

THE GEORGE, WICKHAM MARKET

FINDINGS FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON INTERPRETATION THEMES AND HERITAGE ACTIVITIES

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1. Introduction

The purpose of the consultation was to test the public’s interest in potential interpretation themes, approaches to display and heritage activities which had been developed for the Round 1 submission. Due to Covid-19 an online questionnaire was developed, with images embedded in it to provide visual stimuli. Committee members sent a link to the Friends of The George and shareholders during the second week of August 2020 asking them to participate. A reminder was sent about a week later which resulted in a second surge of responses. Paper copies were also available during an on-site consultation event during mid August. 164 online responses were collected and 6 paper copies.

170 people participated in the survey, most of whom were Wickham Market residents. All 170 respondents answered Question 8 which asked participants to tick the options that applied to them regarding their relationship to the pub. 79% were community shareholders, 75% were residents of either Wickham Market or a neighbouring village; the majority of shareholders are local. Of the 10 ‘Other’ responses, three were part-time residents with a second home in Wickham Market.



Fig. 1: respondent’s relation to The George (n=170)

Respondents were asked to provide their postcodes, the overwhelming majority (n=138) of which answered with ‘IP13’. There were another 9 from IP12 and 7 from other Ipswich (IP) postcodes. A handful of other postcodes from across South-East England were given including two from Cambridge (CM), one from Colchester (CO), one from Hemel Hempstead (HP), one from Redhill (RH) and one from Romford (RM). Four respondents skipped the question. It’s clear that much of the pub’s supporters are from its local area.

2. What people are interested in

Respondents were asked for their opinions on the content and delivery of heritage information about The George. They were mostly interested in the heritage of the pub.

Figure 2 shows respondent’s interest in proposed topics about the George’s heritage. **The story of the pub was the most popular**, receiving the least number of ‘not interested’ responses and the highest proportion of ‘very interested’ responses. The **restoration of the pub** was the next most popular. Owners and landlords of The George was the least popular, but it still had more than 80% of respondents expressing some interest in the topic.

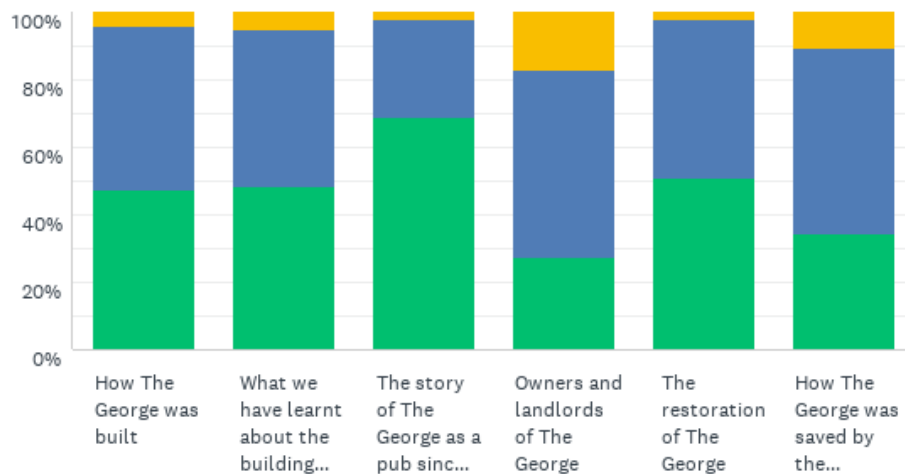


Figure 2: Interest in proposed interpretation themes ¹

Respondents were invited to leave their suggestions of other topics they would be interested in. Several individuals would like to see how the pub fits into the local community and the wider national picture, for example if the pub served mostly local patrons or if it relied on passing trade. There were several requests for information about other local pubs and the competition they posed. One individual was interested in the day to day life of the pub in the 16th century. More specific heritage-based information was also requested, such as the wattle and daubing process and how alcohol was brewed from the Middle Ages forward. One individual who has already undertaken personal research on the pub pointed out that many pubs were owned by women in the 16th and 17th centuries, some of whom were accused of witchcraft and that this might be of interest.

