



# Engagement report

Lewisham town centre improvements programme

November 2024



Lewisham

# Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Executive summary	3
3. What we did	9
4. What we heard	14
• The survey	14
• In-person events	18
5. How we're responding	22
6. Library, culture and business hub	25
7. Conclusion	30
8. Key milestones	31

# 1. Introduction

In 2021, Lewisham Council engaged the local community on plans to revitalise Lewisham Market. Based on the feedback, designs for the market were developed and additional priorities in the town centre were identified. Funding for the improvements was sought through, what was formerly, the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF).

The LUF bid received strong support from local partners and key stakeholders and the Council successfully secured £19m in early 2023, which has been combined with an additional £5m of match funding.

The money is being spent on three key areas –

- Revitalising the market
- Transforming Lewisham Library into a culture and business hub
- Improving the high street

The changes being delivered through the Lewisham town centre improvements programme are once-in-a-generation. They will help provide a strong civic footprint, celebrate local heritage, boost footfall and create new opportunities – directly impacting the lives of people who live in, work in and visit the borough for years to come.

As we progress our designs, it's essential they reflect the needs of local people and that is where community engagement comes in. We want to hear from the people who already use the spaces and know them best but also from the people who actively do not, to foster a sense of shared ownership and advocacy for the changes.

After launching a programme of targeted engagement in October 2023, which informed initial plans for the market and hub, we consulted the whole borough between Monday 11 March to Monday 22 April 2024 to find out what they thought of our proposals.

This report outlines all engagement activities for the Lewisham town centre improvements programme and how they have informed the development of our designs across the three projects. Please note the hub has been allocated its own section of the report as a different approach to the design and delivery process was used vs the market and high street.

## 2. Executive summary



CGI of Lewisham Market

The programme of improvements in Lewisham town centre will have a direct impact on the lives of everybody in the borough – whether they live here, work here or visit. It was important they were all able to contribute to developing the plans.

We know, from the Council's 2021 independent resident insights survey, that 60% of local people feel they aren't involved in the decision-making process. This is a prime opportunity to change the narrative and set new standards for how we engage – leading to better outcomes and satisfied residents.

We worked with internal and external stakeholders including consultants – Project Centre, public works and Architecture 00 – to develop and deliver the engagement strategy, offering a mix of in-person and online methods for people to share their observations.

From Monday 11 March 2024, we ran a far-reaching six-week programme of engagement that was open to the whole community.

Our central feedback tool was a survey which was available online and in print, with printouts available at our Lewisham Shopping Centre popup. This was complemented by targeted engagement for multiple stakeholders including community and advocacy groups who have, historically, been underrepresented in consultations.

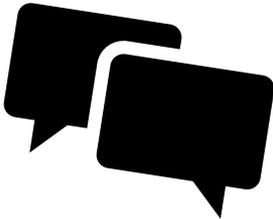
Overall, people are really excited about the changes to come and see them as an opportunity to put Lewisham back on the map.



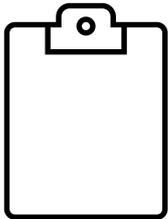
The six-week public consultation ran from Monday 11 March to Monday 22 April 2024



Nearly 1500 people shared feedback



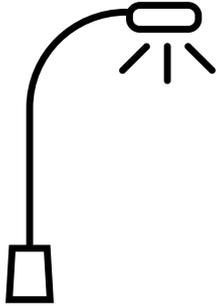
450 people shared feedback in person



990 people responded to the survey



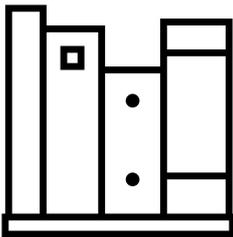
There were over 8,500 visits to the website



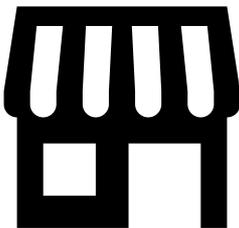
78% of respondents are positive about better street lighting



75% of respondents are positive about more trees and planting



70% of respondents feel positive about library improvements



66% of respondents feel positive about the designs for the market house and canopy

# Emerging themes for the market and high street

Regardless of the feedback methodology, whether qualitative or quantitative, the same considerations repeatedly came up for the market and high street. We have grouped them into eight key themes.

