



CONSULTATION REPORT

RETIREMENT LIVING PRECINCT PROPOSAL

BLOCK 348 GUNGAHLIN

29 NOVEMBER 2022



Prepared By:

Purdon Planning Pty Ltd

Suite 5, Level 1,
243 Northbourne Avenue,
Lyneham ACT 2602
ABN 63 653 124 442
Tel 02 6257 1511
Email purdons@purdon.com.au

Web www.purdon.com.au

Any representation, statement, opinion or advice expressed or implied in this publication is made in good faith but on the basis that Purdon Planning, its agents and employees are not liable to any person for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur, in relation to that person taking or not taking (as the case may be) action, in respect of any representation, statement or advice referred to in this report.



Table of Contents

1.0	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2.0	ABOUT PURDON	4
2.1	Consultation Methodology	4
2.2	Standards of Consultation.....	5
3.0	BACKGROUND TO THIS PROJECT	6
3.1	Correspondence with NCA	6
3.2	Correspondence with EPSDD	6
3.3	Project Site Area.....	7
3.4	The Master Plan	8
4.0	APPROACH TO CONSULTATION	10
5.0	GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION (INCL MPs, MLAs & THEIR OFFICES).....	11
5.1	Feedback to date	12
6.0	TARGETED STAKEHOLDER AND WIDER COMMUNITY CONSULTATION.....	14
6.1	Timeline	15
7.0	OLD GUNGAHLIN HOMESTEAD OPEN DAY	16
8.0	CONCLUSION	21

Figures

Figure 1: Regional Context	2
Figure 2: The Site	3
Figure 3: Gungahlin Homestead.....	3
Figure 4: Canberra Context	7
Figure 5: Site Map	8
Figure 6: Community Master Plan.....	9



1.0 Executive Summary

Block 348 Gungahlin (the subject site) occupies a large tract of land between the districts of Gungahlin and Belconnen in the northern part of Canberra, at the corner of the Barton Highway and Gungahlin Drive. The site contains the Gungahlin Homestead, which is one of the few original Georgian-style buildings with rendered brickwork remaining in the ACT region and has formally been used since the early 1950s as a major research station by the CSIRO.

With the CSIRO soon to vacate the site in 2023, it is important to consider the next evolution of the property with the intention of honouring the indigenous, colonial and scientific history of this important element of Canberra's past. A possible use for the site is the current proposal for a Retirement Living Community. This possible use appeals to honouring and celebrating the heritage of the site, whilst also providing an opportunity to promote a high level of sustainability and cater for Canberra's ageing population.

There is a well-documented shortfall of aged care, retirement living and general housing across the ACT and the region. The Gungahlin region is severely short of aged care options, particularly with regard to options providing an integrated model catering for low care through to high care retirement living accommodation.

Land use for the site in the National Capital Plan (NCP) is Hills, Ridges and Buffers (HRB) which allows a limited range of uses associated with definition of the land and its relationship to the Barton Highway as an approach route. To permit the proposed retirement living community, an amendment to the National Capital Plan is required, which will include a site-specific use of Retirement Living and Ancillary uses to the subject site only. Prior to progressing a formal submission to the NCA, it was important to understand community views associated with the proposed evolution of the site. To gain a full understanding of the community's appetite for development of the site, what sort of development might suit the site and how we can restore the Homestead to its former glory, Purdon has undertaken consultation with a range of government and community members in recent months on behalf of the client.

On 19 November 2022, a community open day facilitated by Purdon, was held with approximately 650 community members in attendance.

Community members and the Gungahlin Community Council especially, expressed a strong interest in protecting the heritage values of the site and protecting its remaining ecological values. The community understands that in order to maintain and enhance the heritage values on the site, a new evolution and use for the site must be explored.

The community also expressed a broad need for Retirement Living options in the ageing Gungahlin and Belconnen communities. There was a high level of support for the proposed Retirement Living concept on the Homestead site, providing that the heritage elements are well addressed.

Preliminary discussions with government conveyed significant interest in the development concept for the site.

The owners of the site are amending and refining the design concept in response to the feedback received from the community and government to date.



