

Record of the second Gillman Barracks engagement session

1 September 2026, HortPark. Residents, with officials from HDB, URA and NParks. The proposal discussed was prepared by residents of Telok Blangah, Depot Road, Preston Road and Pasir Panjang East.

This is the residents' record of what was asked and what was answered. It is written at agency level. No individual officer is named, because this is a record of agency positions rather than of individuals.

Corrections are welcome from anyone who was in the room, including the agencies. Any correction we receive will be published alongside this note.

What the agencies said they would study

Three things were offered in the room. We record them because they were said out loud and because we would like them honoured.

NParks will study the sensory boardwalk and the forest trails. The agency said it had read the residents' proposal, found parts of it interesting, and is prepared to study the boardwalk along the stream and the nature trail connecting into the park. It attached a technical caveat: building into the forest can affect the trees in the area and the soil condition, so the exact alignment would have to be assessed. We accept that caveat. We are asking for the study, not for a guarantee.

Agencies will look at widening connectivity through the site. The undertaking was to examine whether the connectivity through the site can be widened. Residents note that the published baseline to widen from is the 30 metre minimum ecological corridor announced on 10 July 2026. No figure was discussed in the room.

Agencies will look at minimising forest loss. The undertaking was that if forest has to be taken, they will look at minimising it as far as possible, so that a meaningful and sizable forest remains.

There was also a qualified willingness to bring the Singapore Tourism Board into the conversation, or at least to consult it, and agreement that connectivity through Gillman Barracks should be made more pedestrian friendly.

What the agencies explained about how the decision was made

Four things were confirmed that had not previously been clear to residents.

No environmental impact assessment is carried out at master plan stage. Residents asked directly whether an EIA is done when the island wide land use plan is drawn, or only after a site has been selected for development. The answer was no. Island wide planning was described as too early a stage for an EIA, with the scale of planning narrowing progressively as it moves towards a specific site. Upstream, we were told, EIAs are not done.

Upstream, NParks contributes biodiversity input. Asked what NParks provides at the planning stage, the agency described its role as providing information on the flora and fauna within different sites, and as one of several agencies feeding into cluster planning alongside HDB and LTA. Residents then asked specifically whether urban heat and climate impact are assessed at that stage. No assessment of heat or climate was described. If we have misunderstood the scope of that input, we would like to be corrected, because it matters a great deal.

Density is set principally by transport access and height constraints. Asked why some nearby areas are planned at lower density than the Gillman site, the explanation given was proximity to an MRT station and, in some locations, height constraints. Asked whether height constraints apply near Tanglin, the answer was that they do not.

7,800 hectares of green space are safeguarded nationally. This figure was offered in answer to the concern about forest loss. Residents noted in response that safeguarded green space and mature secondary forest are not equivalent, and that a park does not perform the functions of a forest.

What residents asked and did not receive an answer to

The projected yield for the site. Residents have proposed 10 to 12 blocks near Labrador MRT, roughly 2,400 units, and have said openly that they are not planners and want the domain experts to develop the figure properly. No yield for the government's own plan has been published, and none was given. Without it there is no way for anyone outside government to compare the two proposals.

The trade off, if the forest is kept. This was the central question of the evening and it was put four separate times. Residents said explicitly that their position is not zero or a hundred, that compromise is expected, and that they cannot negotiate a compromise without knowing what they are being asked to give up. The request was simple: tell us what we would have to accept in order to keep the forest whole, and we will take it to our neighbours. It was not answered.

Access to the underlying data. A resident offered to run the numbers if the planning data were opened. No commitment was given.

Whether alternatives were assessed. Residents asked why the existing blocks around the site are not built higher, why the vacated Depot Road industrial site and the other brownfield sites in Annex C of the proposal are not brought forward, and why the phasing could not be reordered to hold the housing pipeline steady while sparing the forest. No reasoning was given in the room for why these alternatives had been set aside.

Any date at all. Residents asked three times whether there is a deadline governing this process and when they would hear back. The answer each time was that the feedback would be taken away and studied, and that no date could be shared.

Where it was left

The agencies will take the residents' proposal away, process the feedback, rework the conceptual plan and share a summary findings report. There is no date for that report. It was not established whether the report concludes the process or whether residents will see a revised plan in time to respond to it. Asked who else is being engaged, the agencies listed students, policy makers, nature

groups and residents. Asked whether there would be further sessions after this one, the answer was that this would be decided once the feedback already gathered has been studied.

Two points of context residents put on the record

Residents said they have watched construction and services works along Alexandra Road and Depot Road for the past six to twelve months, and set that against a 30 day comment window on the environmental impact assessment. Their point was that the sequencing makes the exercise feel like a monologue, and that if the intention is to take input, the conversation needed to happen before the ground was opened. Residents invite the agencies to confirm what those works are for.

Residents also raised the inconsistency between a national programme of cooling centres and the clearance of forest that, on residents' own figures, holds surrounding temperatures several degrees lower. They asked that the plan be reviewed against present day climate assumptions rather than assumptions set several years ago. That heat effect is precisely what residents believe no agency currently assesses at the point a site is selected.

The proposal discussed at this session was prepared by residents representative of the local community. It sets out up to 2,400 homes, potentially more, on 538,000 m² of buildable land across two sites, against 340,000 m² in the July 2026 plan, with the forest retained. The full proposal is published at savegillmanforest.org.

Corrections to this record are welcome and will be published. Contact details are on the site.

SOURCES FOR THE PUBLISHED FIGURES CITED ABOVE

- AsiaOne, HDB to build new flats at Gillman Barracks and Sunset Way, 10 July 2026
asiaone.com/singapore/gilman-barracks-sunset-way-hdb-flats
- 99.co, Gillman Barracks housing estate: 25 heritage buildings and 8ha of greenery to be retained
99.co/singapore/insider/gillman-barracks-housing-estate
- Mothership, More greenery retained but fewer homes, 14 August 2026
mothership.sg/2026/08/maju-forest-gillman-barracks-more-greenery-retained-alvin-tan