While many of the findings of this report are already being considered as part of our existing proposals, we have highlighted the areas in which there is further opportunity to refine and improve on our plans.

## Maintenance

### Steps we're already taking:

A maintenance strategy is already being defined which includes looking at a humane pigeon deterrent, efficient waste disposal, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and planting.

### Further opportunities:

There will be annual inspections of the works and opportunities for the public to report faulty lighting.

## Road safety

### Steps we're already taking:

Copenhagen (or continuous) road crossings will help put pedestrians and wheelchair users more firmly in control.

### Further opportunities:

Signalised junction at north end of high street. There may also be an option to work with TfL at the south end of the high street to improve pedestrian and cycle crossings

## Personal safety

### Steps we're already taking:

People support the plan for improved lighting, decluttering high street furniture and more evening activities to help reduce ASB.

### Further opportunities:

Local partnerships i.e. community police and Landsec could help reinforce and manage feelings of safety.

## Accessibility

### Steps we're already taking:

Improved pavements and decluttering will make the high street easier for deaf and disabled people to navigate.

### Further opportunities:

We are looking into putting further controls in place for temporary street furniture such as A-boards which make the high street difficult to navigate.

## **Activating the evening and nighttime economy**

### **Steps we're already taking:**

Lots of great ideas shared during the consultation. We have commissioned a feasibility study to define what's possible.

### **Further opportunities:**

Establish process for community to feed into the programming.

## **Continued support for market traders**

### **Steps we're already taking:**

A maintenance strategy is already being defined which includes looking at a humane pigeon deterrent, efficient waste disposal, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and planting.

### **Further opportunities:**

There will be annual inspections of the works and opportunities for the public to report faulty lighting.

## **Toilet provision during events**

### **Steps we're already taking:**

We have a community toilet scheme in operation in Lewisham town centre but this does not currently extend beyond 7pm.

### **Further opportunities:**

We are investigating options to ensure people attending evening 'under the canopy' events have access to toilets, including speaking to local partners – in accordance with an event management plan.

## **Designing in inclusivity**

### **Steps we're already taking:**

As well as following the latest legislation, we are pleased to have already opened the dialogue with local community and advocacy groups.

### **Further opportunities:**

Explore how we proactively welcome people from all backgrounds to enjoy the new and programming in the town centre.

# Emerging themes for the library, culture and business hub

Engagement sessions for the hub were user-led and focussed on understanding how the design could change to better support the needs of specific groups. As a result, the feedback doesn't follow the same themes as the research for the market and high street.

Insights from community groups and other stakeholders have directly influenced our designs in the following areas.

## Accessibility

- A changing places toilet
- A sensory space
- Sliding doors at the main entrance
- A children's library on the ground floor

## Youth voice

- A separate youth library area
- Informal areas, such as the stepped forum, where young people feel they are welcome to spend time
- Reorientating the entrance of the hub to Limes Grove, allowing groups of children to gather safely outside before entering the

## Activating the space

- Bookable rooms
- Ability to host small performances and events on the stepped forum

## Supporting the local economy

The café:

- Will now serve directly onto the street with potential for external seating
- Now has the potential for longer opening hours than the main library e.g. early morning and evenings

## 3. What we did



Photo from the women and girls' safety walk

Starting with an extensive stakeholder mapping process, we prioritised the audience into three categories, based on usage of the town centre, and looked at which engagement method would work for each group.

### **Decision makers**

Statutory consultees i.e. planners, politicians.

### **Key influencers**

Advocacy/ community groups and key stakeholders with unique perspectives or lived experiences.

### **The wider public**

Any other Lewisham resident, business owner or visitor to the town centre.