Figure 1: Regional Context





Figure 2: The Site



Figure 3: Gungahlin Homestead





2.0 About Purdon

Purdon is a boutique consultancy firm specialising in Strategic and Urban Planning, Communication and Engagement, and Development Management.

Established in 1986, our team are uniquely positioned to deliver communication and engagement projects. We have been providing communication and engagement services for over 30 years and have an in-depth understanding of Canberra's planning frameworks, excellent relationships within the community and the ACT Government, and a proven ability to listen, capture and provide insightful analysis of community views.

We are highly versed in designing and implementing communication strategies that ensure a broad range of stakeholders and informed, consulted, heard, and empowered.

2.1 Consultation Methodology

Purdon commences each communication and engagement brief with the same fundamental ethos – that our stakeholder and community engagement will be meaningful and inclusive, that it will build understanding, create local ownership, and facilitate a sense of excitement about the project that we are working on.

The implementation of a strategic, structured, and consistent framework for stakeholder communication allows the project team to build positive anticipation and enthusiasm for the project amongst key stakeholders and the wider community.

Our approach to communication and engagement involves four pillars. And working from the base of those pillars we work with stakeholders to achieve the best design outcome for the precinct:

Collaborate

We engage directly with residents, community groups, businesses, and relevant government agencies to ensure that the designs meet specific user aspirations and requirements, and all statutory conditions.

Involve

We work with government agencies and other relevant stakeholders to make certain that the new infrastructure and public realm interface will meet requirements for future uses and users while responding to all regulatory requirements.

Consult

We invite public feedback, with opportunities for input from stakeholders, including focus group feedback from those directly affected by the project and/ or with a particular interest in the outcomes. We will provide feedback to the community about how that input has been considered in the design development.

Inform

Throughout the project the community and interested stakeholders will be informed about progress and how engagement has informed design development.



2.2 Standards of Consultation

Our approach to stakeholder engagement is logical and relatively straightforward.

Our approach is consistent with best practice in project management and is broadly consistent with international standards for social responsibility. It involves a number of deliberate and methodical steps to identify stakeholders, understand them, engage with them in a way that is meaningful to them and those consulting, adapt intelligently as required as the engagement unfolds, and then complete the stakeholder engagement in a way that gives project managers a clear and useful understanding of how the project should proceed.

Our consultation process is further informed by the ACT Government Community Consultation Guidelines. This is the community consultation standards set by EPSDD and is considered to represent best practice consultation and set the standard for consultation in the ACT.

The consultation guidelines recommend using a range of tools and materials to reach the target audience. Information provided in other sections of this report meet and exceed those standards.

We have also built on our approach noting the NCA's Commitment to Community Engagement 2015. This has guided the way we inform, listen, acknowledge, consider submissions and provide feedback. Through our process we seek to collaborate with the community in order to achieve the greatest outcome possible for the proposal.



3.0 Background to this Project

The site is identified as National Land and is occupied by the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) with its occupation of the site expected to end in late 2023. The intention of the proposal is to give the site, along with its ecological and heritage values, a new life with sympathetic uses which will enhance these qualities.

The site contains the Gungahlin Homestead, which is one of the few original Georgian-style buildings with rendered brickwork remaining in the ACT region. It has been used since the early 1950s as a major research station by the CSIRO.

The property has evolved over its lifetime, it is the intention of this project to honour the indigenous, colonial and scientific history of the site. This can be achieved by finding a new use, which will provide for the need for retirement living in the North of Canberra while enabling the preservation of one of Canberra's oldest, yet little known, homesteads. It is also an excellent opportunity to provide opportunities for the community to engage with the Homestead which has been 'locked away' for much of its life.

The proposal will see the site gain a new life while benefitting Canberra's ageing community.

3.1 Correspondence with NCA

The initial proposal was raised with the National Capital Authority Board meeting in April 2022, for noting. The proposal has also been discussed with the Chief Planner and NCA officers.

The NCA has not expressed a view on the proposal at the time of writing.

It is the intention of the project team to continue developing the design in consultation with the NCA.

3.2 Correspondence with EPSDD

Initial discussions with representatives of Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) have been held.

