

Maldon Museum and Potential Arts & Culture Centre

Public Engagement Survey – Interim Report

Date: June 2026

Status: Interim Report (final report to be published post 26 June 2026)

Executive Summary

This interim report presents findings from public engagement on the future of Maldon Museum and the potential development of an Arts & Culture Centre. A total of 396 responses were received, providing a strong evidence base to inform early thinking.

Overall, the results indicate broad support for taking action, alongside mixed and conditional views on the scale and type of development.

A clear majority (96%) favour some form of intervention, whether through repairs to the existing museum, development of an Arts & Culture Centre, or a smaller-scale solution. Only a small minority (4%) support doing nothing, demonstrating a shared recognition that the current position is not sustainable in the long term.

The survey shows a broad but not definitive level of support for an Arts & Culture Centre. Approximately 49% of respondents support the proposal, while 30% oppose it and 21% remain unsure. In addition, the most commonly selected single option (35%) is to explore an Arts & Culture Centre, although a comparable proportion (32%) prioritise investment in the existing museum. This indicates that public opinion is finely balanced between enhancement and expansion.

Levels of concern about the future of Maldon Museum are high, with 77% of respondents expressing concern about potential closure if no action is taken. This concern underpins the overall support for intervention and highlights the importance of securing the museum's long-term future.

Feedback also demonstrates that support for any new development is conditional on key factors, particularly:

- Clear evidence of community benefit
- Transparent information on capital and ongoing costs
- Assurance that proposals are appropriate in scale and sensitive to the Promenade Park setting

Qualitative responses reinforce these findings. There is strong attachment to the existing museum and its heritage value, alongside interest in expanding cultural and community use. However, there are also consistent concerns regarding value for

money, potential over-development, and the need to balance new provision with existing assets and wider community priorities.

In summary, the survey indicates:

- A clear mandate to take action to secure the future of Maldon Museum
- Balanced views on how this should be delivered, with support for both enhancement of the existing museum and exploration of a wider cultural facility
- Conditional support for an Arts & Culture Centre, dependent on further detail and reassurance

These findings provide a sound basis for progressing to the next stage of options development, with a focus on refining proposals, addressing key concerns, and maintaining transparent ongoing engagement with the community.

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this interim report is to:

- Present headline findings from the public survey
- Identify key themes and priorities
- Inform the next stage of feasibility and options development
- Provide direction for further engagement and decision-making

This is not a final options appraisal.

2. Engagement Overview

Table 1: Engagement Summary

Item	Detail
Engagement method	Online public survey
Number of responses	396
Target audience	Residents, visitors, museum users, wider community
Engagement status	Closed / analysis ongoing

3. Headline Findings

3.1 Appetite for Action

Table 2: Preferred Overall Direction

Option	% of respondents
Explore an Arts & Culture Centre	35%
Repair and invest in existing museum	32%
Smaller-scale intervention	23%
Do nothing	4%

3.2 Concern About Potential Closure of Maldon Museum

Table 3: Level of Concern if No Action is Taken

Level of concern	% of respondents
Very or somewhat concerned	77%
Not very concerned	15%
Not at all concerned	8%
Total	100%

4. Views on an Arts & Culture Centre

4.1 Overall Support

Table 4: Support for an Arts & Culture Centre

Response	%
Support	49%
Oppose	30%
Unsure	21%

4.2 Key Concerns Raised

Table 5: Main Concerns

Concern	%
Cost / value for money	33%
Impact on Promenade Park	20%
Lack of sufficient information	19%

4.3 What Would Increase Confidence

Table 6: Factors That Would Increase Confidence

Factor	%
Clearer community benefits	41%
More information on costs and funding	33%
Clearer delivery timescales	Lower proportion

5. Community Priorities if Proposals Progress

Table 7: Priority Areas

Priority	Relative strength
Repairs to keep the museum open and usable	Highest
Events, talks, workshops, education	High
Flexible community space	Medium
Gallery / exhibition space	Medium

6. Qualitative Feedback – Key Themes

6.1 Areas of Support

- Value of the existing museum: Many respondents expressed a strong appreciation for Maldon Museum, including its heritage value, character, and role in preserving local history.
- Support for maintenance and improvement: There is broad support for improving the current offer, including repairs, better accessibility, improved interpretation, and enhanced visitor facilities.
- Interest in wider cultural activity: Respondents showed interest in increased provision of events, workshops, education programmes, and opportunities for community participation.
- Community use and inclusion: There is support for spaces that can be used by local groups, schools, and artists, with an emphasis on inclusivity and year-round engagement.

6.2 Areas of Concern

- Cost and affordability: A recurring theme is concern about capital costs, long-term financial sustainability, and value for money.
- Impact on Promenade Park: Respondents highlighted potential impacts on the park environment, including green space, views, parking, and the overall character of the area.
- Scale and appropriateness of development: Some respondents expressed caution about the scale or type of any new development and the need for it to be proportionate and well-designed.
- Prioritisation of existing assets: There is a consistent view that the existing museum should be protected and improved before considering significant expansion or new facilities.
- Information and clarity: Several responses indicate that further detail is needed on proposals, particularly in relation to benefits, costs, and delivery approach.

7. Interim Conclusions

Based on the survey evidence to date, the following interim conclusions can be drawn:

- There is a clear and widely shared view that action is required to secure the future of Maldon Museum. Support for maintaining the current position without change is very limited.
- Public opinion on the preferred form of intervention is mixed. Responses are broadly divided between prioritising investment in the existing museum,

APPENDIX 2

A11 – Public Engagement Exercise

exploring a potential Arts & Culture Centre, and supporting smaller-scale or phased approaches.

- There is moderate support for the concept of an Arts & Culture Centre, but this is not conclusive. A substantial proportion of respondents either oppose the idea or remain undecided, indicating that views are still forming.
- Concern about the potential closure of the museum is high, and this concern is a key factor influencing support for taking action.
- Across all response groups, there is a consistent expectation that the existing museum should be protected and improved as a priority, regardless of any wider development proposals.
- Views on future development are conditional rather than fixed. Key factors influencing support include:
 - Clarity on costs and funding
 - Evidence of community benefit
 - Assurance regarding scale, design, and impact on Promenade Park
- Qualitative responses reflect both support for enhancing cultural provision and caution about financial, environmental, and strategic implications, as well as the need to balance competing priorities.

In summary, the findings indicate a clear mandate to address the future of Maldon Museum, but no single preferred solution has emerged. Further development of options, supported by detailed information and ongoing engagement, will be necessary to build consensus and inform decision-making.