

2021

# Community Stakeholder consultation report for Stevenage Museum



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## 1. Executive Summary

### *‘The heart of a town lies in its people’*

Stevenage Museum is a hidden gem just outside the town centre; hidden beneath a church and beyond a dual carriageway. But it is a place where people gather to tell their stories, learn about their town and their neighbours’ histories, to share life experiences, to learn, grow and have fun. Stevenage has received funding to move the museum to the town centre, to a new building that it can share with community partners which will bring it to life, update the displays and share stories and experiences with the wider community.

To support the museum’s move this consultation was commissioned to understand what community stakeholders with a vested interest in Stevenage Museum, value about the current museum and the guiding principles that should be taken forward for the new museum. Therefore, thirty three community stakeholders attended one of three focus groups in November 2021.

The findings of these meetings are outlined in detail below but the essence of the findings are that the new Stevenage Museum should be a community asset based on the ground floor of the new building, with additional staff and resources, to tell the story of Stevenage contextualised by the story of New Towns. The community stakeholders want the museum to be interactive, co-created, developed and delivered in collaboration with the local community and embodying the ‘pioneering’ spirit of Stevenage.

*‘The heart of a town lies in its people’* is the motto on Stevenage’s coat of arms; a phrase that was recounted a number of times in the consultation as the guiding principle for how Stevenage Museum is currently delivered and how it should be delivered in its new home in the centre of its town.

## 2. Consultation findings

### 2.1. Introduction

In November 2021 thirty three community stakeholders attended one of three focus groups to understand what they value about the current Stevenage Museum and what they would like from the new Stevenage Museum. A full list of attendees can be found in Appendix A, but they covered a cross section of the local community stakeholders, including museum and council staff, volunteers, councillors, artists, university lecturers, teachers, community leaders and business owners. The one thing they had in common was that they all had a deeply held commitment to and love of the museum.

The sessions were held on a weekday afternoon, a weekday evening and a Saturday morning to ensure that as many people as possible could attend.



### 2.2. Findings

Below are the combined findings of the three focus groups. It must be noted that all the attendees were current stakeholders, their commitment to the museum and the impact it can have is reflected in their comments, and this is echoed in the very similar responses to the questions by each of the focus groups.

#### 2.2.1. Current audiences

To facilitate the groups to think about what the museum currently offers, a list of the existing audiences was developed. These lists have been amalgamated below:

Formal education:

- Mostly primary schools
- Limited secondary schools
- Outreach, including loans boxes
- Arts Award
- 6th Form
- University Students

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#### Families:

- Under 5s
- Under 8s – it was noted that there had been a decrease in age for family workshops since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic
- Birthday parties

#### Volunteers:

- Adults
- People with additional needs
- 6<sup>th</sup> Form and University students
- Teenagers

#### Community groups

- Drop in visits
- Workshops
- Projects
- Meetings
- Outreach, including loans boxes

#### Elders

- Volunteers
- Events
- Community groups – dementia groups, Age Concern etc

#### Specialist interest groups and researchers particularly of

- New Towns
- Family heritage
- Social history
- The Vincent motor bike

#### Tourists

- Overseas visitors from the nearby Hotel
- Day trippers, particularly during the Covid 19 pandemic

#### General visitors

- New residents to Stevenage, to understand the context of the town.

Social media and the website were felt to target across all of these audiences.

The audiences that were felt to cut across these core audiences were people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and also people of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage.

*'It is amazing the diversity of the audience that is coming through the doors here, given the current location... it is important to recognise what a huge shift translating this place, with its ethos, collections and staff will be for the new museum.'*

### 2.2.2. Future audiences

Having ascertained the current audiences for Stevenage Museum, the participants were shown the following breakdown of the demographic of Stevenage residents, based on the 2011 census.

- Dominant adult age group is 34 – 49 years old
- Dominant child age group is 0-4 year olds
- 53% have no dependent children in their family; 47% do
- 12% of people living in Stevenage are from a Black, Asian or mixed ethnic group
- 7% are limited a lot and 9% are limited a little in their day-to-day activities by ill health or disability
- C2/D/E households make up 48% of households in the target area, compared with 40% of households in the base area
- 22% have achieved Level 4 qualifications and above (e.g. Higher Education/Higher diploma) and 22% have achieved no qualifications
- 45% economically inactive people in Stevenage are retired, 19% looking after home or family and 13% are long-term sick or disabled.

