



'Roehampton Restored'

Public Engagement Results

25th April 2024



Key Findings



Plans positively received

Visitors are positive about the restoration plans. The design is considered to be attractive and perceived to meet needs. Most (current visitors and prospect visitors) say they will visit the café and surrounding landscape when it opens.



A new audience

In restoring the café and area, it is likely a new audience will visit. Families in particular are encouraged by improved facilities, a safer environment and opportunities for natural play.



The need is there

Most visitors agree the current café and area at Roehampton Gate requires attention. The toilets, crowds and congestion all need addressing to improve the experience for visitors.



Congestion is a key concern

There is some concern that the area will become increasingly congested. Visitors seek reassurance that measures are in place to prevent this. The new access road, traffic calming measures, and increased seating inside help to mitigate this.



Sharing the plans for a new café and enhanced landscape at Roehampton Gate in Richmond Park.



What did we do?

Mustard were commissioned by The Royal Parks to engage with the public, to understand reactions to a new café and enhanced landscape plans at Roehampton Gate in Richmond Park.

Mustard attended **three public engagement days** within Richmond Park, two at Roehampton Gate and one at Pen Ponds, gathering feedback from visitors via **short qualitative interviews** (approx. 3 to 5 mins in length). Post-it notes were also used to record the public's thoughts and feelings on the proposed plans. In total, Mustard engaged with 61 visitors via the interviews and over 300 visitors shared their thoughts via verbal communication with the Mustard and The Royal Parks team across the sessions. The data from the engagement days has been analysed by Mustard, to form this report.



Who did we speak to?

We spoke to a range of different visitors across the three engagement days, with a mix of genders and age groups sharing their views. We also spoke to two visitors with physical disabilities.

We spoke to cyclists, runners, walkers, bird watchers, Friends of Richmond Park, Volunteer Rangers, and families with both young children and teenagers.

Most (around 2/3) lived locally to the park (based on peoples' own personal interpretation), entering on foot or bike, some had driven to the park or had cycled longer distances.

To encourage participation, we didn't ask questions that could be considered intrusive.

We therefore observed participants' demographics and asked how local they lived during the interview.

Based on observation...

Half of the sample were estimated to be over 60 years old. Approximately 30% fell into the age range of 40s/50s, while around 20% were estimated to be in their 30s.

Gender distribution was relatively balanced, with women making up just over half of the sample.





At Roehampton café...

1/3 of the visitors we spoke to were **cyclists**

1/6 were **volunteers** with the park (Friends of Richmond Park / volunteer Rangers)

1/10 were **walkers**, (predominantly dog walkers)

1/10 were **families**



At Pen Ponds...

2/3 of the visitors we spoke to were **walkers**

1/5 were **families**

1/10 were **bird watchers**



**Visitors are
largely
positive
about the
plans**

**“To have a nicer place to
come, sounds like a
great idea!”**

50s, Female

The new café looks visually appealing

Most visitors are very positive about the overall aesthetic design of the café. It was considered to be a significant improvement on the existing building.

“It looks lovely!”


40s, Female, Runner

Improvements are needed

Most visitors agree the existing café and surrounding area at Roehampton Gate needs improving.

“Something needs to happen to the area.”

40s, Female, Walker



“The current offer is lacking. It is far too small, and it takes ages to get served for a coffee. It is hard work trying to enter that car park, and the toilets are awful.”

60s, Male, Walker



**The plans
address existing
issues with the
café and area**

Visitors were delighted to hear that the existing toilets will be improved

All agree that there is a need to update the toilet facilities in the area. Some worry about walking across the often-busy car park to enter the existing toilets. Making them part of the cafe building and **accessible to all** is well-received and considered essential. Families are happy to hear there will be **changing facilities**.

"The loos are horrible!"

50s, Female, Cyclist



Visitors welcome more space and seating

With overcrowding in the existing café an issue, visitors agree there is a need for more seating both indoors and out. Cyclists, in particular, value **sheltered outside seating**, to enable them to remain close to their bikes, whilst enjoying refreshments from the café, in all weathers!

"The current set up is lacking, it's far too small."

60s, Male, Walker



Traffic calming measures are essential

Visitors express concerns about the **current congestion** at Roehampton Gate and appreciate that this has been considered in the plans. The **new access road is praised**, for helping to ease congestion and create a safer space for all visitors to the park.

"An easier way to cross the road, because we do come here very often and crossing this road here. Yeah, it's quite treacherous."

30s, Female, Family





**A positive
reaction to other
elements of the
design...**

None of the people that we spoke to mentioned that they lived at the Alton Estate. However, we did receive some positive feedback about the inclusion of the new access gate within the plans.

“I particularly like the idea of having an access gate into the estate, for local people to feel that this is our park.”

50s, Female, