

Fernhill Estate

What we heard

Public feedback on the Fernhill Estate
Draft Landscape Master Plan

*Summarising community consultation
from August 2021 and April 2022*





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that we work on the cultural landscape of Darug Country. We acknowledge the custodianship of its people. We pay our respect to the Elders of these lands, water and sky – past, present and emerging – and their continuing cultural and spiritual customs and practices.

Bringing Fernhill Estate to life

Fernhill Estate is an exceptional landscape of natural and cultural heritage significance. It is on Darug Country, close to Gundungurra Country, at the edge of the Cumberland Plain, and base of the Blue Mountains.

With its unique heritage house and unparalleled cultural and natural landscape, the vision for Fernhill Estate is for a new parkland the community can experience and enjoy.

Three important plans guide how Fernhill Estate will be brought to life over time and contribute to Mulgoa Valley and Greater Sydney.



The **Foundation Plan of Management to 2026** sets the vision and priorities for opening up Fernhill Estate over the next five years while protecting Fernhill Estate's natural and cultural heritage.



The draft **Conservation Management Plan** (currently being updated) highlights the significance of the place and sets out policies to ensure this significance is retained through its future care, restoration and activation.



The **Landscape Master Plan** will be a companion document to the Fernhill Estate Foundation Plan of Management to 2026.

It shows how we can open up Fernhill Estate in a way that responds to Fernhill Estate's natural and cultural heritage values. It introduces early landscape works to 2026 that will, through a considered and sensitive process, lead to the creation of a new public park for Greater Sydney.

These works draw from the draft Conservation Management Plan and the Foundation Plan of Management.

Community engagement so far

The community is helping shape the future of Fernhill Estate.

Greater Sydney Parklands has undertaken two phases of community engagement on the draft Landscape Master Plan; the first informed development of the draft plan and the second has informed the final Landscape Master Plan.

Valuable community and stakeholder feedback on Fernhill Estate's Foundation Plan of Management to 2026 also helped to inform planning.



Phase 1

- March 2021** Design sessions with Penrith City Council and First Nations community members
- April 2021** Stakeholder groups engaged in “one-on-one” sessions
- May 2021** Community drop-in session at Fernhill Estate

Phase 2

- August 2021** Draft Landscape Master Plan first presentation to Penrith City Council
- November 2021** Draft Landscape Master Plan first glimpse for community stakeholder groups
Draft Landscape Master Plan open for community feedback
- December 2021** Community webinar and live Q&A
- February 2022** Stakeholder groups engaged in “one-on-one” sessions
Close of consultation period for Fernhill Estate draft Landscape Master Plan
- April 2022** “Walk and Talk” session with design team at Fernhill Estate

This document summarises valuable feedback on the draft Landscape Master Plan provided by the community between August 2021 and April 2022.

What we heard – a snapshot



100+ survey responses



23 written submissions



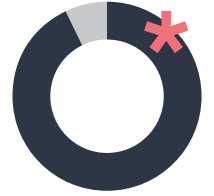
12 key stakeholder briefings



Walk and talk session at Fernhill Estate

- People would prefer to see low impact recreation activities that are sensitive to the character and heritage of the estate.
- Access to and around Fernhill Estate should be a key focus, including from and between Mulgoa Road, and new opportunities for walking and cycling.
- There is strong support to deliver the First Nations co-designed projects as a priority.
- The heritage of Fernhill Estate is important and should be celebrated, especially Fernhill House, its cultural landscapes and the Aboriginal history.
- People want to see works that protect the natural environment including the extensive bushlands and creeks and critical bird and animal habitats.
- There is a desire for appropriate re-use of existing buildings and structures such as the Hayshed for small scale commercial, social and community uses.
- Planning needs to consider the types of equestrian facilities and activities already available for the community.
- People want to see a stronger connection and links between Fernhill Estate and Mulgoa Village.
- The staged opening up of Fernhill Estate should be informed by the final Conservation Management Plan.

How well does the draft Landscape Master Plan reflect your hopes for the future of Fernhill Estate as a public park?



93% support

The majority of survey respondents (n=56) thought the Draft Plan reflected their hopes well (93%).



It is important that all elements of the site's many layered history are shared with the public.

– National Trust NSW



Overall we believe part of the success of Fernhill Estate is dependent on the success of Mulgoa Village and its ability for Mulgoa to maintain its rural village feel ...

– Mulgoa Progress Association



Transformation of Fernhill Estate [should be] simple and sensitive and preserve existing beauty. Embellishments are unnecessary and undermine the existing rural and natural ambience of the Fernhill Estate.

– Mulgoa Valley Landcare

* The Maptionnaire survey was designed to enable people to 'move around' the site and comment on aspects of the draft Plan that they were most interested in. There were around 25 responses per design move, and the percentage of support is reflective of that number. Some participants moved through the survey without commenting.

Fernhill Estate

Draft Landscape Master Plan



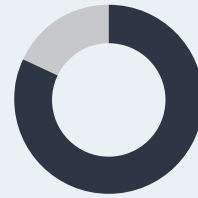
What's proposed

- 1 The Northern Drive
- 2 'Ngunyul' – the Big Arc
- 3 Fernhill House Gardens
- 4 Mulgoa Road
- 6 Hayshed and Orchard
- 7 Northern Dam
- 8 The Native Farmgate
- 9 Fernhill Drive
- 10 Wetland Discovery

Legend

- == Vehicle access roads
- Main pedestrian / Cycle circulation
- Walking tracks
- P Car park
- A Amenities
- Woodland conservation
- Biobanking boundary
- Recreational bushland
- Recreational paddocks – mown
- Paddocks
- Equestrian area

Northern Drive



82% support

18% neutral

Community comments

Support was expressed for the proposed single lane road prioritising pedestrian access and visitor experience, and for the addition of places to spend time and relax with seating and picnic tables. Comments on the Northern Drive highlighted the importance of pedestrian safety, with some seeking further information about management of pedestrian interactions with motorists and cyclists. The experience of arrival should be visually appealing to reflect the heritage setting and important views. Suggestions were also made to restrict access for private vehicles and offer shared transport along the Northern Drive.

The final plan will:

- Ensure the Northern Drive is safe and accessible, prioritising pedestrians and cyclists.
- Clearly demonstrate the proposed entry and exit points to Fernhill Estate from Mulgoa Road.



A single lane road and addition of benches and picnic tables along the Northern Drive is commendable.

— Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley



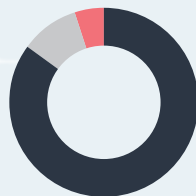
This road should be carefully considered and managed to ensure it is fit for purpose – ie. pedestrian/cyclist friendly.

— Penrith City Council

‘Ngunyul’ – The Big Arc

Community comments

Strong support was expressed for Ngunyul, including establishment of a meeting place, interpretation of Indigenous heritage and opportunities for community education. Some suggested a review of the Big Arc design, particularly the southern overlay with Fernhill House gardens. Others sought further details about Darug input to the design and highlighted the importance of ongoing engagement with local Aboriginal peoples as detailed design progresses.



84% support

5% oppose



I am excited by the design of the plan to include Indigenous history and community involvement.

— Webinar participant



This concept is supported and adds a unique opportunity to interpret the Indigenous heritage of our area.

— Mulgoa Valley Landcare



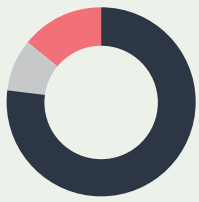
Support this concept, development of a meeting place and related education. Strongly recommend that GSP continues to engage with Aboriginal people to ensure this design element is truly representative of the local Indigenous community.

— Penrith City Council

The final plan will:

- Connect Ngunyul to the walking track network and wider landscape via a new Northern Dam Track. This will form part of a loop, connecting Ngunyul to the Hayshed and Northern Dam, along with the Carriage Loop and Fernhill House.
- Overlay the Big Arc with the heritage values of Fernhill House and the Carriage Loop. For example, where the two landscapes meet, plantings will be sympathetic to both.

Fernhill House Gardens



77% support

14% oppose

Community comments

Plans to restore the 1840s landscape received strong support. It was suggested that further consideration should be given to retaining the Reflection Pond, reconstructing the carriage loop, retaining significant Sorensen elements but removing modern additions, and introducing native plantings.