As a result, the participants were asked to identify who the new museum should target in addition to the core audiences outlined above. These lists have been amalgamated below:

- Passers-by – these are very limited with the current location
- People of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic heritage through community groups and as individuals
- Possibly 12 to 18 year olds through volunteering programmes such as Duke of Edinburgh
- 19 to 24 year olds through volunteering programmes
- More young professionals, or working 30 to 49 year olds, who do not have children
- Pub goers – people who do not see museums as relevant to their lives but are interested in local history
- People with mental and physical ill health
- People without qualifications
- People within a one hour travel time of Stevenage, this will include Hertfordshire, north London and into Cambridgeshire.
- Coach tours
- Retired adults
- Transport enthusiasts

These audiences were used to frame the thinking of the purpose of the new Stevenage Museum.

However further work is needed with the museum staff to work out which of these audiences need to be the target audiences for the new museum, and what the space, programming and storytelling implications will be for the museum.

### 2.2.3. Barriers to engagement

Some of the barriers to engage with the museum that were discussed included:

- the dual carriageway;
- being within a church;
- perceptions of museums 'being for posh people' – although it was noted that 63% of families participating in an event at the museum said that they hadn't visited a museum before;

- perceptions that potential visitors will not see representations of themselves, or people who look like them in the museum.

#### 2.2.4. The current museum

The focus groups were asked what they valued most about the current museum, that should be carried into the new museum. Their responses can be summarised as: the staff and their methodology of being community focused and responsive to their communities needs.

However, the following elements were discussed:

- The staff and volunteers are viewed as a significant asset to the museum.
- The museum is seen as warm and friendly:

*'It is free, it is warm and people can get a drink. That is a really important thing for the town as there are so few places you can go now that you can sit if you need somewhere to sit and not have to spend money.'*

*'I think it has an alternative appeal, a bit fringy, alternative, not clinical, approachable and not like the rest of the town and that would be nice if it was kept in the new museum.'*

- The formal and informal education programmes for families and schools that are developed and delivered to meet the needs of the audiences.
- The temporary exhibition programme developed in collaboration with the local community.
- The willingness of staff to collaborate and to be responsive to the needs of the audiences.
- The collaboration with local artists and art organisations *'...is outstanding'*.
- The use of local experts for the delivery of programmes, such as Alan Ford.
- The extensive and inclusive volunteer programme.
- Outreach projects such as reminiscence work.
- That events can spill outside into a green space outside the museum [see comment later though as well].
- The facilities that enable visitors to research areas of interest.
- A place to understand yourself within the context of the history of Stevenage.

*'Because it is a New Town, a lot of us don't roots here... they came in as pioneers and that creates a different mindset... I was always looking for a bit of extra roots, and that is what a museum can do.'*

- The fascinating objects that are used to tell the story of Stevenage

#### 2.2.5. What does not work well for the current museum

The focus groups were asked what does not work so well for the current museum and needs to be changed for the new museum. The key issues that were discussed were that the publicity and promotion need improvement, as well as the opening times and staff and financial resources.

It must be noted that these stakeholders, all of whom were very committed to the museum, felt that the museum was currently doing a wonderful job, but the discussions included:

- The current level of resources and staff in the museum is a significant issue:

*'The current budgets must be the absolute minimum – they cannot deliver more on what they currently have.'*

*'They are currently underfunded and need more staff, which will cost more.'*

*'The new museum needs more resource and more funding. To be a new museum that is best at what it is, it will need more resource and money... I don't see how you can deliver this new level of development without more resources.'*

- The location of the current museum is not appropriate for a public/ tourist site.
- The opening times are not long enough – in terms of the days it is open and the hours it is open for:

*'If it is not open every day in the town centre then we have got it wrong... and it needs to be open one or two evenings a week.'*

- The current museum cannot accommodate large groups, such as the local three-class entry primary schools.
- There is not a social space for people to stop and spend time in the museum.
- The museum spaces are not currently appropriate for hiring out:

