

**GOLD CREEK HOMESTEAD
COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP
(GUNG AHLIN RESIDENTS COMMITTEE)**

**GOLD CREEK HOMESTEAD SITE
PLANNING FEASIBILITY STUDY
BRIEF NUMBER PALM 82/99**

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INTENDED AUDIENCE

Name	Organization
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Departmental Head	ACT Government -- Infrastructure and Asset Management Group, Department of Treasury
To whom it may concern	Gungahlin Community and other affected or interested individuals or parties.
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To Whom it may concern	Other affected or interested individuals or parties

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Editor	Comments
0.1	20/08/00	Jonathon Reynolds	Document commenced
0.2	22/08/00	Ian Ruecroft	Text Editing and Document Alterations
0.3	25/08/00	Community Working Group	Agreement on Document body text and incorporation of community comment
0.4	04/09/00	Jonathon Reynolds	Incorporated Document alterations from CWG meeting.
0.5	04/09/00	Community Working Group	CWG editing session
0.6	05/09/00	Chris Newman	Proof Reading
1.0	05/09/00	Jonathon Reynolds	Release Document

INTRODUCTION

The Gold Creek Homestead Community Working Group (Gungahlin Residents Committee) (hereafter referred to as “**CWG**”) was established at a community meeting convened by Mrs Julie Brodrick (a concerned local resident) on Monday 14th August 2000.

The purpose of the meeting was to canvass and discuss community sentiment with regard to the proposed redevelopment of the Gungahlin Gold Creek Homestead Site. At this meeting there were approximately 70 residents and other interested individuals in attendance including Mr Richard Small (Small + Quinton Architects) principal consultant of the Feasibility Study Team, two representatives of the ACT Legislative Assembly – Mr. Simon Corbell (ALP) and Ms. Kerrie Tucker (The Greens) – and descendants from the Edmund Rolfe family.

The terms of reference for the CWG was established as follows:

- 1) To work for the retention of the historic Gold Creek Homestead and surrounding property, according to the will of the residents of the Gungahlin community;
- 2) To act on behalf of Gungahlin residents and the ACT community in expressing concerns related to the proposed redevelopment of the Gold Creek Homestead site;
- 3) To keep the residents informed about progress and developments with respect to this issue.

It was subsequently agreed at the first meeting of the CWG on Saturday 19 August 2000 that a formal submission should be made to Small + Quinton and that this submission should be made available to other interested parties.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CWG makes the following submission on the Planning Feasibility Study (Brief Number PALM 82/99) for the Gold Creek Homestead site:

- 1) We believe that the process of public consultation, which has to date, been undertaken for the Planning Feasibility Study has been inadequate and is fundamentally flawed; and therefore we seek additional time for proper community consultation.
- 2) The values of the site should be recognised, protected and managed to ensure that the significant heritage, environmental and open-space values are maintained.
- 3) There should be no subdivision or development on the site for housing, old peoples homes, motels or the like.

SUBMISSION

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS IS INTRINSICALLY FLAWED

It is believed that the community consultation process undertaken to date has been inadequate and that the process, time given, and means of community input have not been made clear to the community. Unclear and limited information has been provided to the community about how and when submissions can be made and a large number of residents were not made individually aware of the proposal.

ISSUES FROM THE BRIEF DOCUMENT

The CWG has examined the “Gold Creek Homestead Site Planning Feasibility Study – Brief Number PALM 82/99” and wishes to advise the following issues arose from the document.

- 1) From Section 2.0 Objectives, it is clearly stated that an objective is to “set down the framework for planning and engineering requirements for future use of the site” that is “viable and marketable”. This implies that the study is to be looked at purely on a commercial basis with no clear indication of analysis and incorporation of social, heritage and environmental obligations.
- 2) Further, from Section 2.0, there seems to be an underlying or preconceived outcome that there is already a plan to issue a draft variation to the Territory Plan and the Feasibility Study (which incorporates) public consultation is simply a “rubber stamp” process to provide “appropriate documentation to be used as a background report supporting a draft variation to the Territory Plan”.
- 3) From Section 4.0 Project Outputs, it is directed as a requirement that the consultant will produce “an economic analysis/feasibility report, identify the most appropriate use/s and their extent” – again reinforcing the idea that the study is being undertaken purely on a commercial basis without consideration for social, heritage and environmental obligations.
- 4) From Section 5.1 First Round of Consultation, it should be noted that advertising in The Canberra Times and the Gungahlin Chronicle did not clearly indicate that the consultation was a sanctioned ACT Government PALM advertisement.
- 5) The advertisements while mentioning the words “Planning and Land Management” and “Gold Creek Homestead Site Planning and Feasibility Study” failed to use appropriate identifiable official Government logos, official departmental names or an area map to clearly identify the Gold Creek Homestead site in context with the surrounds. Furthermore, the wording was such that any reasonable individual might not consider this notice indication of an official Government consultation process.

- 6) From the same section, the consultant was supposed to “hand deliver a letter addressed ‘To the Householder’ containing equivalent information to the newspaper advertisements to all properties as indicated in Attachment C”.

