

Public consultation on temporary uses for the Arcade Site Walthamstow Town Centre – October 2009

Background

On 25 July 2009 the Arcade site, at the junction of Hoe Street and High Street, was opened up to the public as a temporary events/ activity/ community space. The site was prepared with a hard surface to provide maximum flexibility for possible future interim uses. The 25 July also saw the beginning of a 6 week public consultation exercise which sought to capture the views of the local community as to what events/ activities/ uses they would like to see on this space over the next 18 months-2years.

Consultation approach

A three-pronged approach to consultation was undertaken:

- A questionnaire available on-line and in hard copy for all interested parties to complete
- An independent on-street survey conducted amongst 200 adults and 30 children and young people
- A discussion group with key stakeholders and residents

The questionnaire was available to complete online or available in hard copy format from Walthamstow Library, WFD Shop in Walthamstow or at the town hall. The questionnaire was promoted through WFN (circulation of 110,000) and was available at the Launch event on the 25th July 2009, along with Council Officers to answer questions.

The questionnaire was circulated to all market traders at the top of the High Street, those potentially directly affected by activity on the site, and was also provided to the Walthamstow Business Forum to capture the views of the local business community. A mini version of the questionnaire was also completed by 151 young people in the borough, administered by the borough's Young Advisors.

In addition to these questionnaires an on-street survey was conducted by Plusfour, an independent market research agency, and a discussion group was also arranged with key local stakeholders. The discussion group was compiled of key interested parties and representatives of key stakeholder organisations and looked to gather views on what types of temporary uses could be provided on the site. The minutes of this session, along with the Young Advisors presentation and the PlusFour report are available on request to sam.neal@walthamforest.gov.uk.

Headline results

A total of 346 questionnaires (hard copies and on-line completions) were received within the 6 weeks. A further 204 adult surveys and 31 child surveys were collected by Plusfour.

The headline results from these 2 sources tell a similar story, although while the questionnaire was open-ended and allowed for any and every idea to be presented the on-street survey took the emerging key ideas from the

questionnaire and sought to dig further into the support or objection to these ideas through closed (yes/ no/ maybe or ranked) questions. Therefore the percentage figures for the on-street survey are higher than those from the questionnaire. The open ended nature of the questionnaire also means that only mentions of an idea were recorded, i.e. 16% of people suggested the idea of winter street entertainment, however this does not mean that 84% of people did not support this idea, just that 84% of people did not suggest this as an idea on the questionnaire. That is why the questionnaire and on-street survey need to be considered in parallel.

The questionnaire identifies Events (43%) followed by Performance (36%) as the 2 most supported activities for the site. Sport (18%) was cited as the least popular choice, often because it was felt that proximity to the main road of Hoe Street would be a danger.

These findings are supported by the Plusfour data which ranks Performance as the most popular choice for adults and second for children, Community Events as the second most popular for adults and Events as the third most popular for adults and most popular for children. The following two graphs rank the categories by level of interest and likely attendance.

Fig 1: ranking of categories by interest and possible attendance – adults (base 204) – Plus 4 data