*'No one will pay to hire this space' [education room in current museum].*

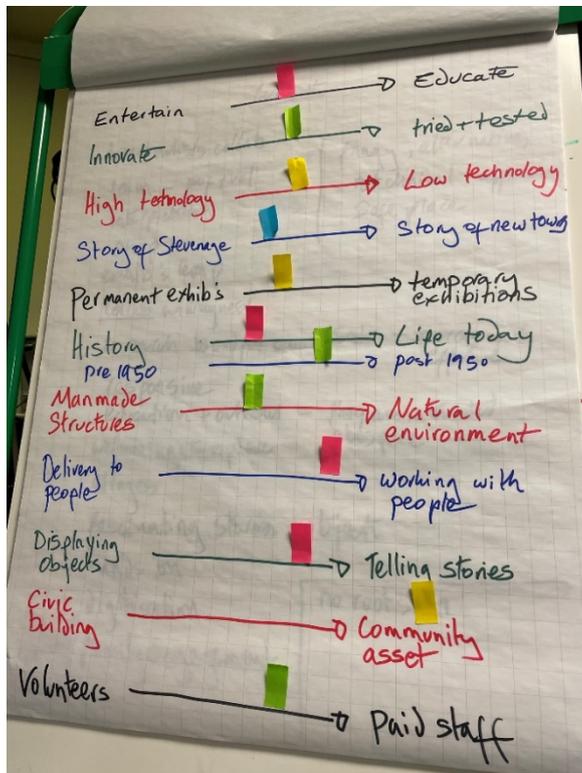
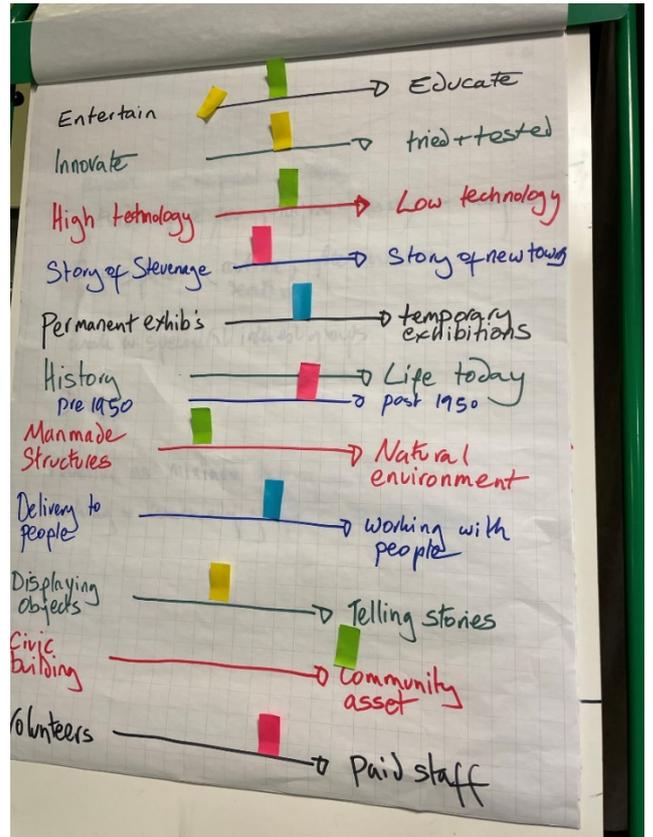
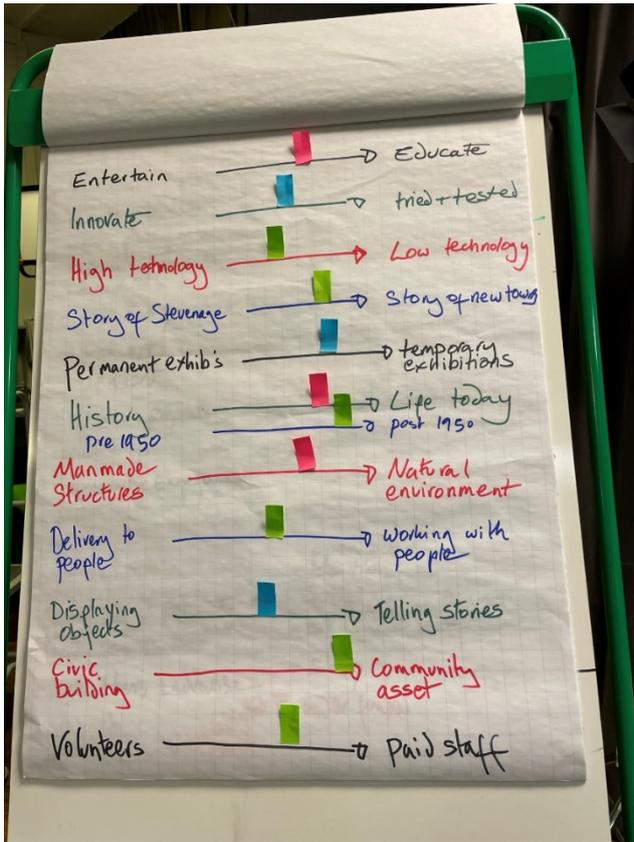
- The current outside space cannot be used:

*'We don't need to take the junkies with us... we can't use the outside space here because there are sharps out there.'*

- There is not a space for film showings with high quality sound.
- The layout of the museum is confusing.
- The museum is not as interactive as it could be.
- There is poor IT infrastructure in the museum.
- The social media and marketing could be more effective.
- The website needs to be improved.
- There is a minimal digital offer, including virtual tours.
- The shop is in a corridor, hard to see what is for sale and is not effective for enticing people to buy anything. They also only have a budget of £200 a year.
- There is not a Friends of Stevenage Museum.