EPSDD expressed support for undertaking further work on the proposal through the meetings held to date. Noting a need for retirement living and providing a positive view on the potential of the site. No formal proposal has been put to EPSDD at this stage.

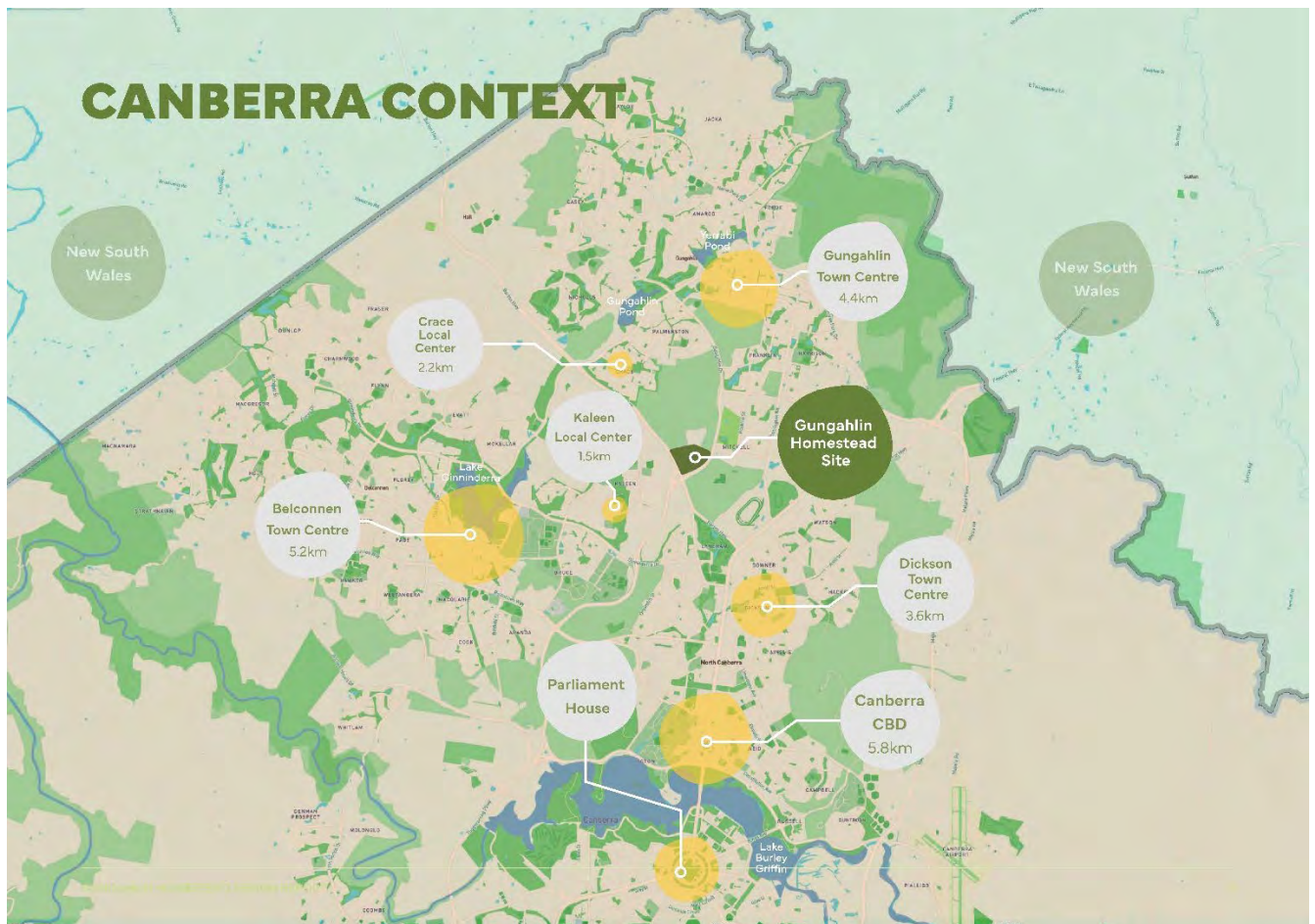
At the time of writing, EPSDD has included the subject site as a future study area in the Gungahlin District Study as a site for potential redevelopment.



