

HALL PRIMARY SITE
LOCAL CONSULTATION – 1ST SESSION
(24 OCTOBER 2007)
INITIAL SUMMARY

1. Introduction

On Wednesday 24 October 2007 a community information display, followed by a facilitated workshop session, was held from 4.30pm – 8.00pm at the Hall Pavilion in Hall to discuss possible future uses for the former preschool 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 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 6.00pm, followed by a focussed workshop session that finished at 8.00pm.

A series of plans and information relating to the Hall 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 37 people attended the workshop and an additional 12 people called in to view the display, without attending the workshop.

5. Key issues

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

5.1 Focus of Hall

- Hall, is a 'village', and is unique in that it is one of the few rural/urban mixed communities in the ACT.
- The loss of the school has had a significant impact on both the economic viability and social cohesion of the local community. The school was the central focus of community interaction. There was a strong community focus around the school, illustrated by the level of interaction that used to occur around the site.
- The identity of Hall is a village with intrinsic heritage values.

Current and future community needs

- There is a need to view Hall in context of its heritage status.
- The most pressing unmet need is a school. The role of the site as a community meeting place for social interaction is vital to the functioning of Hall as a village community.
- Participants understood that the project aimed to identify future use/s for the former school site. Despite this, the clear position was to reopen the school. Failing the option to reopen the school, the majority of participants expressed very strong support to retain the school buildings and grounds in public ownership.
- Many participants stressed the need for the site to be used educational purposes, such as a preschool, child-care centre, rural education courses or community college. Some participants felt that the opportunity for a private school should be revisited.
- Many participants stated that they did not agree with the demographic projections for Hall and cited examples of younger families moving into the area. This was also stated as a driver for re-opening the school.
- Another unmet need stressed by some participants was the provision of public transport facilities to Hall, in order to improve accessibility for youth and elderly people.
- Some participants noted the need for the site to be affordable and accessible for local community groups.
- The site should encourage a wide-range of interest from the community and should create a high frequency of regular visits to Hall.

5.2 Potential use of former school site to meet community needs

- Participants discussed a wide-range of potential uses for the site, although they stressed that with the exception of a school, no future use could replace the diversity and frequency of community members interacting on the site.
- Many participants supported prospects that would encourage people to visit Hall. The Hall markets were noted as an excellent initiative that draws people from both the ACT and NSW into the village.



- The site could provide a base for community organisations. The character of the site should be retained by protecting the heritage listed old school house (museum) and trees. There was no support for new development to accommodate community needs.
- The open space and trees are as important to the site's heritage as the buildings, and therefore needed to be retained.
- Hall is located between the centre of Canberra and Yass/Murrumbateman and therefore serves a large regional rural catchment. Hall is unique compared to other school sites, in that it served a wider catchment and provided services for a diverse rural/urban mix of families.
- Future plans for the site need to maintain the structural integrity of Hall as a 'village' and not form an iterative step towards becoming a dormant suburban enclave of Canberra. The long term sustainability of the village must be supported. Therefore, the long term economic viability of local shops is an important consideration that must be assessed in association with any future use of the site.
- The site could potentially accommodate a range of not-for-profit community groups, but the commercial rates are prohibitive and therefore subsidised rates need to be offered to enable community-based groups to use the site.
- Potential community based groups that have an interest in the Hall site or in accessing multi-use, multi-functional space within the Belconnen region include U3A, play groups, theatre groups, arts classes and others.
- The buildings need to be managed and clarification around maintenance is needed.
- Some participants discussed the possibility for aged care housing, but many others stated that this would not be feasible, as medical and transport services do not exist to accommodate this use.

5.3 Analysis of options

Option 1

- Participants felt that the open space adjacent to the buildings was as critical to the heritage value of the site as the actual buildings themselves, and therefore needed to remain as part of the site (as community facilities).
- Participants did not feel that the oval needed to be zoned as public open space, as it could already be used by locals under the existing community facilities zoning.
- The open space needs to be maintained for use by the community groups, which occupy the buildings.

Option 1A

- Almost all participants opted for Option 1A, which provides flexibility for the buildings to be used as a school in the future to accommodate demographic change. There was consensus that this was the only appropriate option.
- There was agreement that the current buildings and surrounding area were an important part of the heritage of the village, and therefore removal of any of these features would detract from this value.
- Many participants noted that the key to sustaining a high-level of use for the buildings would be to either encourage a



permanent tenant, such as an independent school, or co-ordinate a wider range of community groups to utilise the site. It was suggested that a local community-based management structure could manage any possible new tenants/uses.

Option 2

- It was felt that even partial development would detract from both the amenity of the site, as well as the functionality of the site to operate as a school in the future. If the oval was redeveloped, the open space could not be utilised by a school in the future.
- Participants also felt that the open space would be important to any community groups applying for tenancy on the site.

Option 3

- As per Options 2 and 3A.
- Participants felt that the site would be compromised with any surrounding development. Access to the site by surrounding residents would also become more difficult with any redevelopment of the oval and buildings.
- A very limited number of participants noted that they might be willing to remove some of the demountable buildings, if there was to be a multi-purpose community facility built, which retained the amenity of the local area (heritage of the village). This would incorporate a combination of Option 3 and 3A.

Option 3A

- Many participants felt that the buildings were in a decent condition and therefore, it would be inappropriate to demolish them to build a purpose built community facility.
- Most participants stated that demolishing any buildings would detract from the amenity of the area and its heritage value.

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.

These notes reflect key issues and ideas raised during discussions with the consultant team during the course of the Workshop 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/workshop.

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