#### 2.2.6. The new museum

Discussions were held about the starting principles of the new museum. The groups were asked where a pointer should go between two binary statements, with each statement being discussed before the pointer was finalised. Below are three photos of the final sliders. They show that there was generally agreement across the three groups that give some very strong indicators of the guiding principles for the museum for the current stakeholders.



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To make the decisions about where the pointers should be placed there were some interesting discussions that explain the thinking behind the placements.

All the focus groups felt that the museum needed to use **entertainment to educate** people about the content of the museum, and as such education and entertainment were equally important:

*'Good education is entertaining.'*

*'If you get them in by entertaining them, they are more likely to come back.'*

*'The secret is to educate people without them realising it.'*

The participants generally felt that the museum needed to use the **tried and tested methods** of engagement and developing and delivering museum displays, but there had to be some **innovation** as well. The pride that the local community have in being a 'pioneering' town needs to be visible in the museum, not just through the displays but also in how they are displayed. Therefore, some new techniques need to be developed, but people also need to know that they will also be able to see objects and stories that they are already familiar with. This can also be summarised as there is interest in the museum developed with low risk strategies but there is a commitment to some risk in its development.

*'Tried and tested works but you do need to push boundaries because history is a changing thing.'*

*'If you don't innovate you can often fall behind.'*

*'The curator needs to listen to the community to see what is possible.'*

*'While we have a new building, a new museum ... we really should be innovating.'*

*'Innovation could alienate people.'*

*'You might have some audiences that you are working really well with at the moment, so you need to be careful not to move away from how you work with them.'*

*'In a town there is a tendency to go for tried and tested but ... culturally Stevenage has an incredible legacy of pioneering creativity, underpinned by social progress and this needs to be reflected in the development of the museum.'*

There is, inevitably, caution about using high **technology** in terms of costs and maintenance with many people citing concerns about museum interactives being broken and seeing blank screens. But there is a need for high technology, such as computer interactives, as a means for storytelling, particularly to engage younger visitors. There was also interest in using personal hand held devices to access further information rather than risk having lots of screens that are broken.

*'Low technology portals to engage with high technology stories... you shouldn't have to be tech savvy to understand how exciting the tech is.'*

*'As time goes on high technology can become low technology... it can become obsolete.'*

*'The young only really engage electronically... it is trying to be open to different types of engagement and opportunities.'*

*'There needs to be as much interaction as possible – people will spend more time in the museum if they are engaged.'*

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*'When families come, they want to interact with each other and not with a screen. It is about putting your phone away when you are here. But I also think there are smart ways of using your phone and technology that allow people to access deeper into the stories. We need to use tech smartly.'*

There was significant discussion about whether the museum should focus on the **history of Stevenage** or **the story of the New Towns**. Although many people want the New Towns story told, overall there was a feeling that the museum should be focused on the story of Stevenage but contextualised in the New Town story. There is also aspiration for the museum to have a national reach, although there is understanding that logistically meeting the Arts Council's accreditation standards for a National Museum would be preventative. Some of the participants therefore felt that the story of New Towns could be told through temporary exhibitions or through a space that is delivered in partnership with the library and archives.

*'We should be the First New Town Museum.'*

*'Could we have a Museum of Stevenage but a separate room of archives or study centre for New Towns... that flows into the library service.'*

*'It needs to have a national reach...'*

*'The existing Stevenage has to be told and the roots of the people need to go back into the old town... we should not forget the origins of Stevenage.'*

*'If it doesn't tell the story of old Stevenage from Neolithic times then it is criminal; it is all context.'*

*'The history of Stevenage should be the starting point, and the new town next but then heavily contextualising that to look at the bigger picture.'*

*'Instead of being a national, which is a red flag for me, we could become a centre for the study of New Towns. Basically, I want us to become bigger than we currently are but we have to be realistic.'*

*'My ambition is that there would be a museum of New Towns that would be an international destination.'*

All the focus groups agreed that the museum should not be entirely made up of **temporary exhibitions**. Instead, there should be **permanent displays** that tell the story of Stevenage and the New Towns with additional temporary exhibition spaces that have touring and community developed exhibitions.

