

FLYNN PRIMARY SITE
LOCAL CONSULTATION – 1ST SESSION
(30 OCTOBER 2007)
INITIAL SUMMARY

1. Introduction

On Tuesday 30 October 2007 a community information display, supported by a series of focussed workshop sessions, was held from 4.30pm – 8.30pm at the St Barnabas Uniting Church in Charnwood to discuss possible future uses for the former pre-school and primary school site.

These notes summarise the key outcomes from discussions held throughout the consultation. It should be noted that participation in the consultation was premised on the qualification that that it did not signify support for school closure.

2. Background

In 2006 the ACT Government announced that 23 primary schools and preschools would be closed as part of its Schools Revitalisation Policy.

ACT Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) have appointed a consultant team to undertake detailed site specific technical studies and local community consultation in order to identify optimal future uses for each site.

The consultation process is staged and provides opportunity for residents and other interested members of the community to attend local information displays and workshop sessions to provide feedback and discuss issues relevant to each of the former school sites. Technical findings together with feedback received through the consultations will be used by the consultant team to assess and make recommendations to TAMS about future uses for the former school sites.

3. Approach

The consultation session included a community information display held from 4.30pm to 8.30pm together with four focussed workshop sessions held on the hour every hour.

A series of plans and information relating to the Flynn site formed the display. These plans were available as 'table packs' for the participants of the workshops.

The information included:

- Metropolitan Context Plan
- Project Timetable Flowchart
- Project Objectives
- Options Workshops (District) Outcomes
- Building Condition Summary
- Population Characteristics
- Social Infrastructure Plan
- Territory Plan Extract (Community Facility)
- Territory Plan Extract Map
- Planning Processes Flowchart
- Typical Development Types'
- Site Air Photo
- Suburb Air Photo
- Site Analysis Plan
- Site Photos
- Development Option Plans



4. Attendance

Approximately 48 people attended the workshops and an additional 20 people called in to view the display, without attending a workshop.

5. Key issues

The key issues that were raised at the Flynn consultation included:

Focus of Flynn

- Flynn's physical orientation and identity is centred on the school site. The suburb is designed with the school as a central hub and roads radiating from this hub. The school provided the geographic and social centre of the suburb.
- The school site provided a central focus for the community. The community focus has changed since the school closed; the community lacks a heart. The school provided an activity point that facilitated community interaction and networking. Since the school closure the community focus has reduced because there is less informal interaction.
- The school was a valued and important part of the community and there is strong support to reopen it.
- Housing in Flynn is relatively affordable which draws new families to the area to settle down and have children. As such, the suburb is going through demographic change and regeneration.
- The John Flynn memorial helps to define the suburb and its history. There is strong ownership and respect for the site, as evidenced by the low levels of graffiti and vandalism.
- The community has shifted from having a walking focus to a car focus because children now need to get driven to school. This transition has reduced the community focus.

Current and future community needs

- The school closure has had wide reaching ramifications on the community. There is a need for the site to restore a social centre in the suburb to stimulate community cohesion, familiarity, belonging, identity, respect and ownership.
- Local community based demographic survey data conflicts with government data regarding the rate of demographic renewal happening in Flynn. There is a need to revisit demographic projections.
- The lack of a local school may impact demographic renewal in the area, as young families may no longer choose to move to the suburb.
- Beyond the pre-school, the school buildings and grounds are the only facilities in the area available for community use and interaction. They were well used by a number of organisations. As such, there is a need for multi-purpose, multi-functional space for community based organisations. It is administratively difficult to book the pre-school for community uses and the space is designed for infants the toilets do not have doors and are very small.
- The school grounds are well maintained and are still actively used by the community. There is a need for well maintained open space. The adjoining open space is not maintained and is unusable.



- There is a need for children's and youth services from playgroups through to teenage groups.
- The school accommodated the only holiday care program in north-west Belconnen and there is a need for holiday care to assist working parents.
- The transition to new schools has been difficult for children and support services are needed to enable them to cope with change at such a young age.
- The school closure has had an impact on the vitality of community based groups. For example, the under seven's soccer club can no longer sustain itself because without access to the school network it can not recruit new players.
- There is a real need for a local school and the local Parents and Citizens Association is pursuing legal action to reopen the school.
- A number of community organisations could operate from the site, but they need support to engender the strong sense of community, identity and social cohesion that the school provided.
- There is a need for safe walking routes to enable students to get to alternative schools safely. They are travelling further and crossing busy roads to access schools, which is unsafe.