While we hoped to get the whole community involved in sharing their views on our designs for the town centre, we recognised there is no one-size-fits-all strategy with engagement. We developed and delivered a three-tiered approach to ensure all voices could be heard.



Photo of attendees at the key stakeholder breakfast briefing on Monday 11 March

## Broadcast

We used a survey, as the most efficient platform to collect large amounts of feedback in our six-week window, to consult the wider community. We promoted it through an extensive broadcast communications campaign. We made them available online and in print format.

In-person drop-in sessions held for the public at Unit 25 in Lewisham Shopping Centre on 14, 15, 16, 20, 22 and 26 March from 11am – 4pm.

- All residents
- Business owners
- Visitors

## Targeted

Many of our key influencers were from groups with protected characteristics who are usually largely underrepresented in consultation processes and this is borne out by our own survey data.

- Under 25s/ over 65s/ deaf and disabled people /ethnic minority groups

To address the issue, we delivered a programme of targeted engagement with relevant community and advocacy groups and their users.

## Geo-targeted

Leafletted more than 6,500 homes in the town centre to ensure those most affected by the programme could have their say on the plans – inviting them to visit our drop-in sessions.

- Town centre residents

## Market and high street overview

### Key influencers

#### *Focus groups*

Six 'safe space' focus groups delivered in-person or online and two site walks at convenient times and dates for participants with protected characteristics to capture thoughts on accessibility, pocket parks, personal safety and ideas for the nighttime economy. The sessions were incentivised with shopping vouchers.

- Minoritised ethnicities – *Black VCS Network*
- Disabilities – *Lewisham Disabled People's Commission*
- Young People – *Lewisham Youth Theatre* and *Young Mayor's Team*
- Older people – *Positive Ageing Council (POSAC)*
- Community groups – *Lewisham Pedestrians*

#### *Site walks – 18 April*

- Personal safety
  - Local girls and women – recruited via email newsletters and partner networks
  - 13 women and girls aged between 11-70 attended the personal safety site visits
  - Objective: To understand how safe women and girls who visit the market and high street currently feel and what improvements could make these spaces feel safer.
- Inclusive design
  - *Mencap* – recruited via partner network
  - We wanted to capture feedback about current accessibility barriers when travelling through the high street and market

#### *Key local stakeholders*

Meetings with key stakeholder groups like market traders who can share technical/operational knowledge of the impact the changes will have and decision makers.

- Market traders – regular forums and on-site visits
- Key town centre stakeholders breakfast briefing Monday 11 March
  - Local businesses and organisations/ community groups /residents' associations/ Cabinet Leads/ ward councillors
- Lewisham Pedestrians

## Areas of focus

Engagement for this programme was never a tick box exercise. We structured our consultation around 'areas of focus'. This was to allow residents an opportunity to influence the whole programme. It allows us to understand and organise the breadth of views residents shared with us and to take action.

### *Safety*

- Understand levels of perceived and actual safety by users of the town centre
- Ensure proposed safety improvements will meet the expectations of the local community
- Identify areas where safety could be further improved, including with increased focus on the night-time economy

### *Market layout and canopy*

- Understand public sentiment regarding the canopy aesthetic
- Enable market traders to feedback on the operational elements of canopy design and layout

### *General improvements and upgrades*

- Understand public sentiment on proposed key changes to the high street, including opportunities for greater and safer cycling provision, pedestrian space and greening

## The consultation

How we connected during the six-week consultation, from Monday 11 March to Monday 22 April.

### Engagement activities

- 450+** in-person conversations
- 6** shopping centre pop-ups
- 88** suggestions left on feedback wall
- 6** focus groups
- 2** site walks
- 8,825** visitors to the consultation website
- 990** respondents to the online and print survey
- 132** stakeholders were emailed prior to the consultation launch

### Integrated communications campaign

- Social media – **125,000** people viewed the posts across combined social media platforms
- Out-of-home – JC Decaux bus stop ads in **40+ locations**, e-vehicle in market
- Weekly email newsletter to residents
- Internal campaign – news on toilet doors, Chief Exec email, Laurence House and Wearside pop-ups
- Partners' networks – Federation of Small Businesses, South East London Chambers of Commerce, housing associations, Lewisham Strategic Partnership
- 6107 emails** and **6,500 leaflets** were sent inviting the community to participate.