*'I like the idea of temporary exhibitions and I have been to St Albans, and I don't think it is a success and they have three times the staff that we have... instead our spaces need to be flexible and adaptable.'*

*'You need some items that are on permanent display ... that are like your favourite slippers.'*

*'We have to work well with our space, team and funding and having a temporary exhibition based museum really doesn't make sense.'*

*'The temporary exhibition gives you scope for the innovation.'*

*'Some exhibitions that are touring have a real wow factor. We currently can't host larger touring exhibitions, but it definitely would be an aspiration for us.'*

*'We need a strong permanent space but would be good to have a big space for temporary exhibitions that could last four or five months and also a smaller space that is used with communities.'*

*'My instinct is that the temporary exhibitions should be free because otherwise we would have to staff it and also it would exclude some people.'*

*'If there are high profile temporary exhibitions there will need to be secure storage and also appropriate goods lift to get them to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.'*

*'There should be a space where you can sit and have a cup of tea and not look at an exhibition space.'*

One of the groups felt that there should be an emphasis on **history**, whereas the other two felt that **life today** was the best way to engage audiences in the history of Stevenage. On further discussions all groups felt that the emphasis and focus on the museum should be on post 1950s history. In one of the groups, it was discussed that using the archaeology of the new town could be a way of telling the story of the old town.

*'It needs to resonate with people ... the more it is up to date the more people will be able to relate to the history.'*

*'Most people who live in Stevenage don't care about the new town identity... I think the youngsters don't think about the pioneering spirit, it is beginning to be a distant past.'*

*'To have a community group using it today it must be relevant to their lives.'*

*'As a new resident I am personally fascinated by Stevenage's 20th century history.'*

*'Reminiscing and nostalgia are important.'*

*'If you don't understand the past, how will you understand the present?'*

*'We don't need much on Roman and Anglo Saxon era as they are not Stevenage.'*

*'Use the new town to tell the story of the old town through the archaeology.'*

*'It is easier to engage with people with growing up in Stevenage in the 1970s than farming in the 1760s or Neolithic pot fragments.'*

*'If you focus on the past, it excludes a lot of people who won't see themselves in that past. They won't see themselves in that history.'*

*'We are all immigrants, everyone who came to the new town, has moved from across the UK, and far far further.'*

*'You have to be really careful that it doesn't become too stale and turn it into a museum that only academics come to.'*

The balance of understanding the history of the **manmade structures** and the **natural environment** was felt to be one that the museum could address. It was felt that the green spaces in Stevenage were as important as the buildings and the museum's role could be to get people to value the green spaces.

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*'Over Covid it has proven that nature and environment is really important, and it is important that the museum reflects that.'*

*'The ethos of the new town was about healthy living, allotments and things like that and that needs to be included in the displays.'*

*'One of the problems we have with the town is that people associate New Towns with concrete buildings.'*

*'It doesn't matter whether it is the man made buildings or the natural environment – it is the people and their stories that will bring anything we put in the museum alive.'*

When asked if the museum should be **delivering to people**, through talks and exhibitions or **working with people**, to develop projects and co-create exhibitions, there was significant interest in working with people, but it was also acknowledged that some people prefer to simply access information. Therefore, the museum must continue its work with the community whilst also delivering information for those people that do not want to be so deeply engaged with the museum. As a result, there will need to be a mixture of project and co-creation work and also exhibitions and events that people can just drop into.

*'You have to do both to be inclusive for everybody.'*

*'It is all about developing the key relationships with people ... you need to be focussed on a modern way of work... people feel more connected if they are engaged.'*

*'Working with people is resource heavy.'*

*'We need a range of offer according to the different audiences we want to work with and attract.'*

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All the groups felt that the **objects** are in the museum as a tool for **telling stories**, they are not there to be admired as objects of beauty (apart from the motorbike!) but are generally seen as a way of getting people to understand the stories of people and place.

*'They go hand in hand... display objects in a way that tells stories.'*

*'You need to know the stories to understand the object.'*

*'It is the context and the people that makes the museum.'*

*'You tell the story of the displayed objects.'*

*'That is something we do well now – you can physically interact with our objects, you can play in the 1950s kitchen and pull down the pans.'*

The overwhelming consensus was that the Stevenage Museum of the future needed to continue the work they have been doing by being a **community asset**. rather than a place for telling the **civic story**. This is key to how the museum needs to be developed and delivered in the future as it is about developing and delivering the museum for and with the local communities.