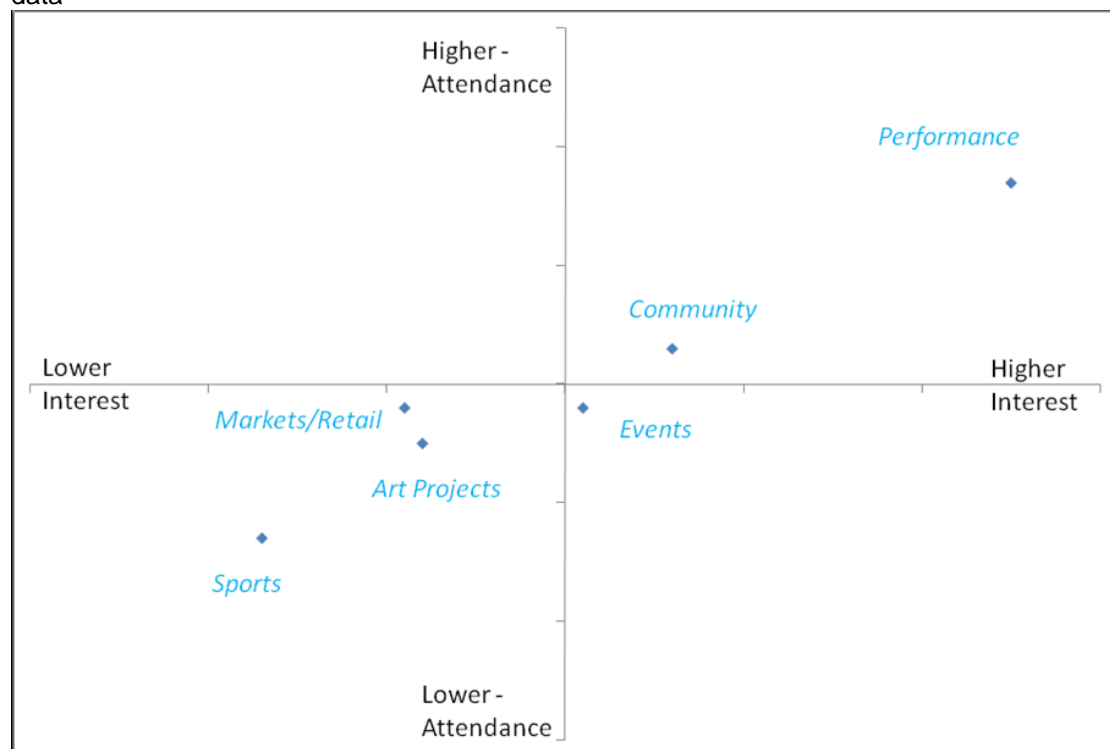
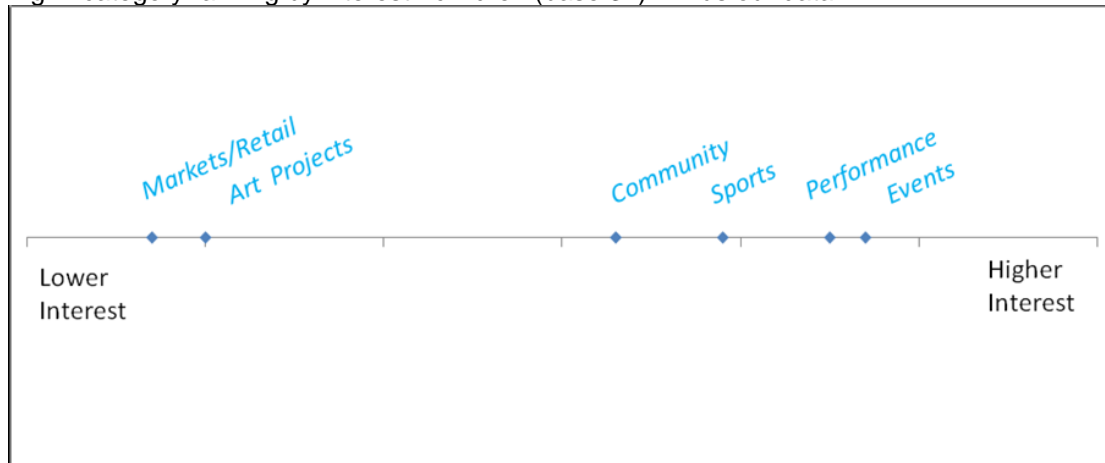


Fig 2: category ranking by interest - children (base 31) – Plusfour data



Digging further into these categories we can see that a winter ice rink (49%) is the most popular choice in the questionnaire, followed by art exhibitions on the hoardings (41%), theatre performances and the farmers market (33% each), art and craft markets (31%) and raising money for charity (28%).

The results from the Plusfour survey shows a slightly different pattern, this may be due to these ideas (which emerged through the questionnaire process) being presented to participants, therefore stimulating their imagination as to what could be possible on the site.