Potential use of former school site to meet community needs

- Many participants stated that their preference was to re-open the school to provide for future community need, but resigned to discussing possible future uses for the site. As the development potential of A10 areas is realised, and more high density housing is established there will be a need for a local school.
- The school was well designed and has flexible spaces. The buildings are in good condition and there is an opportunity to adaptively reuse them for a combined education and community development centre.
- The gymnasium has sprung floors and is recognised as a valuable community asset that could be used for a number of uses and should therefore be retained.
- The road infrastructure serving the site is limited. The site is serviced by local, not arterial roads. Therefore, the impact any future use has on traffic flow and parking would need to be assessed. Future use should discourage car use.
- The opportunity to establish natural bushland on some of the site could be considered.
- Participants indicated the site was unsuitable for aged care, medium density residential or commercial uses because the road network could not support traffic generating development. Specifically in regards to aged care, participants indicated the hilly terrain and the lack of shops or facilities rendered the site unsuitable for aged care.
- The governance arrangement to manage and coordinate future use of the site is an important consideration that will impact the viability of the site being used as a multi-purpose, multi-functional community centre. The management of the site needs to coordinate multi-use of the site and facilitate community development.



- The John Flynn Community Group's concept for the site is for a flexible multi-use community centre. The proposal identifies tenants to fill all spaces in the building. The concept needs government support to enable a business plan to be progressed. The former Holder High School was also noted as a good example of a well maintained community facility.
- Potential community based groups that have an interest in the Flynn site or in assessing multi-use, multi-functional space within the Belconnen region include local playgroups, holiday care, aerobics, community barbeque and fete committees, fathers and kids groups (genesis of men's shed), youth centre, U3A, community college, woodworking workshops, quilters/craft groups, small business enterprise centre, professional consulting rooms, neighbourhood watch, community gardens, community library.
- There was majority support for the site to fulfil local community needs as a priority over regional community needs. The site has been designed as a local facility that serves a walking catchment.

Analysis of options

Option 1

- There was no support to rezone part of the school grounds to open space because the open space is not adequately maintained and therefore is not a useable or valued community asset.
- Many participants felt that if the site was partially rezoned for open space that it would become vulnerable to future development and that the existing community facility zoning guaranteed the retention of this land for community use.

Option 1A

- The majority of participants stated that the school should be retained in its entirety to enable the school to be reopened in the future to support demographic change.

Option 2

- Some participants resigned that partial site redevelopment may help to sustain and ensure a community dividend and felt that aged care or low density residential would be acceptable. However, the majority of participants stated that there was already a lot of medium and high density housing within the surrounding A10 areas and as such, the site should not be rezoned for residential use.
- A range of views were expressed in regards to constraints that impact the potential to subdivide the site to enable partial redevelopment. Specifically:
 - Participants noted the school hall is a valuable space that could provide rehearsal space for a number of community based groups and therefore should be retained.
 - Participants noted the school grounds are well maintained and provide the only useable green space in the area and therefore should be retained.
 - Participants noted the preschool needed to be retained and integrated with the site.



- The north-west corner of the site was identified by several participants as having some potential for future development.
- Participants who supported partial subdivision of the site did so on the condition that revenue generated by development be guaranteed to deliver a tangible community benefit in the form of a multi-use, multi-functional managed community centre.

Option 3

As per Option 2.

- There was no consensus around whether all existing school buildings should be retained or which ones should be retained if the site was to be partially developed.

Option 3A

As per Options 2 and 3.

- Some participants felt that the buildings were in good condition and therefore, it would be inappropriate to demolish them to build a purpose built community facility. Demolition should be a last resort.

Option 4

- There was no support for total redevelopment of the site.

Option 4A

- There was no support for the entire site to be rezoned for open space.

Alternative options

- Some participants supported the idea of rezoning the open space for development to enable the school site to be used for community uses. Participants suggested the open space has better access than the school site and could accommodate medium density housing.

These notes reflect key issues and ideas raised during discussions with the consultant team during the course of the Workshops and Information Display and are not intended to reflect all of the comments made, nor does it include any of the comments written on 'Feedback Sheets' provided to persons who attended the session/workshops.

Information from feedback sheets and other submissions will be analysed and incorporated into the site evaluation process by the consultant team and included in the final report to Government.

7 November 2007