*'It needs to be civic funded, for the community.'*

*'That is the advantage – you can complain about the boiler and find out your history at the same time!'*

*'That is the way the majority of our staff think – they are providing a service to the people of Stevenage. It is a facility for the people.'*

*'Stevenage's moto is 'The heart of a town lies in its people' and the museum needs to be showing this.'*

There was a unanimous agreement that the museum needs **paid staff** to make and manage the museum a professional, high quality organisation, but **volunteers** are essential to the delivery of the service. There is a need for a Friends of Stevenage Museum to support the museum, staff and recruit volunteers.

*'Paid staff are there to do the core stuff that opens the museum, and the volunteers are here to do the nice extras... the volunteers should not have to do the things that aren't nice. They are like your best visitors – they are so committed.'*

*'But we need more staffing resource than we have now.'*

*'You need a good solid core [of paid staff] ... if you are too volunteer based the organisation can fall over very quickly.'*

*'You need to be careful not to devalue the paid staff. We need as many paid staff as possible.'*

*'You need the paid staff, but you also need the volunteers as the backup.'*

*'Volunteers need to be supported well.'*

*'Volunteering offers opportunities for young people ... you have to have experience.'*

*'Volunteers can't be relied on. They have other lives. They are also wanting to move on and go on holiday!'*

*'What is important is not if the museum needs the volunteers, but if the volunteers need the museum. They should not rely on the volunteers labour to open.'*

*'There needs to be a History Society to support the museum.'*

### 2.2.7. Potential ways of working together

The participants were asked how they and their organisations might be interested in working with the new museum.

There is significant belief across all the focus groups that the new Hub building could have a significant impact on Stevenage if the occupants of the building and the wider community of organisations work closely together.

*'The strength of the library and museum is they cut across services. With the new Hub there is a real opportunity to do something that is at the forefront of thinking within the cultural sector of working with health partners, MIND, Age Concern – to be able to work with these audiences by collaborating with them is a real opportunity.'*

*'We know there are not loads of resources to go round but we can collaborate so well. We can be a model of best practice and that is really exciting.'*

The Hertfordshire Archives is the official legal depository for the New Town records, and hold the records of the building of Stevenage, Hemel and Harlow. They are very interested in working closely with the museum to tell these stories and also helping with physically moving the museum and the associated archives, as well as digitising the records. Further discussions are needed with the archives staff about how they can work with the museum.

When projects have been developed that work across organisations in and around Stevenage it is acknowledged that the impact can be far larger than the sum of their parts, such as the previous World War I project and suffragette project. As a result, Stevenage Library and Knebworth House are very interested in working more closely with the museum in the future to develop partnership projects.

MIND would like to continue working with the museum because:

*'...we now know how important creativity is to people's mental health, and how it can support their recovery. ... if we get the resources, we would definitely be up for working with the museum.'*

Junction 7 Creative are very interested in working more closely with the museum:

*'A permanent space with the museum would be great. We are creative producers; we are very nimble and new but the way we are working is co-creation that is absolutely embedded in the community and the town centre. ... joining forces [with the museum] we have an amazing potential that joins up as many people as possible, combining heritage learning with creative expression.'*

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There was discussion that there would be a Creator Space, that includes 3D printers, digital cutters etc, similar to the one in [St Albans Library](#) in the new Stevenage Library. This could be utilised by the museum and Junction 7 Creative:

*'We will definitely have a Creators Space, as Stevenage is one of the big five libraries in Hertfordshire, and we have been wanting to redevelop for many many years and they will definitely want to make a splash with it.'*

There is scope to explore relationships with BeMe Stevenage, the University of Hertfordshire and local artists who attended the focus groups. Partnerships also need to be developed with local companies that can result in exhibitions, events and projects that can explore Stevenage as a science hub and also address climate change and sustainability.

There were discussions that community groups and community leaders need to be paid for their time and expertise, if they are helping to develop the museum in the future:

*'People cannot be expected to always give their time for free.'*

There is a need for a Library of Things where people/ community based organisations can borrow resources:

*'...wouldn't it be wonderful if there was somewhere where you could access to a kiln, a stage etc that people could borrow.'*

### 2.2.8. Physical infrastructure

There is overwhelming consensus that the museum really needs to be on the ground floor to entice people into the building.

*'At Harlow the museum and gallery is on top of the council offices, you go in and there is really horrible municipal welcome where someone is complaining about their neighbours guttering. The fun bit is upstairs, but you never get to the fun bit because of what you have to get past first.'*

*'People with dementia do not like going in lifts. It has to be as simple as possible – from the door handles, to being able to feel walls. There are probably similarities with other people with disabilities... a ramp between floors would be the solution.'*

*'As long as it is accessible, and can't be difficult to manage, it does not matter if it is on the first floor as well.'*

However, there is an issue with accessibility if there is some of the museum on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, as not everyone likes using lifts.

