

10 Public consultation



Public Consultation

The client views proper consultation as a clear priority and has been active in this area. In February 2009 a newsletter detailing initial plans, proposed scheme features and a Q&A was produced and sent to over 18,000 households in the centre of WGC. Following that, a public exhibition was organised where the draft plans, images and a model were all open to the public and the scheme's consultants were able to directly answer questions. This exhibition was promoted by both advertising and editorial coverage, plus a website was launched which is still being actively used to communicate to WGC residents. This exhibition was subsequently extended for more dates following requests by members of the public. In total, 1,302 people attended results in 173 written responses, 95% of which were supportive of regenerating the Site.

Workshops following the exhibition were organised with attendees from both relevant societies and local groups, plus also members of the public who asked to attend during the exhibition.



Image



Illustrative masterplan sketch of the central area of the scheme

The Layout

The first scheme presented at a public exhibition had three distinct areas around a new civic square at the base of the railway bridge: a residential zone to the south, an office campus to the north west and a supermarket hall wrapped with residential units to the north east. A leisure centre was proposed next to the Civic Square.

Comments from the public:

Positive feedback from the public was focused on the retention of the listed Silos and Production Hall and the regeneration of this section of the Site. They generally welcomed the proposal for the mix and distribution of uses across the Site. Negative feedback focused on the residential component where the density and quantum of development was seen to be at odds with the general scale of development within the town. It was felt that the residential area to the south should incorporate more town houses with gardens and reflect more the principles of the Garden City idea. It was pointed out that there was a greater need for two and four bed town houses than apartments. The current courtyard arrangement of the housing blocks was not seen to be visionary enough to act as a focal point for the development. It was noted that more open space and parkland, especially within

the north eastern corner of the Site, would be required to continue the Garden City ethos.

It was felt that there wasn't a market for a large office quantum in Welwyn and that it should be replaced with more community uses.

It was queried whether the architectural quality of the 1950s warehouse building justified its retention and whether it was suitable for any reuse. There was wide support for the leisure facilities and the greatest need appeared to be the provision of facilities for young people from nursery age up to teenagers. The swimming pool was popular and the water theme park was the preferred type of pool. There was a dominant request for play areas for younger people, activity spaces for teenagers. More detailed information on the provision of the care home was requested. It was also queried whether there should be any vehicular access to the central civic square area.

Our response:

Introduction of recreation ground
 Moved the leisure centre next to the bridge, closer to town centre
 Focus on the brief and type of leisure centre
 Reduce the office quantum and replace by larger YMCA facility including care home



Photograph of physical model looking at the scheme and town centre in the background