Several respondents used the suggestions box to articulate how they would like to receive the information, perhaps not noting that the next question addressed this. Ideas included the information being presented on beer and table mats. Pictures of the pub through the ages were suggested for the walls.

3. Preferred approach to the interpretation

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to engage with a range of interpretative approaches e.g. traditional displays, games and beer mats. **Panels and picture frames with text, maps and pictures from the past** were most popular. **Labels highlighting certain aspects of the pub and a family tree showing key characters in the pub’s history** were the next most popular. Least popular were images printed on the back of doors. See Figure 3 on the next page.

¹ Between 167 and 170 people responded to the questions.

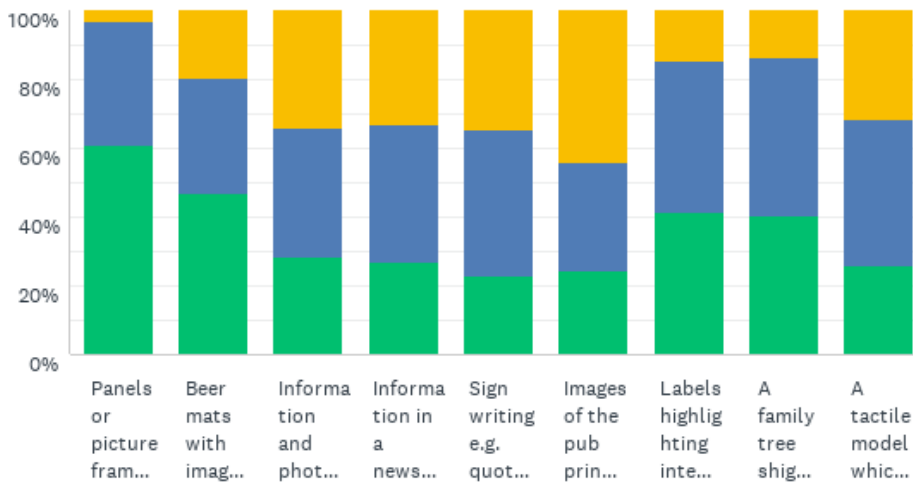


Figure 3: interest in methods of displaying heritage ideas ²

It is also worth noting that more than half of respondents expressed interest in all the proposed methods of displaying the information including telling stories through newspapers.

As above, respondents were asked for other suggestions for presenting the history of the pub. Several respondents noted that they didn't want anything 'tacky' and that they would be "going for a pint not a museum visit". Short film clips were suggested several times, either shown on a screen or online. An app was suggested by a few respondents but there is insufficient budget to develop one on this project.

More ideas were proposed in response to Question Four, specifying activities that require direct engagement. Watching a short film was marginally more popular than reading/downloading more information about The George. Buying a book and listening to oral histories were less popular but were still generally well received.

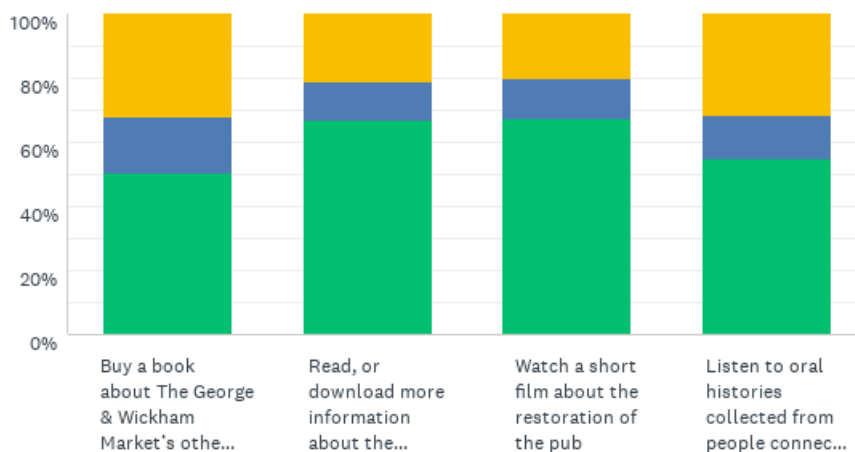


Figure 4: Interest in further activities

² Between 167 and 168 people responded to this question and 168 to 170 to the options in Figure 4.