Support was expressed for opening up Fernhill House and gardens for a range of indoor and outdoor events such as weddings, markets, concerts, exhibitions and outdoor cinema, with appropriate infrastructure provided to support future use of the house and surrounds.

Feedback highlighted the importance of views including from Fernhill House to St Thomas' Church. Proposed parking on the State Heritage-listed colonial landscape was thought to negatively impact important views.

The final plan will:

- Support careful restoration of the Fernhill House garden setting and Sorensen elements, which will be further detailed in the Conservation Management Plan.
- Reinstate the Carriage Loop. Bring the Big Arc plantings up to the Carriage Loop, creating a point of intersection.
- Carefully locate parking areas, so as to maintain important heritage views.

“

The intention of restoring the historic land-form and landscape to the east and south of the house is excellent: the removal of the swimming pool and terraces, the reinstatement of the original contours and the reinstatement of the carriage loop as the essential finale to the experience of the landscape drive.

— Community member

“

Small music and arts events within the Fernhill House Precinct are supported.

— Community member

“

In addition to potential uses for Fernhill House itself, we support the use of the open grassed slopes surrounding the house as an outdoor amphitheatre presenting an ideal opportunity for future concerts, outdoor movies and the like.

— Penrith City Council



Mulgoa Road



52% support

39% oppose

Community comments

This idea received mixed support, with strong interest in the Mulgoa Road strategic planning process. Some members of the community proposed an alternative entry point to Fernhill Estate through Littlefields precinct, and expressed concerns about reduced speed on the local road network, and loss of rural character. By contrast, this idea attracted support from others who highlighted the related public safety and amenity improvements. Some concern was expressed that enhancing views of St Thomas' Church would involve the removal of Cumberland Plain Woodland.

The final plan will:

- Rename this idea, initially referred to as 'Mulgoa Scenic Road', to better reflect the importance of retaining its rural character.
- Prioritise safe entry and exit to Fernhill Estate, while continuing to work with Transport for NSW, key stakeholders and the community on an outcome for the Mulgoa Road corridor.
- Reconsider the heritage view corridor to provide views to St Thomas' Church.
- Broaden the scale and function of the Littlefields Precinct/entrance to enhance the arrival experience, parking, shared pedestrian and cycle access.

“

We see this as an exciting opportunity to implement a safer and more enjoyable experience for all that travel Mulgoa Road – both visitors and locals. This will also provide the opportunity for motorists to enjoy the scenic landscapes of Mulgoa in greater safety and will add to the overall experience for visitors to Fernhill.

– Mulgoa Valley Landcare

“

The MPA (with strong community support) strongly believes that the Littlefields Creek precinct should serve as a gateway between Fernhill and the Mulgoa Village.

– Mulgoa Progress Association

“

The rural character along Mulgoa Road should be protected; rather than introduce the concept of the upgrade to a 'scenic road'.

– Community member

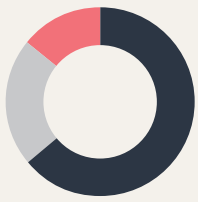
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The idea of lowering the speed limit on the road is ridiculous when it is a main road for buses, trucks and residents of Mulgoa Village into Penrith and surrounding suburbs.

– Survey participant



Moving around Fernhill



64% support

14% oppose

Community comments

A strong desire was expressed for improved and expanded walking and cycling opportunities at Fernhill Estate, including the new park link road. People want to see broader connections from Fernhill Estate to Mulgoa Village and points of interest in Mulgoa Valley and surrounds. Some proposed alternative locations for walking paths to enhance pedestrian safety, and avoid potential impacts on biobanking areas and nearby private properties. Concerns were raised about the proposed new entry point on the historic alignment. People want to ensure access is inclusive, with amenities to support people of all ages and abilities to enjoy Fernhill Estate. It should also be a place that continues to support equestrian uses.

