

Summary of Feedback

Block 1 Section 82 Weston

May – September 2019

Consultation activities and feedback received on the Village Building Company's proposed re-development of the former Australian Federal Police site at north Weston – on land formally known as Block 1 Section 82 Weston – has been summarised below based on the following activities:

- Community Information Sessions in May 2018
- Community Information Stalls at Cooleman Court during July 2018
- Presentations to the Weston Creek Community Council, in May and July 2018 and September 2019
- Email correspondence from nearby residents.

The below summary relates to consultation undertaken between May and September 2019. Actions undertaken to date in response to the feedback received has also been summarised.

Community Information Sessions

Two Community Information Drop-in Sessions were held:

- On Tuesday 22 May, from 5:30pm to 7:30pm, at the Weston Creek Community Centre (next to Cooleman Court);
- On Thursday 31 May, from 5:30am to 8:30pm, at the Weston Neighbourhood Hall (off Hilder Street).

Logistics of Information Sessions

The two venues chosen were based on their affordability, large size, ability to host functions outside standard business hours and their proximity to the former AFP site.

Both Sessions involved the rooms being fitted out with a range of A1 and A3 drawings of the proposed development, placed on walls and tables for participant viewing. These drawings included:

- A Site Plan
- Indicative floor plans of the various townhouse types.
- Indicative building heights
- Potential materials and finishes

Those on hand to assist with participant enquiries during the sessions included three representatives of Village Building Company and two from Canberra Town Planning. As the number of attendees was very large for such a session (approximately 30 for 22 May and 60 for 31 May), the sessions were conducted largely in a presentation format introduced by Canberra Town Planning and led by the Village Building Company. At the conclusion of the presentation a Question and Answer session was held, followed by the opportunity for more personalised one-on-one discussions with participants who wished to raise further comments or questions.

Attendees were encouraged to complete the record of attendance, and a feedback form if they wished to provide written feedback during or soon after a given Session.

Outcomes of Information Sessions

Demographics

In terms of age, attendees of the two sessions were predominantly over 50.

Of attendees who stated their gender, the majority of those at the 22 May Session were male (7 of 11) and the majority of those at the 31 May Session were female (22 of 37).

All but one of the residents who stated their address were residents of the suburb of Weston (the other, from Holder, attended the 22 May Session).

Feedback

Concerns raised during the 22 and 31 Sessions, and responses to them, are highlighted in the table below.

Feedback from 22 and 31 May consultation sessions, and associated actions / responses

Issue	Details	Action / Response
Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that a proposal of up to 260 dwellings on the site was too many • Compatibility of “high-density” development with the character of Weston Creek • Fear of a repeat of Molonglo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site layout re-worked to reduce proposed number of dwellings closer to 240 for July consultation activities • Many other recently developed homes in north Weston are 2 storeys high. • Concept Landscape Plan includes aim to retain as many existing trees as possible, and additional tree plantings, to integrate with the beauty of Weston and incorporate parklands and vistas • Relocation of a number of detached home blocks from the Streeton Drive frontage to the Heysen Street frontage, allowing more integration with the detached blocks opposite.
Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many residents did not believe the site zoning allowed for Medium-Density Residential • Some residents sought proof that consultation was undertaken for the site’s zoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the site’s rezoning to RZ4 (Medium Density Residential) in 2008 were uploaded to the Village Building Company website. • It is standard procedure that consultation is undertaken as part of variations to the Territory Plan that result in the re-zoning of significant land parcels.
Building heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two and three storey building heights are inconsistent with the surrounding single-storey detached homes currently opposite on Heysen Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For clarity, design revisions in July clearly stated that the proposed development would have two-storey height limits on Heysen and Unwin Streets, in line with the North Weston Concept Plan. • Building heights of up to three storeys are still proposed in the middle of the site, which are permissible under the site’s RZ4 zoning.
Traffic concerns surrounding the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims of speeding on Heysen Street • Queuing at main intersections • Rat-running between Molonglo and Woden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Village Building Company went to the uncommon step of providing a Traffic Report as part of its July 2018 consultation. Such level of detail is not legally required until the submission of a Development Application, which is also open to public scrutiny.