How we connected with key stakeholder groups from October 2023 – March 2024.

### Targeted engagement

- **3x** market trader forums
- Workshops and outreach with **30+** advocacy/ community groups

## 4. What we heard

### The survey

Snapshot of survey respondents.

**90%**

Respondents live  
in the borough

**72%**

Had no disability or  
long-term health  
condition

**Nearly half**

Did not have a  
religious belief

**Two thirds**

Described their  
ethnicity as white

**1/4**

Were within the 35-  
44 age bracket

**55%**

Visit the town centre  
at least once a  
week

**55%**

Identified as women

**80%**

Were within the 25-  
64 age bracket

Under 25s (5%) and over 65s (13%) were underrepresented as anticipated. We mitigated this with targeted engagement.

## The market

66% of respondents felt positive about the designs for the Market House and Canopy

More trees and planting, better waste disposal and improved stalls are seen as the top three measures for the ongoing success of the market

The top three choices for after-hours activities under the canopy are:

- Street food market (38%)
- Night market (19%)
- Performance space (15%)

## High street

Of the changes to the high street, people were most positive about:

- Improved lighting (78%)
- Better pavements (77%)
- More trees and planting (75%)

When asked about the offering for mobility hubs – where several transport modes and community facilities are located together – the top choices were:

- Cycle storage (28%)
- Covered seating (26%)



Model of Lewisham Market at our shopping centre popup

## Recurring themes

We have grouped the feedback thematically into the following areas of focus:

### Maintenance

While most were positive (74%) about more trees and planting on the high street and the new market canopy, the need to keep on top of maintenance came up repeatedly.

**22%** of free text respondents said that improved maintenance and cleaning would make Lewisham Market more successful

**55%** of all respondents felt positive above plans for better waste disposal on the market

### Accessibility

82% of deaf and disabled respondents said they feel very positive or positive about plans to improve lighting on the high street and market.

78% of deaf and disabled respondents said that they felt positive, or very positive about plans to improve paving on the high street and market.

### Personal safety

Safety was a key theme that emerged, with only 5% of survey respondents feeling 'happy' about current safety provisions in Lewisham town centre.

Participants in the safety site walks said the high street currently feels unsafe in the evenings, describing the area as 'eerie' after the market closes.

Similarly, concerns about safety and antisocial behaviour came up consistently throughout the focus groups and other face-to-face conversations.

Improved lighting has been proposed for the high street and market appears to address some of the concerns around personal safety with 84% of women feeling very positive or positive about these changes.

Participants at the Lewisham Disabled People's Commission focus group said that good lighting is essential for deterring anti-social behaviour at the new pocket parks.

### Supporting market traders

The community sought reassurance, via drop-ins and free text survey responses, that traders are being supported and involved throughout the planning process, construction and beyond.

"Retain as much of the original market traders and essence of Lewisham."

## Activating the evening and nighttime economy

**66%** of respondents felt either very positive or positive about the designs for the Market House and Canopy.

**72%** of respondents felt very positive or positive about the new canopy creating opportunities for events.

**38%** of respondents ranked 'street market' as the event they'd most like to see under the canopy after day market trading hours while 10% said 'performance space'.

**23%** of respondents said an improved commercial offering would make Lewisham Market more successful.

**75%** of all respondents felt very positive or positive about more opportunities for street trading and outdoor dining.

## Toilet provision to support the nighttime economy

Although we didn't specifically ask about toilets, they came up a lot in the survey, as they did in our face-to-face sessions. Here are some of the free text survey responses:

"I think another set of toilets near the market would be invaluable"

"Please can we have good quality public toilets on the high street?"

