guidelines, it will need to be revised accordingly and then reassessed by the WEV Design Team before the Concept Approval can be issued.

These additional concept reviews (if required) will cost the applicant \$300 per review.

Once Concept Approval is achieved, we recommend initiating the invoicing process for the NMI meter and signing the Construction Agreement and paying the associated bond, as these items can take up to FOUR weeks to process and we wouldn't want them holding up the lodgement of the Building Permit to the Shire.

2. Detailed Design Review + Approval

Following the Concept Approval, the proponent will refine the design and prepare construction documentation and detailed materials specifications. Once these are completed,

there is a second design review process with the Witchcliffe Ecovillage design team to verify compliance with some of the more detailed requirements of the Design Guidelines. This is a checklist assessment process; the onus is on the proponent to provide all details required and demonstrate compliance with the BDG's.

Detailed Design submissions shall comprise:

- Building Design Guidelines compliance schedule/checklist
- Detailed site and infrastructure plan, including finished floor levels and key site levels to explain the site drainage strategy
- Detail building floor plans, roof plan, elevations and cross-sections
- Car parking plans and specification
- Landscape plans and specification, including fencing
- Services including water storage and location, photovoltaic system and location
- Structural engineering drawings
- Building materials specifications
- Fixtures and fittings schedule
- Schedule of external materials and colours
- Thermal Assessment (NatHERS) Certificate
- Life Cycle Assessment Summary and Certificate
- Builders' Waste Management Plan
- Executed Construction Management Agreement and payment of Security Bond

Once the WEV design team deems the application compliant with our requirements, a formal Letter of Design Compliance will be issued to the proponent. This letter should be submitted to the Shire with the other documentation required for Building Permit.

3. Building Permit (Shire)

A Building Permit is required for all structures (residential, commercial or industrial) including but not limited to new works, alterations, additions, patios, retaining walls and sheds.

Building Permits must be obtained prior to the commencement of any building work. To obtain a Building Permit, an application form (BA01 or BA02, see below) together with one copy of all plans and specifications must be submitted to Augusta-Margaret River Shire Building Services.



Submission requirements can be found on the Department of Commerce website <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/building-and-energy/building-approval-forms-0>

To speed up the approval process, applicants can engage a private building surveyor to certify plans prior to lodging with the Shire for approval.

- Certified applications - BA01 - approval timeframe 10 business days
- Uncertified applications – BA02 - approval timeframe 25 business days

Timing Expectations

The WEV team is small and tasked with oversight of a large and complex project to deliver. As such, our ability to respond varies depending on workload and staff availability. From mid January 2023, please allow two weeks for Concept Review, and two weeks for Formal Approval. We will turn design reviews around as quickly as possible.

To enable us to achieve this, you need to:

1. Adhere to the requirements of the BDG's; and
2. Provide all information required at concept design and formal review applications. We will no longer assess incomplete applications.

Stage 4

We have started to receive proposed designs for lots in Stage 4, and we are happy to consider and respond to design concepts for those lots.

However, we have only just received the final as-constructed drawings from our civil contractor. We expect the as con drawings to have been reviewed and posted on our website by late January.

NMI Meter

For the microgrid communications in each cluster to work effectively, every house must have an identical NMI meter. WEV has bulk purchased high-quality SATEC meters and is passing the savings onto lot purchasers. As part of our Formal Approval process, each lot owner must purchase their NMI meter for their house. Because this invoicing process can take up to four weeks, we will initiate the invoicing process after Concept Approval; the NMI meter must be paid for prior to receiving Formal Approval, and the early invoicing will ensure no delays in the process.

Construction Agreement and Bond Payment

Each lot owner must sign a Construction Agreement which is then co-signed by Sustainable Settlements, as the representative of the Strata. This agreement states that the lot owner will be responsible for any damage to the common property or the adjacent public road verge caused by any contractor engaged by the owner. The generic agreements can be downloaded from the WEV website and we can also issue in DocuSign for electronic signing. The owner must also pay a \$1,000 bond which is kept in escrow in the Strata bank account. Once construction of the home is completed, the owner can request a Bond Inspection and if no damage is identified, the bond is returned. If damage is identified, the cost of rectification is then taken out of the bond and the balance returned to the owner. This agreement must be signed and the bond paid prior to the owner receiving Formal Approval for the house design. To ensure no delays, this process should be commenced upon receipt of Concept Approval (at the same time as commencing invoicing for the NMI meter).



Lot Levels and Finished Floor Levels (FFL)

The philosophy of the Ecovillage around site levels is to work with the natural topography rather than benching / flattening lots like most subdivisions. This has allowed us to minimise retaining walls and, in many cases, better integrate designs with surrounding lots and community gardens.

However, we have run into challenges on some lots where houses are close together and there is substantial fall in the topography, or where residents choose to build up their site relative to others. This has caused some conflict between neighbours and additional and often unnecessary costs for retaining walls. The issue is particularly pronounced with the Groupie and Cottage Lots where buildings can be as little as 2m apart (side to side). As such we pre-filled the Groupie lots to avoid such issues occurring.

Our engineers had the challenge of ensuring that all homes are safe in the event of a large flood (1:100 year event). In response to some builders in Stage 1 struggling to interpret the finished floor level requirements of the BDG's, we engaged our civil engineer to set minimum finished floor levels (FFLs) for habitable space on every lot.

On blocks that slope away from the street, setting one FFL that is higher than the street to avoid flooding can leave the building very elevated compared to the surrounding lots and community space, and create the need for retaining and/or battering the surrounding land.

