

DARWEN MARKETS – HEART OF DARWEN

Stage one: draft consultation feedback 31st May 2015

Background

A 9 week public consultation focussed on the future of the 3 day Darwen market site was launched at Darwen Aldridge Academy (DACA) on the 21st March with an open invite to the public including market traders.

The consultation was focussed on how the market site can support the development of a town centre which meets the needs of all residents and visitors of Darwen with potential new uses and activities.

The consultation was very open, interactive and non-prescriptive, asking for views and ideas from residents with events and a variety of media including leaflets and social media designed to attract the widest feedback.

The business- led Darwen Town Centre Partnership Board led the consultation and the feedback to the Council to help inform the Council's decision on the future of the 3 day Market and the Market Square site. They led a number of events and consultation and also utilised existing events such as Darwen Music Live at the end of May to try to obtain a wide spread of views.

Liam Dargan, a 3rd year undergraduate from Darwen studying in London, had been carrying out some consultation as part of his dissertation project. He presented his ideas and consultation with young people, as well as the 'Heart of Darwen' concept, to the Partnership Board in February, and was asked to work with them to develop the Heart of Darwen theme and branding for use throughout the consultation.

In addition, an event organised by Jake Berry on the future of the 3 day market in St Peter's Church on the 8th April gave another opportunity to detail the objectives of the consultation and raise awareness with leaflets distributed to all attendees.

The consultation was dynamic and the second event at DACA on 3rd May was informed by the feedback collected in March and April with some visuals generated from some of the ideas put forward.

The consultation feedback across all the events and media has been summarised below into key dates and themes. As the consultation has only just finished as this report has been finalised, there is still some late feedback to be collected particularly from the students at the Studio School as well as some analysis of the social media.

EVENTS

21 st March – DACA Workshop	Launch of Consultation, leaflets, Heart of Darwen website and Facebook page. Open invite and Presentation to attendees followed
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	by an interactive workshop to brainstorm ideas. Businesses, market traders, residents and other stakeholders attended
8 th April, St Peter's Church	Question and Answer session hosted by Rt Hon Jake Berry MP for Darwen.
3 rd May - DACA Workshop	Open invite and Presentation and feedback on visual early ideas from previous feedback
23 rd May	Consultation with the Darwen Studio school – feedback forms still to be forwarded
10 th May	Consultation at DACA for 6 th Form students
29 th May	Darwen Music Live

MEDIA

A variety of media and methods to engage as wide an audience as possible to participate in the consultation were used.

- 10,000 leaflets were distributed around Darwen in key public buildings, Markets, Town Hall, Leisure Centre, Library, bars and restaurants and schools including feedback form collected in key public buildings
- 'Heart of Darwen' Website launched to enable electronic feedback
- Heart of Darwen Facebook page
- Darwen Town Centre Partnership Board facebook page launched
- 2 articles in the Lancashire Telegraph

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

A total of **505 responses** were received and these have been split into feedback across the public and student workshop events at DACA, Darwen Music Live face to face consultation and the leaflets and online feedback. In addition, because of the nature of the open consultation, the responses are more of a qualitative nature often gained via conversation, particularly in the case of Darwen Music Live. Therefore the feedback has both summaries of comments and also some statistics to support them.

DACA WORKSHOPS: 82 responses

50 people attended the first consultation in March and contributed to the development of some visual ideas for the second workshop in May*.

The key themes were:

1. The opportunity for a multifunctional space to attract residents to the town centre
2. More events and pop up markets and stalls desired
3. The opportunity to build on the growing and very busy night time economy in Darwen
4. The importance of Darwen markets as part of the heritage of the town
5. Better retail and leisure offer

DACA STUDENTS : 152 RESPONSES

SUMMARY:

26 wanted the market to stay and be modernised.

49 wanted more entertainment/activity facilities. Space to be used all year, arcades, cinema, trampoline park, roller park all common answers.

30 wanted a better food offering. McDonalds, KFC, Ice cream shops, and Starbucks all being popular answers.

43 wanted a retail offering with a market presence. An offer that was open 7 days, better stalls like 'craft stalls'. The main answers consisted of 'a mall' a game shop', 'Primark' more clothes, sports clothes, shoe shops and good make up shops.

4 of them specifically discussed improving 'the feel of the place' - to have music playing, flowers and pretty surroundings was very important to them.

Overview: Throughout these responses it became very clear that the students want a space where they can go and enjoy their social and leisure time with family and friends. There needs to be an 'all in one' solution. Somewhere to eat (food that actually appeals to them), somewhere to go shopping (clothes, make up and games) and somewhere to a place for them to meet and have fun.

DARWEN LIVE: 67 RESPONSES FROM FACE TO FACE INTERVIEWS

SUMMARY:

Every response was for a multi-purpose space. Something that kept the market presence - farmers markets, car boot sales and craft fairs all listed. Somewhere for the children to play - activity centres, skate park, rides etc and a space that can be utilised for festivals and events for the town. A space that is constantly being used.

46 of respondents wanted a better retail offering with more choice of unique shops 'clothes shops', 'shoe shops' 'ice cream shops' and 'KFC' being frequent suggestions.

NOTE: the majority of conversations had the same theme. Darwen has a great nightlife and entertainment offering in the evening, however, you have to go out of town to buy the

clothes, make up etc that you wear to go out in the town. It would be more convenient to get it all in Darwen.

ONLINE, LEAFLETS AND FACEBOOK: 204 RESPONSES

SUMMARY:

99 would like a strong retail offering. Somewhere to buy 'clothes', 'shoes', 'children clothes' and 'sports clothes'. More variety of food. They want to keep a market presence, with the market being modernised and more variety and offering.

77 would like a multipurpose space that allows for better integration of events. A space that can be utilised for Christmas markets, festivals and community use etc.

28 would like somewhere for the youth to go. Trampoline parks, skate park and youth centre all being featured.

Overview: Looking through the feedback there seems to be a strong feel of 'maintaining our market heritage'. That being said it is clear that the respondents want a multi-purpose space that can be used regularly. They would like more 'themed' markets such as farmers markets, craft stalls and Christmas markets. They want something 'different' to attract them back in to town time and time again. They want more retail stores where they can buy their clothes, shoes all in one place. A space to relax, where the youth can go and enjoy themselves.

Finally, there is a strong sense of 'pride for Darwen' throughout the responses. They want to use the space, right now nothing attracts them. There is a strong sense that Darwen needs something 'big' and 'unique' and once it's there. They will use local services.