3.3 Project Site Area

The project site area is centrally located between Gungahlin and Belconnen and is on the corner of Gungahlin Drive and the Barton Highway (an approach route identified in the NCP).

Figure 4: Canberra Context



Elements of the site and buildings are listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List. The buildings include the original Homestead building, Servant's Quarters and Coach House (most recently used as a Herbarium). There are also landscape elements in the listing including: the original carriageway alignment and trees; brick well; courtyard between heritage buildings; rural character of the settings for the Gungahlin Homestead Precinct and Outbuildings.

The site is home to a large number of mature canopy trees, and is bordered by a significant barrier of mature oaks along the Barton Highway Frontage. There is an area of ecological communities which include a small population of striped legless lizard and Golden Sun Moth habitat on the edge of the site. These have been assessed by an ecological consultant with the findings incorporated into the development of the master plan concept.

It is intended that these heritage (indigenous and colonial), existing tree canopy and ecological values will be regenerated and enhanced as part of the proposal.



Figure 5: Site Map



3.4 The Master Plan

The Community Master Plan has evolved through a vision for the site which integrates both European and Indigenous cultural values to design a new community that places the health and wellbeing of country and residents at the forefront of the design.

The proposal incorporates a designing for country approach, prioritising country, the environment and the experience for residents. This approach is intended to improve the well-being of all species on site and is intended to enhance the quality and experience for residents.

Our approach to the site prioritises the retention of the existing mature trees on the site, with over 90% of existing trees to be retained through the design. This will also be augmented with generous plantings throughout.

The building footprint proposed aligns with the existing built footprint taken up by the homestead and CSIRO research buildings and facilities. The proposed built form is set behind a dense canopy of mature trees and is setback a minimum of 200m from the Barton Highway.

Figure 4 below shows the current master plan concept, presented to the community during the community consultation period.

A copy of the Master Plan Concept as presented to the community is available at Attachment 1.



Figure 6: Community Master Plan





4.0 Approach to Consultation

Purdon approached consultation on the basis that stakeholder engagement does not aim to achieve consensus among all participants.

We believe that consultation is a mechanism for realising community and stakeholder concerns and utilising local knowledge. Our view is that engagement must be conducted in a clear, transparent manner that provides all participants with a realistic understanding of what engagement means in this context. Part of our approach is to clarify what engagement is to stakeholders, and to the community, in a clear and articulate manner. An important part of the process is how we obtain feedback and how this feedback informs the planning and design process.

More specifically, recognising the unique nature of this site, Purdon's recommendation to the owner of the site was that it should consult the community at the early stages of concept design. This would ensure the community has a strong voice in the proposed development concept. This is important not only for community acceptance of the eventual proposal, but for refining the proposal to ensure its ultimate viability.

In line with that advice, after initial concepts were developed, before seeking formal approvals from relevant authorities, the owners held an open day and invited the community into the site to explore the Homestead and consider development concepts for the site.

In parallel with preparation for the open day, the team met with community groups, government officials and other community representatives.

The following sections summarise the discussions held so far.



5.0 Government Stakeholder Consultation (incl MPs, MLAs & their offices)

Meetings were sought with ACT Government officials, Members of the Legislative Assembly, Members of Parliament and their offices. The meetings that have been held, planned or offered are listed below.

Table 1: Key Government Stakeholders

Key Government Stakeholders		
Consultation Date	Name	Organisation
24/2/2022	NCA Officers	NCA
7/3/2022	EPSDD Officers	EPSDD
14/4/2022	NCA Officers	NCA
27/5/2022	EPSDD Officers	EPSDD
12/10/2022	Site Visit	NCA
3/11/2022	Andrew Braddock	Greens Member of Yerrabi
3/11/2022	Cathy Day	Andrew Leigh MP Office
4/11/2022	Rebecca Vassaroti	ACT Minister for Environment and Heritage
7/11/2022	Mary Johnston and Linda Robertson	National Trust ACT
11/11/2022	Suzanne Orr	Labor Member for Yerrabi
17/11/2022	Toby Noon	Senator Gallagher's Office
8/12/2022	David Pocock	Senator for ACT
Meetings offered	Michael Pettersson MLA	Labor Member for Yerrabi
Meeting offered	Andrew Leigh MP	

The Government stakeholder engagement was intended to provide a briefing and to seek views both with relation to the future of the site, and in regard to the community need for Retirement Living options in North Canberra.