"I like the suggestions but you need to install public toilets"

"More easily accessible public toilets when the shopping centre is shut"

## Road safety

Road safety was a concern, with illegal driving on pavements and feelings that existing crossings were not as safe as they could be for pedestrians and those using wheelchairs.

**55%** of respondents were positive or very positive about improved measures for pedestrians.

# What we heard

## In person

Eight workshop sessions held with community/ advocacy groups during the six-week public consultation period.

- Lewisham Black VCS Network
- Lewisham Disabled People's Commission
- Lewisham Youth Theatre
- Lewisham Pedestrians
- Mencap (inclusive design site walk)
- Positive Ageing Council (POSAC)
- Young Mayor's Team
- Local girls and young women (personal safety site walk)

Despite coming from different perspectives, there was a lot of overlap in the feedback, most of which mirrored the themes from the survey.



CGI of Plough Bridge Pocket

## Maintenance

### Observations

- Concerns that planters/ greenery/ market canopy/ seating will fall into disrepair – need long term plan for maintenance of the space
- Cleanliness affects safety so the space needs to be cleaned regularly incl. rubbish collection
- Will there be a pigeon deterrent strategy?
- Rubbish bins needed near seating.



CGI of Lewisham High Street

## **Accessibility**

### *Observations*

- Need to ensure there is enough space for wheelchairs and mobility scooters to easily manoeuvre around pocket parks and in the new market layout
- Better wayfinding needed – please consider use of bright colours for those with learning disabilities
- Removing obstructions on the high street a key concern. Disused phone boxes, uneven paving and shop spillage are said to be the biggest culprits
- Requests that market stalls aren't too high otherwise they're inaccessible to wheelchair users and mobility scooters
- Positive reaction to the proposed seating on high streets and in pocket parks but asked to consider different seat heights for accessibility

## **Supporting market traders**

### *Observations*

- Reassurance sought that current traders won't be priced out of updated market and will be supported throughout
- Questions from traders re: the operational side of the new market – layout, pitch sizes, waste management, restocking etc
- Challenged to improve diversity of offering in the daytime market and attract new vendors who reflect the local cultural mix while not alienating current sellers
- Preference is for new traders to be local/ have local connections

## Activating the evening and nighttime economy

### Observations

- Ensure there's no monopoly on canopy rental to allow for diversity
- We need a good mix of events including activities which are programmed specifically for young people
- Build inclusivity into the programming for under the market canopy, as well as the design
- Huge amount of engagement re: ideas for activating market house and canopy. Nearly 90 post-it notes were left on the 'ideas wall' during our shopping centre drop-in sessions and lots more shared during workshops including roller rink, street food markets, performance space

## Toilet provisions

### Observations

- Extra toilets needed if we are programming events under the canopy and they need to be accessible
- Also need to be within easy reach of the market house and canopy
- Lots of reports at the Lewisham Central Ward Assembly of local streets/ front gardens currently being used as urinals in the evening.
- Toilets in library, culture and business hub should be freely accessible to all – perhaps as part of the Community Toilet Scheme?



Photo of our Lewisham Shopping Centre pop-up

## Designing in inclusivity

### *Observations*

- The challenge to ensure everybody feels they are being welcomed came up frequently during focus groups
- Lots of places in the town centre aren't currently very welcoming of young people so would be nice to make it clear that pocket parks, the hub etc are young person friendly zones
- How can we make changes dementia-friendly?
- Provision has been made for wheelchair users for the canopy ENTE events but some of the event layout configurations restrict numbers. Given it's a flexible space, there shouldn't be a limit
- Deaf and disabled people shouldn't be bunched together for events as it often means they can't sit with their friends



Photo from the inclusive design site walk

## 5. How we're responding

Several of the themes from the feedback, if not already being addressed as part of our existing design proposals, will be considered at a later stage – whether that is through the creation of operational strategies and processes or ongoing collaboration with key community stakeholders and advocates.

### Maintenance

Most people are excited about plans to make the high street and market greener, cleaner, and brighter, but there are concerns about how these spaces will be maintained.