Ranking	Adults	Children
Cinema	1	4
Activities for young people*	2	2
Music performances/festivals	3	10
Summer ents. for children*	4	1
Theatre	5	=7
Winter entertainment	6	=7
Winter ice rink	7	=5

The least popular ideas/events from the Plusfour survey were (out of 24):

Ranking	Adults	Children
BMX / Skateboard	24	=15
Circus	23	=11
Basketball	=21	14
Football (5 a-side)	=21	=7
Urban beach	=18	=5
Photography	=18	=21
Sculpture/modern art	=18	=17

Activities for young people, an ice rink and art exhibitions were all supported by the workshop held with stakeholders.

The young peoples' consultation pulled out the following popular ideas (based on 151 responses):

Activity	No. of people supporting idea
Another fun day similar to opening day	25
Funfair / circus	25
Outdoor cinema	21
(Outdoor) ice rink (winter/Christmas)	21
Football & Basketball tournaments	19
Outdoor swimming pool	16
Youth club e.g. acting, singing & dancing	8
Sunday market	8
Skate park	6
BMX park	5

The graphs below (from the Plusfour report) show this ranking in a clear graphical way.

Fig 3: Popularity of ideas from children (base 31) – Plusfour data

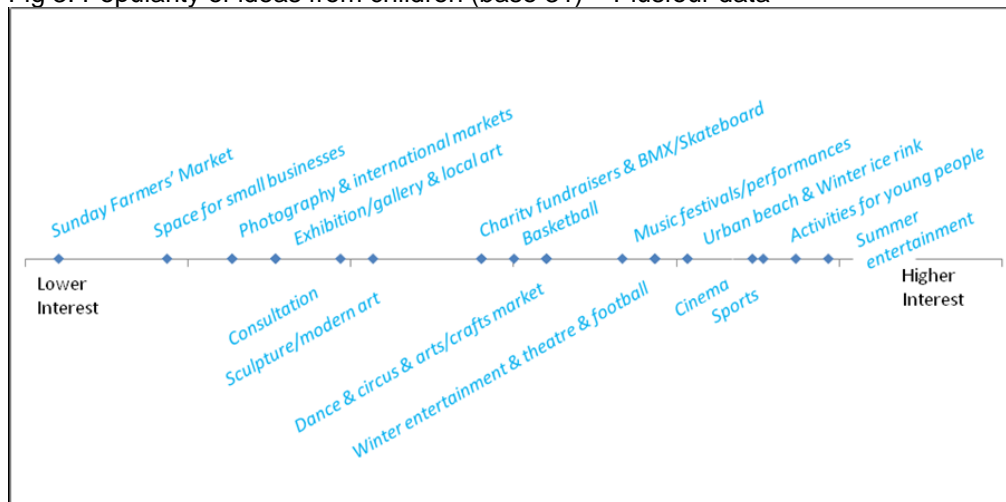
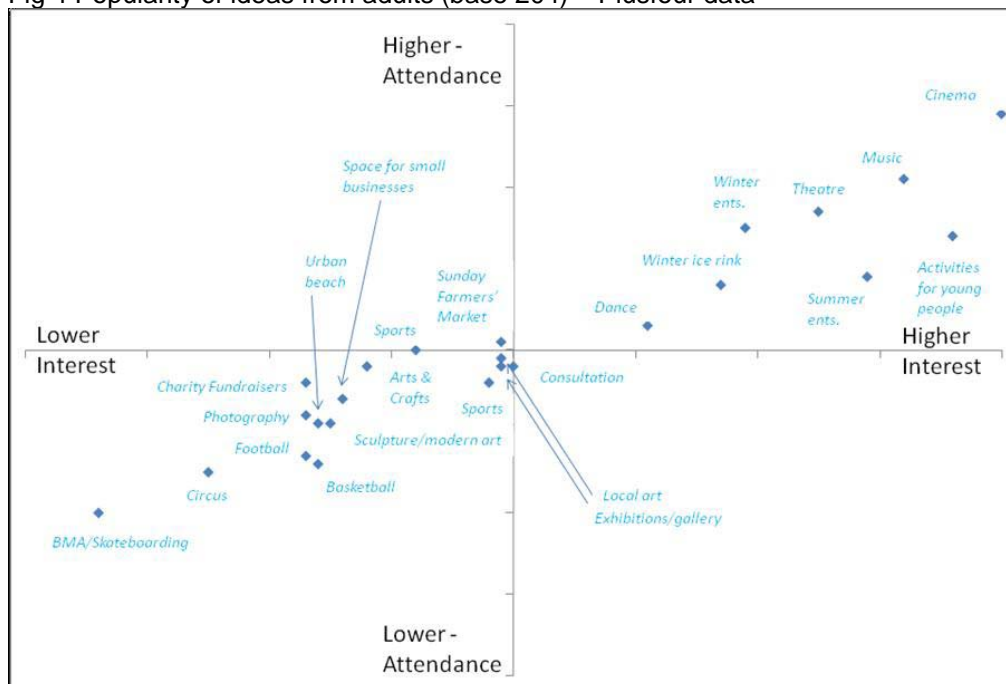