5.1 Feedback to date

Table 2: Government Stakeholder feedback

Key Government Stakeholders	
Name	Feedback
Andrew Braddock Greens Member of Yerribi	Very positive, particularly to the Design for Country approach. Would like to see greater density in the building footprints given the large areas of planned green space.
Cathy Day Andrew Leigh MP Office	Positive, particularly around the approach and meeting the retirement living aged care need
Rebecca Vassaroti ACT Minister for Environment and Heritage And the Acting Executive Director of Heritage ACT	<p>Very positive around the need for the Gungahlin Homestead to have a future use in order to maintain the integrity of the historic building into the future. Understood that the site would need a use to fund the ongoing maintenance of the Homestead, as the building would not be self supporting.</p> <p>The Acting Executive Director of Heritage ACT reminisced about his past working as a heritage conservationist on the site. His concerns were about how the site has been made inaccessible to the public. He showed full support for adapting the site to be publicly accessible. He also commented that he was under the belief that the site was always envisioned to be used for retirement living.</p> <p>Felt that the retirement living was a compatible use on site and appreciated the design for country approach.</p> <p>Enjoyed the conceptual development of the design through cohesion with indigenous groups and the planned living country on site approach. Supported the potential business opportunities for indigenous which the development creates.</p> <p>Noted the legless lizard population and the living systems design intent and would be interested to see where that develops.</p> <p>Appreciated the light touch attitude in preserving the natural ecology and the planned conservation of existing trees. The approach for a pedestrian driven society run on low ecologically impacting vehicles sparked interest as the site and its image is to be maintained and managed.</p> <p>Spoke about how higher density would be suitable.</p>



Key Government Stakeholders

Mary and Linda Robertson National Trust ACT	Overall positive and supported the Open Day activity. Will be an additional briefing when the National Trust ACT President is back from travelling.
Toby Noon Senator Gallagher's Office	Positive and wanted to know how quickly the proposal could come to market and into fruition. He also enquired about how many dwellings were planned.
David Pocock	To be reviewed upon completion of meeting on 8 December.



6.0 Targeted Stakeholder and Wider Community Consultation

The targeted stakeholder groups were identified as those who have a specific interest in the project, either as a community group member, potential aged care resident, heritage advisor, investor, Aboriginal organisation, or part of the general community.

Special attention was given to the Aboriginal organisations and the heritage advisors due to the sensitive nature of the site, and the values it holds. The site is a place of cultural and historic significance, and our priority is to understand and protect these values.

The owners of the site or their representatives have met with the following individuals or groups.

Table 3: Targeted Stakeholder Groups and Contact Methodology

Stakeholder Group	Contact Method
Gungahlin Community Council (GCC)	Email and Exec Meeting, presentation at GCC Meeting
Belconnen Community Council (BCC)	Email and Exec Meeting
Friends of Grasslands (FOG)	Email and Meeting on site
Community Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- On site advertising- Media Release- Facebook- Community Councils- FM Radio- Open Days
Council of the Ageing (COTA)	Call and Meeting
ACT Heritage Council	Call and Meeting
Soldier-on	Call and Meeting
Neighbouring Rural Lessees	Letter and Meeting
Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs)	Continued engagement through Yerrabingin along with broader Co-design group

Early Stakeholder Engagement

The earlier stakeholder engagement contained meetings and consultations with a smaller group of stakeholders, including Agencies, business owners, COTA, government, and select members of the general public. This approach allowed an analysis of the initial design to be undertaken. It also facilitated the incorporation of numerous ideas into the design, enhancing the proposal.