#### Measures we're already taking

- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are being proposed to support the maintenance of new plants and trees on the high street and market.
- Hard wearing and weather resistant material which reduces visibility of dirt and grime is proposed for the paving on the market and high street.

#### Further opportunities

- We will create and deliver a robust maintenance and greening strategy for the high street and market.

### Personal safety

The market was described by women and girls on the safety site walk as “too dark” and “eerie” after trading hours. Similarly, concerns about safety and antisocial behaviour under the canopy came up consistently throughout face-to-face events and in responses to the survey.

#### Measures we're already taking

- Improved lighting on the high street and market
- Improved CCTV around the market
- Proposals for two-way system in the market to prevent traffic from driving on pavements (outside loading hours)
- Plans to activate the town centre during and after market trading hours

#### Further opportunities

- Local partnerships e.g. with the community police and potentially Landsec could help reinforce and manage feelings of safety.

## Accessibility

Limited pavement space, shop spillage, disused objects, and uneven paving were the most common accessibility barriers identified by disabled users on the high street and market.

### Measures we're already taking

- Decluttering the high street and market
- New market layout to create more space
- Revising terms and conditions for stall holders to restrict stall spillage
- Proposals for improved, high-quality paving throughout the high street and market
- An accessibility audit has taken place on the high street to ensure designs meet accessibility guidelines.

### Further opportunities

- Ensure the scrutiny continues
- Explore the potential for a review panel/ steering group to feedback on design and programming decisions ongoing

## Market trader engagement

Market traders are seen as the heart of the town centre and local people feel strongly that collaboration with them is key to ensuring the market's ongoing success.

### Measures we're already taking

- Monthly meetings with the two market trader reps and quarterly meetings with the rest of the traders to support them through the process and involve them in decision-making
- Building welfare provisions for traders, including toilets and handwash facilities, just off the high street in Burton's Yard
- Ongoing collaboration between design teams and market operations teams

### Further opportunities

- Work with traders to identify approach for expanding market – new traders, more diversity in offering
- There's also a potential to extend trading hours for current traders

## Activating evening and nighttime economy

There was lots of positive feedback about plans to boost the nighttime economy in the area, and consistent links made between evening activity and increased personal safety.

## Measures we're already taking

- We are currently investigating the feasibility for hosting different events at the market, using many of the ideas submitted to our ideas wall during the consultation process

## Further opportunities

- There is an opportunity to further engage the local community re: programming
- We will create a process for community groups and organisations to apply to use the space under the canopy after trading hours
- Creating additional strategies to support the improved night-time economy

## Toilet provision

People are excited by a more buoyant nighttime economy driven by events under the market canopy but feel more toilets are needed to support it.

## Measures we're already taking

- Lewisham Community Toilet Scheme is in place to help the local community locate clean, safe and accessible toilets that are open to the public, at no cost during normal office opening hours.

## Further opportunities

- We will explore options for providing access to toilets during evening and nighttime events. This includes working with other town centre stakeholders.

## Designing in inclusivity

A direct challenge to ensure people from right across our community feel like the new spaces are somewhere that they are actively welcomed to enjoy.

## Measures we're already taking

- Working with community groups to understand where the opportunities for further inclusivity lie.

## Further opportunities

- Keep the feedback loop open with community and advocacy groups as our plans continue to develop.
- There are opportunities to feed in re: mobility hubs, afterhours market house and canopy and pocket parks.

## 6. Library, culture and business hub

The hub has been allocated its own section of the report as a different approach to qualitative feedback was used vs the market and high street.



CGI of library exterior

Architecture 00 and public works used a co-design approach to develop plans for the hub. It is a participatory method involving our key stakeholders, including community groups, in an iterative design process. This ensures our new flagship venue meets the needs and desires of local people.

Between October 2023 and April 2024, we ran a targeted programme of engagement, working with over 30 local advocacy groups and their users to help inform our designs. A co-design process was used for the hub, to create feedback loops which allowed into the design process throughout.