*'There is also a psychological barrier about going upstairs'*

There were discussions about how the building needs to spill out into a safe green space around the museum that can be used for education and entertainment. This space could be in the square, an atrium, internal courtyard or it on the roof of the building:

*'You need an outdoor space that you have control over, you can ticket.'*

There were discussions that:

- there should also be a contemporary art gallery in the building;
- there does need to be a museum store on site;
- a large lift is needed for the moving objects about;
- the museum needs to be designed with flexible spaces so it can be used in different ways – so there can be live music played in the galleries, or theatre performances around the museum;
- internal signage is going to be key to understanding how the different spaces work in the building;
- the shop needs to be easily visible and have plenty of space for selling books.

The Hub was seen as a space to inspire people's creativity, both through its design and also by having spaces within it that encourage creativity.

*'The building needs to be aspirational for children.'*

*'It would be good to have a space where people can have a creative response to what they have seen.'*

Outreach to schools, care homes and businesses will still be needed for people who cannot come to the museum.

### 2.2.9. The most important elements to take forward

All the groups were asked what the most important element of the discussions were that needed to be taken forward. All of the groups felt the most important aspect of the current and the future

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Stevenage Museum is that it is and should be a community asset that needs to be based on the ground floor of the building with additional staff and resources telling the story of Stevenage contextualised by the story of New Towns.

### 3. Implications

From the consultation outlined above the following implications need to be considered for the development of the new Stevenage Museum.

#### 3.1 Building

- There needs to be a museum store onsite that meets [Arts Council Museum Accreditation Standards](#), as well as a larger off site store.
- There needs to be a space for people to do their own research – this will need to be a secure space where documents and objects can be examined.
- There is a need to continue digitising the collections, this will have implications for space and the museum store.
- A green/ outside space is needed for events to be run. This could be in the square outside the museum, an atrium, internal courtyards or it could utilise the roof of the building.
- Ideally the museum would need to accommodate up to 90 school children in one visit in both the museum and the education space.
- There needs to be a space to show films with high quality sound.
- It will be important that the building has the most modern IT infrastructure possible.
- There needs to be a shop that has a reasonable budget for the purchase of goods and books and is designed and delivered so that it will attract visitors.
- The temporary exhibition space could be on the first floor if it has good access, but this space will need to meet Museum Accreditation standards in terms of security and environmental conditions to also enable the Government Indemnity Scheme to be used for the insurance. If the exhibitions are paid for, the space will also need a welcome desk and will need to be staffed.
- If the museum is based over two floors, there will need to be an appropriate goods lift that can carry large items to the first floor.
- The museum will need to be open at least one evening a week with regular events programmed.
- There has to be a Changing Places toilet onsite.

In addition, the following ideas need to be considered:

- having a contemporary art gallery in the building to complement the museum;
- having a ramp that can be used to access the different floors, so that stairs and lifts are not needed;
- having a [Library of Things](#);
- having a space for Junction 7 Creatives in the building.

#### 3.2 Museum content

- The museum must be free and continue the tradition of welcoming all.
- The museum must continue being about, for and with the local community. It may be useful for the museum to join the [Of/By/For all network](#).
- The museum needs to have permanent displays that tell the story of Stevenage contextualised within the New Town's movement.
- The museum displays need to be representative of the local community that live in Stevenage today. People need to come into the museum and see representations of people and places that they can relate to, whether they have lived in the town for generations or only recently moved there.

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- Although there is a need for a chronological understanding of the history of Stevenage, this could be done through the lens of the New Town and seeing the history of the town through archaeology rather than an incremental time line.
- There needs to be a lot of physical interactivity in the museum but people can delve deeper into the stories by using additional information accessible on their own mobile phones.
- The museum displays need to include interactivity with the objects.
- The museum needs to be easy to navigate with high quality internal signage as well as carefully designed storylines.
- There needs to be a space in the museum where people can stop and reflect and connect to each other. (Possibly similar to the [Wellcome Reading Room](#))
- The displays and information about the New Towns movement could be a space that combines the library, archive and museum, and could link into the space for reflection and connection.
- The museum needs to have two temporary exhibition spaces – one for touring or locally produced or high profile temporary exhibitions and one for exhibitions developed specifically with the local communities. (Possibly similar to [Hackney Museum's](#) temporary exhibitions spaces)
- There is interest in high quality temporary exhibitions that would be in the space for four to five months. There are implications of this around security and if they are paid for, how the reception desk will be managed. Therefore if there is a temporary exhibition space it needs to meet national [Accreditation standards](#) and therefore the [Government Indemnity Scheme](#) for the insurance.
- There needs to be plenty of spaces for people to sit and relax without having to feel that they have to spend money.
- The emphasis on the history of Stevenage means realistically that the museum will not have a target audience of people across the UK, it is more likely to be people within a one hour travel time of the museum or with a specialist interest in New Towns or the local history, such as the Vincent Motorbikes.

