

HOLT PRIMARY SITE
LOCAL CONSULTATION – 1ST SESSION
(31 OCTOBER 2007)
INITIAL SUMMARY

1. Introduction

On Wednesday 31 October 2007 a community information display, supported by a series of focussed workshop sessions, was held from 4.30pm – 8.30pm at the Kippax Library Community Room in Kippax to discuss possible future uses for the Holt preschool and primary school site.

These notes summarise the key outcomes from discussions held throughout the consultation. It should be noted that participation was premised on the qualification 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 Holt 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 18 people attended the workshops and an 20 additional people called in to view the display, without attending a workshop.

5. Key issues

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

Focus of Holt

- Holt is a normal, quiet, safe, suburban, family-focussed, established community with a lot of medium density and affordable housing. Holt is close to new release areas of Molonglo and Macgregor and will support development in these land release areas.
- Housing in Holt is 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.
- There is a perceived balance between young families with children and elderly people.
- The school forms a central part of the local community and links with the shopping strip and encourages informal interaction.
- The school is valued as an important local asset that contributes to the 'lifeblood' of the suburb. Accordingly, there is consensus to reopen the school or reuse the site for an independent school.

Current and future community needs

- One large super school will not meet the needs of all students. Some students need a smaller school and parents have a right to choose whether to send their children to large or small schools. As such, there is a shortage of school choices.
- Aged care housing may be needed if population continues to age, but it was noted that there is a good supply of housing which provides accommodation choice for older people.
- The community is well serviced and is close to retail centres of Kippax and Belconnen and therefore does not need additional retail services.
- No specific social or community services or facilities were identified as pressing unmet needs. There was a general perception that the area has a good balance of community services and facilities that meet existing community need. However, additional services for children and teenagers would benefit the community.
- Local churches provide services for youth in need, including after school care and a breakfast program.
- The school currently provides a meeting space for after-hours community activities, such as tae kwon-do. When the school closes there will be a need for a general community meeting place.
- Emmaus Christian School operate an independent primary school in Dickson that is at capacity. There is sufficient demand in the Belconnen district to open another school.
- Given the low socio-economic profile of the community it was widely recognised that services that reinforce a sense of community are important.



- There is a perception that the capacity of the new super school will be less than the current combined capacity of the Holt and Higgins Primary Schools, which are both being closed.
- The lack of consultation over the future use of the Higgins Primary School site was noted as an unmet need.
- A number of not-for-profit community organisations need space but are not in a position to lease or purchase facilities at commercial rates and therefore need to access space via subsidised rates or via supported leasehold arrangements in partnership with the government.
- The open space to the north of the school needs to be irrigated and better maintained to enable it to be used for recreation purposes. The current maintenance regime prohibits community use.

Potential use of former school site to meet community needs

- Some participants stated that their preference was to retain all existing buildings to ensure the school could be re-opened to meet future community need. If the school could not be reopened, there was consensus that an independent school would represent optimal use of the site.
- The Indigenous pre-school on site provides essential social networking and early education support services to Aboriginal families and should be retained.
- Many participants felt the buildings have been purpose built and therefore should be reused as a school.
- Site maintenance was recognised as an important issue. If the buildings are occupied their maintenance will be guaranteed. The school grounds need to be maintained to a higher standard than open space to the north.
- The site is not centrally located and public transport services are inadequate and therefore it would not support tertiary student accommodation. Participants felt that tertiary students would 'party' which would detrimentally impact the quiet amenity of the suburb. As such, the broader social impact of establishing tertiary student accommodation on the site would need to be considered.
- The buildings are in good condition and therefore have potential for adaptive reuse for community purposes. It was suggested that retention of buildings for community purposes would outweigh benefit of additional housing. The Griffin Centre was noted as a good example of a managed multi-use, multi-function community space. The former Charnwood High School was also noted as a good example of a privately owned and well maintained community facility.
- Potential community based groups that have an interest in the Holt site or in accessing multi-use multi-functional space within the Belconnen region include U3A, community college, quilting groups, PCYC, theatre/dance groups, mens/womens groups, Samaritans Purse (4,000 m²), Emmaus Christian School other independent schools.

Analysis of options

Option 1

- If the site was used for future community use, caveats should be applied to guarantee community access to the grounds and buildings for multiple community based activities.
- There was minority support to rezone part of the school grounds to open space. However, the land would need to be managed to a higher standard



than the existing open space to the north, which is unusable because it is not irrigated or mowed.

Option 1A

As per Option 1.

- The majority of participants stated that the site is a purpose built facility and should be retained in its entirety to enable the school to be reopened in the future to support demographic change or for an independent school to operate and provide choice to parents.
- The majority of participants supported retention and retrofit of existing buildings to provide community based services of some type. That is, there was little support for additional site development.

Option 2

- As per Options 1 and 1A.
- The majority of participants felt that subdivision would preclude future use of the site as a school and as such there was almost no support to subdivide the site.
- Some participants felt that any loss of green space would impact Canberra's identity as the 'bush capital' and therefore, development should not be undertaken at the expense of green space.
- Several participants indicated that partial site redevelopment may help to guarantee a community dividend and felt that the site could support aged care, affordable housing or overnight accommodation for interstate school groups. All of these options would provide potential for the community to access multi-use, multi-functional space. However, the majority of participants stated that there was already a lot of medium and high density housing and affordable housing with in the surrounding A10 areas and as such, the site should not be rezoned for residential use. The impact of further affordable housing on property values would need to be assessed. Likewise, the impact of further residential development on local road infrastructure would need to be assessed.
- 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 that the Indigenous preschool is a specialist service provider and should be retained.

Option 3

- As per Options 1, 1A and 2.

Option 3A

- As per Options 1, 1A and 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.

Option 4

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



Option 4A

- There was minority support to rezone the site for open space to increase the amenity to adjoining residential property owners. There was concern that if the buildings are retained that they may not be actively used or maintained and the site would become rundown, which would have a negative impact on the amenity of the area.

Alternative options

- No alternative options were raised.

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