The BDG's set a maximum height for a single retaining wall at 500mm. On sloping lots, we recommend stepping the building down the slope to minimise retaining. On steep lots, this may be challenging or impractical. If this is the case, please identify the proposed site solution (including levels, retaining and proposed drainage routes) at Concept Stage so we can

discuss this with you prior to finalising the design concept.

Architectural Character

We have written about the intended architectural character of the Ecovillage in Section 2.3 of the Building Design Guidelines, and then attempted to implement this through the requirements and recommendations in the balance of the document. In general, we are trying to achieve an aesthetic that will stand the test of time.

As such, we have referred back to the vernacular, largely agricultural buildings of the region that have been relevant for many decades if not centuries. In doing so, we have eschewed the architectural 'fashions of the day,' relying instead on traditional patterns and proportions. While this approach may not be exciting for a designer looking to exuberantly express their inventiveness in the building form, it tends to create a visually cohesive community where the variety and delight comes in small creative details, and personal touches.

Design Trends

Given this, we'd like to provide our views on a few prevailing design trends relative to our Building Design Guideline provisions:

Nordic Barn – This style seems to be popping up everywhere. Essentially, it is a simple gable roofed building with no side eaves, minimalist detailing, and the gable eaves are extended vertically to the ground. They are a design response to large amounts of snow being too heavy for eaves, something we don't have to worry about. We are not supporting this aesthetic: we believe it will date quickly, it doesn't easily incorporate guttering (essential for water capture) or window shading on the long sides (very



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important in Australian summer), and it is not in keeping with our intended vernacular character.

Asymmetrical Gable Roofs –

Our Building Design Guidelines state that gable roofs must be at least 30 degrees in pitch and ‘generally symmetrical’ (Section 5.3). Over time we’ve clarified what ‘generally symmetrical’ means: we will accept gable roofs with different wall plate heights (Figure 2) but not gable roofs with different pitches (Figure 3).

Precedents

We are trying our best to be consistent in our design reviews and application of judgement relative to the design guideline provisions we’ve put in place. Occasionally, things slip through the cracks and design elements get approved that, in hindsight, we’d like to amend. Now that there are so many homes under construction or completed, it may be tempting to try to find examples from other builds to justify a design proposal that is inconsistent with our



Figure 1: example of Nordic barn style



Figure 2: symmetrical but with different wall plate heights.



Figure 3: asymmetrical with different roof pitches.

intended character or allowed materials. Please be aware that we are not bound by precedent; if something was approved previously that we feel in hindsight shouldn’t have been, why would we repeat the mistake? In addition, occasionally builders will build the home in a way that is inconsistent with the approved design, which is disappointing. All this to say, please respect the vision we’ve laid out in the design guidelines and try to work within the design parameters that we have set for the Ecovillage.

Building Colours

Our Design Guidelines state that painted exterior walls should be predominately light or mid-tone with some allowance for feature elements of brighter colour or darker tone.

These contrasting colours are best applied to trim and other elements such as fascia boards, window frames, architraves, and balustrades. Dark timber finishes are allowed (eg. Shou Sugi Ban) as well as untreated hardwood weatherboards.

In practice, we are accepting of dark walls as long as they are real timber (no timber grained Hardie cladding), as this aesthetic has a strong linkage to the local Group Settlement homes of the area and buildings such as Druid’s Hall, and will fade and weather over time, revealing the grain and integrity of the natural material.

Over time we have become more scientific in determining the range of acceptable paint colours for the exterior of buildings. The below chart shows a standard array of colour tone from the graphics industry. We have set the darkest acceptable exterior paint tone at #4 (assuming it isn’t timber cladding) – anything #3 or darker may be acceptable for trim or feature elements but not as a predominant colour for the house. Obviously, this example



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is greyscale but the theory can be applied across other colour tones.



Fencing

The standard dividing fencing in the Ecovillage is a simple timber post and wire configuration, and many residents have extended this type of fencing around the front and back of their homes. Others, however, have proposed more detailed and creative solutions. We provide guidance about maximum fencing heights and minimum visual permeability in the Local Development Plans, and direction on acceptable materials in Section 3.10 of the Building Design Guidelines. To date, we have not been requiring this information to be submitted as part of your design approval process. However, given the large impact of fencing on the aesthetics and sociability of the cluster, we will now be requiring drawings that set out the proposed fence design as part of the Detailed Design Approval process.

Other Matters

Construction Inspections

We will no longer be undertaking mid-construction building inspections, for several reasons. First, we do not have sufficient staff resources to undertake this task, and it is really something that the resident themselves (or someone hired by the resident) should do to ensure the build quality. Second, we've found that the builders rarely communicate with us with sufficient notice to be on site at the

appropriate moment to do the inspections, so they were occurring only sporadically in the first place. Ultimately, as much as we'd love to assist the residents, especially those who haven't built before, ensuring that the construction is in accordance with the designs is well beyond our purview and resources.

Wall Insulation

With an eye toward mitigating the enormous rise in building costs, we have sought further consultation with industry experts and determined that the additional cost in building homes with R3.0 wall insulation is not justified by the minor increment of thermal improvement. Thus, we are amending our requirements in the Building Design Guidelines to reflect the current National Construction Code minimum of R2.8.

All buildings are still required to meet the overall NatHERS minimum star rating that applies to your Cluster (7 stars for Stages 1-2 (currently averaging 8.4 stars), 8 stars for Stages 3-5).

Design reviews over the holiday period

The WEV office is closing for a month from 16 December 2022 to 16 January 2023. Any plans submitted for review after we close will not be assessed until the WEV office reopens in the new year.

For your reference, you can download this entire article in PDF on the Document Library or here:

[Design Review Update: Clarifications and Modifications - December 2022](#)