### What we did

During RIBA stages 1-3 the hub's design team - Architecture 00 and public works - ran an extensive engagement programme. Through progressive rounds of consultation with over 30 local advocacy groups and their users (see below) the designs for the hub were iterated and adapted.

## The advocacy groups included:

999Club  
Circle Collective  
Deaf and Disabled Commission  
Entelechy Arts  
Heart & Soul  
Ignition Brewery  
Kinaraa  
Lewisham Black VCS Group Network  
Lewisham Library Service staff members  
Lewisham Local  
Lewisham Youth Theatre  
Mercia Gr. / Clarendon Rise. TRA  
Metro Centre  
Positive Ageing Council  
Other library operators (see Library visits)  
St Saviour's Primary School  
The Albany  
V22  
Young Mayor's Team

## Engagement approach

We used different formats of engagement in order to quickly and responsively test the emerging design ideas. These included:

- In-residence and small group sessions Lewisham library staff
- Repeated, small group sessions with over 30 local advocacy groups, local arts organisations and charities
- Four paid citizen journalist placements
- Design consultancy for Lewisham Youth Theatre
- Design reviews and feedback sessions with the Young Mayors
- Conversations with café operators
- Conversations with business hub operators

The co-design sessions created feedback loops with the key stakeholder groups who were able to input on the designs throughout the process.

The wider public consultation tested assumptions and designs with the wider community. Popup sessions were held at Lewisham Shopping Centre, Glass Mill Leisure Centre and the borough's libraries.

We also consulted café and business hub operators, including:

- Revive Coffee (Canada Water Library)
- Plateful Café (Lewisham Refugee business)

- Dolce Café (Catford Bridge)
- Catford Mews
- Benugo (Young V&A)
- Gaff (Lewisham Hospital)
- Perky Blenders
- Homestead Café (Beckenham Park)

In addition, they worked with the client team to develop a shared vision and strategy which included visits to:

- Canada Water Library
- Walworth Library
- Peckham Library
- Set Set Set - workspace and social club
- Forza Wine roof top bar at Copeland Park

The process was useful in both confirming and challenging aspects of the design and has guided core decision making.

## What we heard

### The survey

In terms of activities within the hub, respondents to this question said they were most likely to:

- Visit the rooftop bar (70%)
- Attend cultural performances/ talks/ events (60%)
- Visit the café (55%)

They were least likely to use\*:

- The sensory space (78%)
- The gaming space (74%)
- The media space (72%)

\*This is based upon net likely (very likely/likely) and net unlikely (very unlikely/unlikely) response data.

When asked to prioritise services, in the event of budgetary constraints, the most important deliverables were:

- Additional environmental building improvements (22%)
- Cultural performance (17%)
- More luxurious finish inside and out (17%)

When considering respondents' first, second and third choices collectively, the most important deliverable changed to the café (22%), followed by additional environmental building improvements (17%) and cultural performance space (17%).

**Caveat:**

Activities and deliverables aimed at children and young people or those with disabilities not prioritised by survey respondents who are not necessarily core library users. We had already identified under 25s and people with physical disabilities as core audience and spoke to them as part of our targeted extensive co-design process for the hub.



CGI of children's library

# How we're responding

## Activities with key groups

### 999 Club

999 Club is a charity working to support people experiencing homelessness. We met with CEO Thomas Neumark to hear about their service, review the designs for the library and how their work interacts with the library provision in Lewisham.

We also spent time at the 999Club talking to users about their experience within the library service to see how they can be supported and moments of friction can be reduced.

**Influence on the design:** Design and layout of the toilet areas to reduce moments of conflict between homeless users, library staff and members of the public.

### Circle Collective

We worked with youth employment charity, Circle Collective to design and promote our internship programme, to which they helped us recruit four local people aged 18-30 years.

**Influence on the design:** The internship programme gave a unique perspective of the role of libraries for young people. This led to design interventions including the stepped forum alongside a dedicated youth library, to allow for informal use of the space. These spaces without defined functions will allow young people to spend time without pressure from staff to move on.