Later Stakeholder Engagement

Later stakeholder engagement will occur after this initial round of engagement, after the design is refined. At that point, the development design is being prepared for the approval process, a second round of consultation will occur to allow the community the opportunity to see how their feedback has been incorporated into the design, and to take a general sounding on the refined design.

6.1 Timeline

To give the community and relevant authorities a more complete picture of the work that has been undertaken to date, Figure 4 below includes a timeline of activities to date.

Table 4: Timeline to date

Date	Activity	Description	Collateral
Feb 2022	NCA	Meetings to discuss proposal	High Level Discussion and Initial Mapping
Mar 2022	EPSDD	Meeting to discuss proposal	High Level Discussion and Initial Mapping
27 Oct 22	COTA	Meeting	High Level Discussion Limited Mapping Material
4 Nov 22	Media Release	Article in RiotACT Media release to Canberra Times and ABC Radio	High Level Points relating to the proposal Invitation to Open Day
	Facebook Page	Gungahlin Homestead Facebook Page	Images Text Plans
9 Nov 22	Presentation to GCC	Presentation to community council Seeking input	High Level Presentation Invitation to Open Day
17 Nov 22	Meeting with FOG	Meeting and presentation of Concept design and approach	High Level Discussion Invitation to Open Day
18 Nov 22	Website Go-Live	Master Plan Have Your Say	Maps Images Historic Write Up FAQ Questionnaire
19 Nov 22	Open Day	A turnout of 638 people	Presentation Discussion Questionnaire
On-going	Further discussion with Community		



7.0 Old Gungahlin Homestead Open Day

On 19 of November 2022 a community open day was held, opening the Old Gungahlin Homestead to the community. It was intended to give the community an opportunity to see this hidden heritage gem, but also to give the community an opportunity to see the design concept for the site.

The day involved heritage tours of the old homestead conducted by heritage expert Eric Martin and an array of design concept material displayed in one of the meeting rooms on the site. Brochures, flyers and surveys were also provided to the public on the day. A Rotary run sausage sizzle and coffee cart were also operating on the day.

These attendees came to visit the site and review the contemporary masterplan concept. From these visitors, 110 provided written comments in the surveys.

Purdon estimates that between all Purdon and development management staff working on the day approximately 300 individual conversations were had, the vast majority being positive.

The overall feeling towards the retirement living use was almost entirely positive, with 92% of people completing written surveys agreeing that there is a lack of appropriate aged care and retirement living in the region, and 81% of people fully supporting the scheme and commending the sites suitability.

A summary of the written feedback received on the day is depicted in the table below:

Table 5: Summary of written feedback from surveys

Gungahlin Homestead Community Survey			
Question	Overall Community Reaction	Percentage in Support	Comment
Do you think retirement living / aged care is an appropriate use for the site?	90 people were in favour	81% in full support	The majority of the people who responded to the survey were positive and believed that the site is appropriate for aged care usage. Some of those who provided negative comments were noted as being hesitant in providing support citing, they did not fully understand the proposal or thought that use was proposed for the Homestead Building.



Gungahlin Homestead Community Survey

Question	Overall Community Reaction	Percentage in Support	Comment
Do you think the Gungahlin and Belconnen districts have a need for more options around retirement / aged care living?	101 people agreed with this statement 2 people did not give a response	92% of people in support	The people who submitted the survey agree that there are not enough aged care options in the Belconnen and Gungahlin district.

Question	Overall Community Reaction	Percentage in Support	Comment
Do you support the proposed development approach of Designing for Country?	91 people who submitted the survey supported our approach. 8 people were uncertain of the concept of Designing for Country.	83% of people surveyed support this approach.	Most of the people surveyed, supported the approach to design for country and displayed positive feelings towards the concept. Eight of the people surveyed were ambivalent to the approach.