4. Interest in heritage activities

Question Six focused on a proposed programme of heritage activities in the future. Figure 5 shows the responses. The majority of respondents weren't interested in the oral history project. 71% of respondents expressed an interest in hard hat tours. Talks about the restoration and temporary exhibitions were more popular with over 83% of respondents expressing interest. This is perhaps not surprising given that these ideas were developed in response to consultation prior to the Round 1 submission.

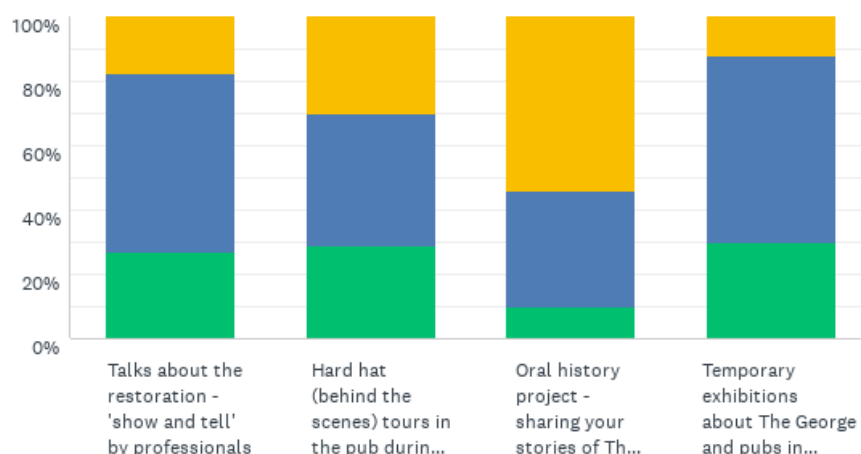


Figure 5: Interest in heritage activities (n=168/170)

A final opportunity for additional suggestion or comments was provided. One individual expressed an interest in displays about the pub's old regulars and plays about Wickham Market. Another noted their concern that printing information on tables and doors would look too 'corporate' and 'tacky'. They suggested an 'eclectic' approach instead, including using a mix of antique and salvaged furniture. There was a hope of looking to the future when the pub would reflect a diverse user base. Re-enactments were suggested as well as themed events based around old pub games. One respondent suggested that the project should work with the WMAAC to make the project easier and to avoid alienating villagers.

5. What do people value about The George?

The final question on the questionnaire asked respondents what they valued about the pub. This was an open-ended question and received 143 responses which is very positive. Figure 6 summarises the responses in a word cloud. 31% of answers included the word 'community', 43% included 'village'. It is clear there is a strong sense of local support and community for the pub. As one respondent wrote, it is "a central social point in the village". Several respondents pointed out that it was the last local pub in the village and that without it, the village lacks a meeting place for local residents.

"Would be great to have our own pub in the Village to meet with friends and acquaintances and have social activities that the village and surrounding area will enjoy."

Somebody else noted that once the tea shops close it will be a place to meet. One wrote that:

“Every village benefits from a pub and without the George being active it feels that something of the village is missing. Looking forward to having a pub with a nice atmosphere to visit.”



Figure 6: What do respondents value about The George? (n=143)

6. Conclusions and recommendations

It is evident that people value the restoration project and that they are looking forward to having a community pub back in the heart of Wickham Market. The local community appears to be both excited for the project and eager to participate when they can.

The majority are interested in learning more about the pub’s history, in particular the story of the pub since it opened as The George. They do not want the pub to look like a museum but are open to pictures with text and maps on the walls, labels on interesting features, beer mats with information on them and a family tree. It is probably not worth pursuing screen printing on the back of doors and table tops or a tactile model as there was less interest. There was a similar response to signwriting and using newspapers but these would require less investment so could be considered, along with layering information on the website.

About half of the respondents were very interested in a book and a 17% interested, but given the make up of the sample, this probably means no more than 125-150 copies will be sold so the financial viability of this needs to be tested.

There is a market for the heritage activities based on talks or temporary exhibitions but there is limited interest in sharing oral histories.

Dr. Alix Slater

1st September 2020