The final plan will:

- Use an inclusive approach to access throughout Fernhill Estate, including visitor drop-off points and disability parking.
- Provide a safe connection for pedestrians and cyclists to Fernhill Estate from Mulgoa Village.
- Consider future opportunities to connect with the region, such as walking tracks to Glenmore Park and Mulgoa Creek Reserve.
- Provide opportunities for community appreciation of vegetation zones and tree species in biobanked areas.
- Consider buffer areas to protect nesting sites of the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot.
- Consider the existing topography and plantings in design of the link road to minimise disruption of views from Fernhill House.
- Safely connect the historic entry point to Fernhill Estate with the internal road network.



“

Extension of the existing Great River Walk along the Nepean River and the provision of tracks to connect the Estate to it are supported. Walking and cycling connections from the Littlefields Creek Precinct to Mulgoa Park and Gow Park would also be favourable.

— Penrith City Council

“

The creation of a circuit encompassing the north and south drives and a new drive north/south approximately parallel to Mulgoa Road is logical and would be of minimal interference to the landscape if sensitively designed.

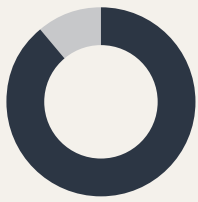
— Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley

“

Realignment of Fernhill drive to its original entry prior to the diversion of Mulgoa Road is questionable.

— Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley

Hayshed and Orchard



89% support

11% neutral

Community comments

Feedback highlighted strong support for this idea. People want to see the Hayshed and Orchard used for a wide range of recreational and commercial activities – from picnics and cafés, to farmers markets and concerts. It was suggested that parking could be consolidated in this location and further amenities provided, recognising its importance as a key arrival point and destination within Fernhill Estate. Potential impacts on the surrounding community arising from use of this precinct should be effectively mitigated and managed.

The final plan will:

- Create a welcoming place for visitors and hub to support vibrant community life at the Hayshed and Orchard, with places to eat and drink, play and picnic.
- Sensitively respond to the rural parkland landscape through development of this idea.
- Establish site management policies and protocols to support increased activation of the site, ensuring uses are complementary for recreational and community events.



“

The Hayshed and Orchard precinct presents a unique opportunity to develop the site as a tourism destination and potential events hub. We support the future use of this area for farmers markets, concerts and the like.

– Penrith City Council

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Please consider public parking to be limited to one area and to be situated near to the Hayshed where public amenities can be sited for the visiting public’s convenience.

– Community member

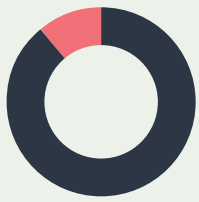
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We presume that weddings and other noisy events will not be permitted and strict noise abatement controls will protect neighbours.

– Community member



Northern Dam



88% support

12% oppose

Community comments

Feedback demonstrated support for the Northern Dam as a place where people can ‘cool down’ and enjoy the natural environment, and where habitats can thrive. People were interested in the types of recreational activities that could be offered in this location and called for a range of amenities to support community use of the area. Some asked about water quality in the Northern Dam and sought clarity on the types of activities it could be used for in future.

The final plan will:

- Provide infrastructure in this area that encourages use by diverse members of the community, including an amenities building with toilets, picnic shelters (large and small), BBQs, pedestrian tracks, boardwalks and seating areas.
- Demonstrate how the Northern Dam can be used as a cooling element within the landscape and the types of recreation activities people will be able to enjoy here.

“

Support habitat restoration for all existing dams in order to improve habitat for wildlife in the Mulgoa Valley.

– Mulgoa Valley Landcare

“

This zone may be one of the more popular attractions.

– Survey participant

“

Providing access to the Northern Dam for passive recreation is commendable, but swimming and canoeing may be impractical due to stagnant water, muddy banks, steepness of the banks and water quality concerns.

– Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley

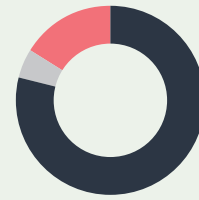
“

We support this design initiative and encourage further consideration of how it can contribute to cooling the environment.