### 3.3 Programming

- The museum needs to continue and grow the current co-creation programme of working with the local communities to understand and tell the stories of Stevenage.
- To attract young professionals and 30 – 49 year olds workers without children an evening events programme will be needed.
- Programmes need to be developed targeting people without qualifications.
- Programming is needed to target those that have an interest in local history but don't feel that the museum is a place for them.
- There is a lot of interest in the museum working with other cultural venues in the local area to create projects on a single theme.
- There are plans for a [Creator Space](#) in the library that the museum needs to negotiate access to so that they can deliver programmes that include high quality making.

### 3.4 Staff, volunteering and resources

- The current staff and resources are not enough to deliver the current museum; they will both need to grow to deliver the new museum.
- If there is an increase in opening hours and associated events there will need to be an increase in staff accordingly.

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- The current volunteers are highly valued and feel integral part of the museum and will be needed in the delivery of the new museum.
- There needs to be a Friends of Stevenage Museum that can access additional funding for the museum and also develop and support new and varied volunteers.
- A Community Steering Group could be established that supports the museum staff and helps to prioritise the future museum.

### 3.5 Promotion and publicity

- A budget is needed to develop a strong brand for Stevenage Museum and to ensure effective marketing to all the target audiences, including those that will travel up to one hour to visit the museum.
- Training and support is needed in delivering high quality social media and marketing.
- The museum needs to link into the coach tour companies that are currently visiting Stevenage to ensure that the museum is one of the key places they will visit on a tour of Stevenage.

## 4. Next steps

Further to the consultation there are deeper conversations and consultations needed:

- A workshop with the museum staff to work out exactly who the target audiences are for the new museum and starting points for working out the implications for the museum.
- Consultation with community groups that are not currently using the museum
- Consultation with young people
- Consultation with non-users
- Consultation with people of black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage (this should be cut across the consultations above).
- Consultation with people living with physical and mental ill health.
- Creation of Community Steering Group for the museum, where people are paid for their time.
- Deeper conversations and partnership agreements need to be drawn up with Hertfordshire Archives and Stevenage Library.
- Consultation with all the potential organisations to be housed in the Hub to see how the organisations can be working together for the future and how this could impact the design of the building.

### 3. Appendix A: Attendees

Alan Ford; Volunteer  
Alina Congreve; Trustee at the Harlow Arts Trust  
Anji Archer; Artist  
Brian Piggott  
Christina Anderson; Early Years teacher and SLICE in local platinum Artsmark  
Craig Maret; Local film maker  
David Martin  
Diane Wenham; Wellbeing Services Manager & Stevenage Helps Team Manager  
Dora Housham; Senior Museum Assistant  
Gary Moyle; Archivist, Herts Archives and Local Studies  
Gerry Strohm; Junction 7 Creatives  
Getrude Acheampong; BeMe Stevenage/ Black Women in Business Awards (BWB)  
Hilary Spiers; Chair of Stevenage Arts Guild  
Hugh Madgin; Local historian  
Jackie Burton; Volunteer  
Jill Wadsworth; Senior Museum Assistant  
John Gardner  
John Prebble; Director, Junction 7 Creatives  
Jo Ward; Museum Manager  
Judy Kinnear  
Kate Johnston; Learning Officer, Stevenage Museum  
Kath Pope; Museum volunteer  
Kevin Johnston  
Lisle Weekes; Ex-volunteer and trainee secondary school teacher  
Martha Lytton Cobbolt; Managing Director, Lytton Enterprises Ltd./Knebworth Estates  
Melissa; Volunteer  
Michelle Lloyd; Stevenage Library  
Nick Mallinger; Cultural Development Officer, Stevenage Borough Council (SBC)  
Pam Pellen; recently retired from being head of Drama and Senior Leader in Cultural Education (SLICE) at Barnwell School  
Pauline Maryan; Volunteer  
Richard Henry  
Sam Daisley; Casual Senior Museum Assistant  
Sharn Tomlinson; CEO, MIND in mid-Herts