### Lewisham Disabled People's Commission

We met with Jamie Hale, disabilities advocate and former Chair of the disbanded Deaf and Disabled Commission to look at the brief for the library and how the design could live up to best practice for deaf and disabled clients and their carers. This was followed by a focus group with additional members of the commission to review and interrogate the design.

**Influence on the design:** Practical changes such as the inclusion of a changing places toilet, a meeting room which can become a sensory room, sliding doors (not revolving) at the main entrance, the children's library to be on the ground floor and smooth threshold changes on the floor. Further meetings will take place in the design development to help ensure the design is as accessible as possible.

### St Saviour's Primary School

We met with the head teacher at a local school to introduce the project, understand how the design of the future hub could best support teachers, parents and pupils.

**Influence on the design:** The head reinforced the idea of re-orientating the entrance onto Limes Grove to allow groups of children to gather safely outside before entering the building and reduce the risk of a child running out onto the busy road.

The school also influenced the location of the children's library to be on the ground floor and positioned towards the back of the space and away from the main public toilet areas, with the ability to close off the space if desired.

## Young Mayor's Team

We attended three sessions with the Young Mayor's team, first to introduce the programme, second time to present the developed designs and for a third time to review facade developments and talk about youth engagement with intern Lauryn.

**Influence on the design:** Input from these young people supported the inclusion of a separate youth library area alongside creating informal areas, such as the stepped forum, which allow for a more relaxed use where young people feel comfortable to spend time without feeling pressure to move on.

## Local arts, charity and resident organisations

We met with various local arts and charity organisations who might use the space in the future. This included Lewisham Black VCS network, Metro Centre, AFRIL, Heart and Soul, Positive Ageing Council, Entelechy Arts, Lewisham Youth Theatre, Kinaraa, Lewisham Local, Lewisham Educational Arts Network and the Albany among others.

**Influence on the design:** Much of the feedback related to how the future space is managed alongside the physical design itself. This included a desire for the project to remain in the interest of, and accessible to, local residents.

Suggestions from local people were also the catalyst behind bookable rooms, the ability to host small performances and events on the stepped forum with the potential for onsite storage to allow third party groups to run programmes in the space.

## Café Operators

We met with eight café operators to test the design and location of the café.

**Influence on the design:** Feedback has led to the café being able to serve directly onto the street and to operate independently if it has longer opening hours than the main library. Its position on Limes Grove has the potential for external seating and a small back of house kitchen along with a separate dry store area. Potential operators will also have input on the final detailed design.

# Conclusion

We've tried our best to ensure the feedback we've gathered as part of this engagement project represents the needs, interests and views of the whole community. Between October 2023 and April 2024, we spoke to hundreds of people including key stakeholders, community and advocacy groups and the wider public – asking them to share their thoughts on our plans for Lewisham town centre.

The good news is that what we've heard has been very positive overall. People are excited about the changes to come and how they will benefit the borough. However, we've had lots of constructive comments and it's how we address those that will prove the marker for success on this project.

Regardless of methodology, the same messages cropped up repeatedly in our research. We are pleased to have addressed many of these themes as part of our existing proposals and, by listening to the community, have also identified further opportunities to improve our plans.

We encountered varying levels of apathy throughout this project with many feeling that they're regularly asked to contribute to Council consultations and then aren't listened to. We need to show people we are listening and clearly demonstrate how their involvement has impacted our decision making.

To do this we will report back via a 'you said/ we did' style comms campaign which draws a direct line between the community's input with the proposals and the impact on design outcomes.



Photo of bus stop ad in town centre

## Key project milestones

Market planning application approved – July 2024



High street construction works begin – August 2024



Library, culture and business hub planning application approved – Autumn 2024



Construction begins on market and hub – Spring 2025



Communicating results of engagement back to residents – Autumn 2024



Transformation of Lewisham high street, market and hub complete – Summer 2026