Question	Overall Community Reaction	Percentage in Support	Comment																								
How supportive are you of the proposed regenerative development approach?	<p>The average result of all surveys conducted was 8.5/10</p> <p>This was made up of the following distribution</p>	<p>An average result of 8.5/10</p> <p>or</p> <p>85% support</p>	The people surveyed support this proposal and would like to see it implemented.																								
On a scale from 1-10, where 10 is the most supportive	<table><tr><th>Number of People</th><th>Scale 1-10</th></tr><tr><td>50</td><td>10</td></tr><tr><td>14</td><td>9</td></tr><tr><td>14</td><td>8</td></tr><tr><td>9</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>N/A</td></tr></table>			Number of People	Scale 1-10	50	10	14	9	14	8	9	7	4	6	3	5	1	4	1	3	3	2	2	1	5	N/A
Number of People	Scale 1-10																										
50	10																										
14	9																										
14	8																										
9	7																										
4	6																										
3	5																										
1	4																										
1	3																										
3	2																										
2	1																										
5	N/A																										



Noting that the Block 348 is privately owned, what other ideas would you consider appropriate for the Block 348?

From the 110 people who filled out the survey, 72 comments were made in response to this question. A collated translation of these comments is recorded below.

Suggestion	Number of people who made this or similar
Community Use (Markets, Event space, Art space, Museum)	25
Public Transport	2
Public Access and Tours	4
Short Courses or School	6
Hotel and other temporary accommodation	4
Health facilities other than aged care	12
Scientific Research Facility	1
Urban Open Space with Residential intervention	3
Wedding Venue	6
Low and Medium density Residential accommodation	3
Urban Open Space	2
Trade Fair	1
Farming	1
Anything other than a school	1
"Keep it Australian"	1

Comments

"From the results of the survey, it is noticed that several people who responded to this question would like to see the site used for public access, to host weddings and present community facilities. "

"The retirement living community already plans to introduce community activities and is intended to make the Homestead publicly accessible. Weddings are expected to and can occur on site however a wedding venue alone is not viable due to the maintenance costs required from the heritage buildings.

"It should be noted that some of the other comments made did not fully understand the proposal and the approach for design for country. "



Noting that the Homestead is privately owned, what ideas would you have for future uses that would attract you to visit the Homestead in the future?

From the 110 people who filled out the survey, 93 comments were made in response to this question. A collated translation of these comments is recorded below:

Recommendation suggested	Number of people who mentioned this comment
Community Use (Music Venue, Art Gallery, Park, Museum, Restaurant, and Café)	35
Public Access, Tours and, Open days	14
Wedding Venue, and Function Room	13
Restoration of the Homestead	10
Garden	3
Environmental Workshop Centre	1
Public Open Space	3
Hotel	1
Club	1
Historic Trades	1
Demolition	1
Education and Science facility	2
Safe Housing and Accommodation	3
Playground	1
Fruit Trees	1
Zoo	3

Comment

“From the results of the survey, it is observed that several people who responded to this question would like to see the Homestead Building used for Community Use and want public access.”

“As previously mentioned, the retirement living community plans to introduce community uses and is intended to be publicly accessible.”



8.0 Conclusion

Based on comments received from meeting with different stakeholders and stakeholder groups and the information received through the open day, the strong emerging view is that retirement living options is in demand in the region, and the majority of those we have spoken to believe retirement living is an appropriate use of the site.

Further, there appears to be considerable support for the view that a retirement living development such as the one put forward in the concept design is an appropriate way to bring the Old Gungahlin Homestead to life.

While it is difficult to capture complex views expressed about the proposed design concept, the solid data yielded by the surveys convey strong message of support.

- 81% of those surveyed thought retirement living was an appropriate use on the site
- 92% of those surveyed agreed Gungahlin needed more retirement living options
- 83% of those surveyed supported the approach of Designing For Country
- 85% of those surveyed supported the proposed approach to regenerative development
- And in terms of ideas for future development, a large majority of respondents favoured keeping the homestead available for community uses such as entertainment venue, restaurant, café, art gallery, wedding venue, function centre.

Importantly, the many discussions had with Purdon and the development management staff on the day support these views.

Based on the feedback received at the time of writing, Purdon recommends that Urbanistik continue to refine its development concept and make preparations for a formal application to amend the National Capital Plan to support the proposal for a Retirement Living Community on the site.

**Purdon
November 2022**

Suite 5, Level 1,
243 Northbourne Avenue
Lyneham ACT 2602

02 6257 1511
purdons@purdon.com.au

purdon.com.au