✍ The “invitation” did not have the appearance of an official document that would otherwise be forthcoming from a Government agency or their representative. It is generally accepted that a Government Agency would normally use a standard A4 format for correspondence in the form of an official letter. In this case the notification received was in A5 format and had the appearance of a commercial flyer.

✍ The single page flyer was not addressed as a letter “To the Householder” (as mandated by the brief) nor was it delivered in an ACT Government PALM envelope. This resulted in a significant number of households discarding the document as junk mail.

✍ Furthermore, the flyer lacked any form of identification (recognised government logo or crest) that would indicate this was an official invitation to participate in the formal consultation process.

✍ It is believed that the area as marked in Attachment C of the brief document failed to reflect the interests of all relevant parties as it only covered a very limited area of approximately 400 residences. The impact of any development will reach much further than the immediate vicinity of the surrounding site. Potentially, there is impact for all residents of Gungahlin and the Canberra community in one form or another. The ‘letter to the householder’ should have been distributed to the wider community.

✍ The amount of time set for public consultation is grossly insufficient. It must be taken into consideration that the community as a whole does not have the same financial resources available to Government and commercial organizations to analyse, prepare and submit an economically-underwritten and justified response. Additional time for preparation of a response should be allowed to compensate the community for this financial disadvantage.

ISSUES FROM THE FIRST PUBLIC CONSULTATION SESSION

Prior to the first public consultation session, there were over 200 signatures collected from residents requesting the Gold Creek Homestead site be retained as a working educational and tourist farm. These were submitted at the public consultation session.

At the first public consultation session, held at the Gold Creek Senior Site School on 24th July 2000:

- 1) any submissions had to be made at the consultation session and left in the “feedback” box, or submitted by mail, although this was not made clear to attendees;
- 2) there was no material or collateral that attendees could take with them to use for reference to make a submission at a later date; and

- 3) at least in one known instance, Small + Quinton were approached for copies of the displayed plans. It was indicated that this information was available at a cost or could be purchased direct from PALM. This information should be publicly accessible, free of charge.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY VALUES ABOUT THE GOLD CREEK HOMESTEAD SITE

The community believes that the Gold Creek Homestead site as it exists today is of significance.

The community values the:

- 1) open space/rural character;
- 2) aesthetic qualities of the site, including the site when viewed from Gungahlin Drive; and from surrounding streets; the mature trees on the site can be seen from many locations in the surrounding suburbs;
- 3) site vegetation including mature trees (which are a very distinct feature), grasses, orchard plantings etc;
- 4) heritage values of the property from its early history as a homestead through to the current day, including the buildings, trees, orchard planting, farming elements, stonewall well, windmill and landscape setting;
- 5) current pastoral usage (running of a small flock of sheep); and
- 6) environmental elements, including habitat for birds, animals and insects.

OPTIONS THE COMMUNITY DOES NOT WANT FOR THE SITE

It was made very clear from the community organised meeting on 14th August 2000 and subsequent CWG meetings that the following issues are of major concern to the community.

The community does not want to see or support:

- 1) Substantial building or structural development on the site. There is strong opposition to rezoning for specific development purposes such as for residential housing, an old persons home or motel. This type of development is not in keeping with the original and current character;
- 2) Development that would involve significant alteration to the site and its existing features and character, including removal of existing buildings, flora, fauna and alteration of the open spaces and rural character.

- 3) A general variation in the permissible uses for the site within the Territory Plan. The community has a reasonable expectation that the Gold Creek Homestead site would be conserved as it is, and not be subject to residential development – many residents based their initial purchase decision on the basis of the site's usage and utilisation as currently indicated within the Territory Plan;
- 4) Any development proposal that would potentially exclude the general community access; or
- 5) Piecemeal development or sell-off of the site until all relevant re-development issues have been resolved.

There are also specific concerns about the impact of proposals on the surrounding properties, including negative impacts on amenity, producing increased traffic and parking problems, and increased noise.

OPTIONS THE COMMUNITY WOULD LIKE TO SEE FOR THE SITE

The community wishes to see:

- 1) Preservation and capitalisation of the site through retention of the buildings and structures in their landscape setting, trees and vegetation;
- 2) Retention of the open space and rural character of the site;
- 3) Re-use of the site in a way that is compatible with the identified values of the property and which respects heritage, environmental, open space, aesthetic, educational and social values; and
- 4) Community access to the site.

A holistic plan for the entire Gold Creek Homestead site needs to be prepared and well promoted. All development of the Homestead site be in accordance with this.

CONCLUSION

- 1) The Gungahlin community, through the Community Working Group, strongly believes that the Gold Creek Homestead site is a significant community asset, which should be managed to protect and conserve its values (social, historic, environmental and rural).
- 2) The community strongly objects to the proposals put forward in the PALM Brief Document, and as a result of the Feasibility Study, which suggest that development of the site for incompatible uses.
- 3) The community would prefer the site to remain basically unchanged including its use and the appearance. However, it is understood that the Government is encouraging a change in use and as a result, the community would prefer to see the adaptive re-use of the site in a manner that has minimal impact on the appearance.
- 4) Finally, the CWG asks for an extension until no earlier than 1 January 2001 to ensure a community response that is viable and marketable.