Issue	Details	Action / Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed development will make existing problems worse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report's key finding was that the main intersections near the site (Streeton Drive – Heysen St and Streeton Dr – Unwin St – Dixon Dr) will require upgrades sometime between 2021 and 2041 regardless of whether the AFP site re-development goes ahead.
Lack of imagery and modelling of the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawings did not give a clear indication of building facades, especially those fronting Heysen and Unwin Streets Stepping and articulation facades, not just a wall of building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised design drawings and images in July 2018 included more imagery, including landscaping, external facades and the appearance of townhouses.
Shadowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on light on surrounding residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shadow diagrams were included in drawings provided online and as part of information stalls during July. This, combined with two storey building height limits fronting Heysen Street, suggest that no existing homes on Heysen Street will experience overshadowing between 9am and 3pm on the winter solstice (21 June – the day on which the sun is lowest in the sky, and likely to cast longest shadows)
Potential commercial / retail uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some residents wanted information about commercial use opportunities on the site, due to demand at Coleman Court and facilities in the Molonglo Valley not yet being open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the site is zoned RZ4, commercial and retail uses are not permitted. The Village Building Company is not proposing to include commercial or retail uses on the site
Driveway widths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One participant suggested the internal access roads appeared too narrow to be practical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal access roads will be required to meet design and safety standards, as well as be of a suitable width to allow safe manoeuvring of waste vehicles.
Connectivity with surrounding areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed site layout appeared inward-focused How will the site integrate with the adjoining ANU land and with Fetherstone Gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept landscape plan released as part of the updated site plans in July show an internal pedestrian network with paths near and along its eastern boundary. This allows the opportunity for future connectivity to the ANU site, and a path for residents toward Fetherstone Gardens via Heysen Street.

Issue	Details	Action / Response
Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some residents of Heysen Street were concerned about the removal of trees on the site and along Heysen Street, particularly a group near the southeast corner of the site that were saved from the 2003 fires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Village Building Company announced at the May Sessions that efforts would be made to retain as many on-site trees and verge trees as possible. Existing trees would also be supplemented with new plantings. This stance did not change as part of the revised designs released in July, and was shown in the concept landscape plan included as part of July consultation activities

At the conclusion of the 31 May session, Village Building Company staff spoke with a number of participants to seek follow-up meetings and walk-through of the local community, to get a more detailed understanding of the concerns raised by local residents. These activities were undertaken during June, and used to inform revised designs of the site released in July.

Community Information Stalls – Cooleman Court Sessions

Following the design revisions arising from the May Consultation Sessions and follow-up meetings with residents in June, revised designs were released for public feedback in July. These designs were released online on 16 July. They were also subject to public feedback through the Weston Creek Community Council on 25 July, and through four information stall sessions held at Cooleman Court, Weston, between 26 and 28 July.

The information stalls were held during the following session times:

- 10am – 12pm on Thursday 26 July
- 5:30pm – 7:30pm on Thursday 26 July
- 12pm – 2pm on Friday 27 July
- 10am – 12pm on Saturday 28 July.

At the information booth, the following material was available for viewing by the public: A Site Plan

- Indicative Floor Plans
- Elevations
- Shadow diagrams
- Perspectives
- Landscaping plans
- Proposed materials and finishes
- Preliminary traffic report

Some of the drawings and feedback forms were also left in place outside the stall session times to allow for additional viewing and feedback.

Each session was conducted by 1-2 Canberra Town Planning staff, who greeted Session participants, took them through the site plans (or left participants to look through the plans unassisted if the participants preferred), listened to feedback and responded to any questions raised.

Attendees were encouraged to complete a feedback form if they wished to provide written feedback during or soon after a given Session. Notes were also taken by Canberra Town Planning staff to summarise participant feedback.

Outcomes of Cooleman Court Sessions

Almost fifty people participated in one of the four stall sessions, with attendance as follows:

- Thursday morning: 15
- Thursday evening: 3
- Friday afternoon: 11
- Saturday morning: 19

Visitors to the information booth across the four sessions comprised a mix of age and gender representation, including several residents located in the vicinity of the site and persons who had previously attended consultation sessions on the proposal.

Feedback received from the sessions is explored in the table below.