Fig 4 Popularity of ideas from adults (base 204) – Plusfour data



Other comments/ issues arising out of the questionnaire and survey were:

	Questionnaire	Plusfour
The Arcade Site should be used mainly for children	23%	9%
Concerns regarding security/supervision	6%	4%
The site should be used to create a garden or simply just a green area with grass and trees	8%	4%
That the area should include benches/seating	4%	3%
Concerns regarding noise	3%	3%

Several of these issues were raised during the workshop session with stakeholders i.e:

- Concern of local residents getting affected by activities/ events – especially noise
- Issues of seating – not enough
- Greenery on site to reduce glare, fountain, seating, café
- Site to compliment town centre activities, not detract from it
- 24 hr access, therefore needs to be user friendly throughout- Security/ Safety
- Build on the cultural offer of the borough
- Marketing/ promoting of the site beyond the borough and be innovative in its uses
- Ensure that any programme of events is sustainable and sufficient resources are available to support its delivery
- Issues of fences for sport activities

Next Steps

The results of this consultation have informed the development of a way forward for the use of this site over the next 18-24 months.

The above results demonstrate that there is a desire for innovative, exciting and entertaining events and activities on this site. Some of these activities, such as visiting markets and an ice rink, are currently being explored by the Council as options for the site in the forthcoming months.

Looking to the future the Council is exploring the options for the longer-term event management of this site; to provide a creative event and art programme which not only meets the aspirations of the local community but also attracts interest and visitors from all over London. This approach will build on the ideas emerging from the consultation reported on above.

Once developed the timetable for the future interim use of this site will be made available on the hoardings of the site, in WFN and on the Council's website

Appendix 1 – Summary of key findings from Questionnaire and Survey

Activity	Result from Questionnaire		Result from Plusfour	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Performance				
Music festivals/ performance	50%		74%	10%
Theatre	33%		70%	11%
Dance	26%		56%	18%
Cinema	16%		82%	9%
No performance activity	1%			
Events				
Circus	15%		38%	43%
Urban beach/ swimming/ paddling pool	2%		44%	40%
Winter ice rink	49%		61%	23%
Summer entertainment for children, inflatable/ funfair rides	46%		62%	24%
No events	3%			
Art projects				
Exhibitions/ gallery (on hoardings)	48%		51%	21%
Local/ community art	18%		52%	23%
Sculpture/ modern art	10%		44%	29%
Photography	5%		45%	29%
No art projects	1%			
Markets/ retail				
Sunday farmers' market	33%		54%	23%
Asian/ French/ African other specialist visiting markets	80%		53%	23%
Space for small businesses to sell products/ services	12%		47%	28%
No markets	8%			
Community				
Raise money for charities	28%		49%	27%
Provision for young people	23%			
Consultation events/ information sharing	17%		51%	21%
Sports				
Sports days/ tournaments	24%		49%	25%
Basketball	13%		39%	35%
Football (inc 5-a-side)	12%		40%	41%
BMX/ Skateboards	7%		33%	49%
Any sport	9%			
No sports	9%			