– Penrith City Council



Native Farm Gate



79% support

16% oppose

Community comments

There was strong support for an Indigenous garden and opportunities for locally grown produce to be bought and sold, providing local and regional benefits. Queries about the Native Farm Gate focused on governance arrangements, such as whether this space will be leasehold or a community garden. People identified opportunities for connection between the Native Farm Gate and food focused activities and events at Fernhill Estate.

The final plan will:

- In conjunction with the Darug community, establish a programme for this land use.

Greater Sydney Parklands will engage with the Darug community to further develop this concept.

“

A cookery school in conjunction with the local producers might be an interesting use of some of the buildings.

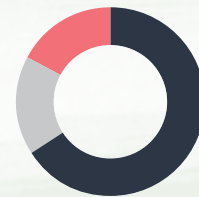
— Webinar participant

“

We support the initiative to develop an Indigenous garden offering bush tucker and food production experiences as part of an events program encompassing a ‘Native Foods Farm Gate’ using Indigenous planting/bush tucker grown onsite.

— Penrith City Council

Fernhill Drive



66% support

17% oppose

Community comments

While opportunities to restore the historic landscape were generally well received, some concern was expressed about its potential realignment. There was support for restricted vehicle access on Fernhill Drive and for opportunities to walk along the drive and enjoy the heritage landscape. Some commented that the proposed footpaths would detract from the historic landscape. Mixed views were expressed about the stone walls that line a number of drives around Fernhill Estate, with some in favour of their removal and others their retention.

The final plan will:

- Support careful restoration of the historic drive and provide further details of elements, such as the stone walls in the Conservation Management Plan.
- Respond to design guidelines for essential infrastructure, to be developed by Greater Sydney Parklands.
- Provide pedestrian connections that complement the natural landscape and heritage setting, through location and materials selection.
- Incorporate the historic Early Colonial-era Fernhill Drive as a shared pedestrian and cycle path with restricted vehicular access.

“

Realignment of Fernhill Drive to its original entry point would not be feasible without considerable earthworks.

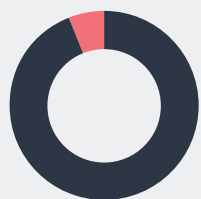
— Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley

“

A number of stone walls sit along the driveways, albeit their more recent introduction. I'd like to see their retention, along with some of the distinctive pathways, as a number work well in terms of the visual and landscape experience.

— Community member

Wetland Discovery



94% support

6% oppose

Community comments

Some expressed strong support for ecological restoration of the dam and wetlands, and related opportunities for education and knowledge sharing. However others commented that the location for this idea and related car parking should be reconsidered, in order to retain Fernhill Estate's rural pastoral landscape and heritage vistas.

The final plan will:

- Support habitat creation and quality, consistent with the Biodiversity Strategy being developed for Fernhill Estate.

“

Given the various draft CMP recommendations, this area should be rejected for a wetlands discovery area as it is not in keeping with the SHR listing of the 1840s colonial landscape. FFMV is supportive of a wetland discovery area elsewhere.

— Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley

“

While I applaud the emphasis on restoration, I reject the two parking areas in the heritage area. I am also unsure of the reference to a wetlands discovery area as it is unclear whether this refers to possible development on this heritage site.

— Community member

“

We support the concept of the wetlands discovery area for its potential ecological and biodiversity values. However, concern is raised as to whether the proposed site is the most appropriate location for this feature element.

— Penrith City Council

“

A Wetland Discovery area as shown on the concept map is not a natural area for such activities. Please consider the area to the east of Lake Jessica where already there is a natural water way from the overflow of Lake Jessica.

— Community member



Next steps

We thank everyone who contributed to the Landscape Master Plan for their valued feedback.

The Landscape Master Plan is a stronger plan for Fernhill Estate thanks to community involvement and we look forward to continuing to work together in the future.

This Landscape Master Plan is a companion document to the Fernhill Estate Foundation Plan of Management to 2026.

The works outlined in this document draw from the draft Conservation Management Plan and the Foundation Plan of Management to support estate stewardship, opening up the estate, engaging the community and sustainable and resilient management.

As we continue to learn more about the significance of Fernhill Estate, we will, from 2026 onwards, revisit our management and landscape planning to incorporate this new understanding.



Fernhill Estate



Greater
Sydney
Parklands