Feedback from Cooleman Court Consultation Sessions, 26-28 July 2018

Issue	Details of support or concerns not previously raised
Support for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good mix of dwelling typologies • confident that the proposal will reflect well local land value and connect well with the rest of the suburb • opportunity to meet local demand for townhouses. • Supported aim to promote ageing in place, but felt units would be better than apartments in creating a sense of community • Great idea for the site to offer higher density options for Weston residents • Nice internal garden spaces
Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about potential for rat running along Gruner St • Concerns about on-site tandem car parking in townhouse garages
Transport Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transport connections (to Civic, Cooleman Court, Woden, Tuggeranong and Fyshwick) • Claims transit plans for the district should have been resolved many years ago
Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's playground(s)? • Courtyards appear too small for useable garden space • "Less is more"
Fears of a ghetto or slum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims that residents would hoon on nearby streets or vandalise nearby parkland
Fears of another Molonglo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some residents are baulking at the proposal as they've seen what's happened in Molonglo and in other areas and fear / don't want a repeat of it here • "This could be the nicest development out, but locals will still baulk at it because of what's gone on elsewhere"
Lack of government support through infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking at Cooleman Court • Molonglo • "We haven't got the infrastructure to cope now, let alone with this"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in the district more broadly has been managed (by Government) appallingly
Green space and gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of proposed development on surrounding environment? • Will the development include communal gardens for composting, growing vegetables, etc? • Opportunity to create a new community garden, or leverage / expand an existing one nearby • The broader north Weston – Molonglo Valley should have been planned to include wildlife corridors
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External facades: 1-2 Thursday morning participants still felt more detail was needed • Suitable air flow and solar access?
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the local sewer network and/or other services need to be augmented?
Alternative dwelling types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of participants advocated single-level townhouses to allow older locals to downsize

Participating staff offered responses to a number of questions raised, particularly regarding public transport and local shopping centre impacts.

- In relation to public transport, the proposed development may stand to benefit from the proposed new Transport Canberra bus network open for consultation during July and early August – which included rapid services along Streeton Drive with a stop outside or close to the former AFP site.
- In relation to current demand for Cooleman Court from the Molonglo Valley, it should be realised that shopping centres will come on line in Molonglo in coming years. While it is causing an inconvenience now, the opening of the Coombs shops as soon as early 2019 and other shops in Wright and Denman Prospect in the not-too distant future should ease demand for Cooleman Court’s shops and car parking.

Weston Creek Community Council

The Village Building Company held private meetings with the Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) Committee in May and July 2018, and also gave presentations to the WCCC’s May and July 2018 General Meetings (which were open to members of the public). The WCCC also assisted with promotion of consultation activities during July 2018, including on its website and through local radio, and by agreeing to be a contact point for feedback from the local community.

WCCC has expressed support for the site’s re-development, in part as a way to allow more older residents in the Weston Creek district to age in place. It did, however, note there were a range of questions and concerns from local residents, particularly regarding traffic, and apartments fronting part of Heysen Street (as proposed during the May consultation activities).

Minutes of the WCCC May 2018 meeting can be found at https://westoncreek.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Minutes_Public-mtg_May2018.pdf. The minutes note questions were asked on a range of questions, including:

- Traffic

- Visitor parking
- Building heights
- Location of apartments
- Retention of existing verge and on-site trees
- Whether the site could include shops?
- Sustainability measures
- Construction impacts
- Ability of the Village Building Company to support the nearby Fetherstone Gardens

Minutes of the July meeting were not available as of 20 August, however the WCCC acknowledged on its website “a big turnout for the guest presentation by the Village Building Company on its development on the old AFP site.” Traffic was again raised as a key concern among existing nearby residents.

Village Building Company presented the revised proposed to the Council on 4 September 2019 prior to the submission of the EDP.

The Council raised comments in relation to the revised proposals’ resident privacy and traffic performance. Support was provided for the proposed signalisation of Heysen St and the single vehicle access points on both Unwin and Heysen Streets.

The loss of trees due to the proposal was lamented however the efforts to reinstate landscape and trees and provide improvements to surrounding areas, including Featherston Gardens, was supported.

Email correspondence as part of July consultation

Letterbox drops, and other community consultation activities undertaken during July also attracted a number of emails from nearby residents.

Feedback received reflected a desire among at least some residents to retain low density, single dwelling development along Heysen Street.

Traffic concerns regarding the site remain a concern, with one person stating:

Traffic is already congested and dangerous for school children crossing the street especially in peak hour traffic to catch buses and to attend the Islamic school on Heysen Street and the Orana School on Unwin St. Heysen Street is already showing signs of being at capacity for traffic volume - residents already have problems reversing from and exiting their driveways, cyclists are increasingly vulnerable to traffic accident when going up and down the hill, and residents from nearby streets have difficulty entering Heysen Street. Heysen Street is steep with a constant stream of traffic especially at peak hours.

The government has already refused the local schools' requests to put a pedestrian crossing on Heysen Street as a way of increasing safety for student pedestrians. Unwin Street is flat and quiet, with traffic light at its intersection with Streeton Drive, so would be a better option for having the majority of driveway exits from the development. Traffic calming mechanisms are also recommended for both Heysen and Unwin Streets, for the safety and wellbeing of pedestrians and local residents, as it is inevitable that the volume of traffic will increase in both streets because of the development.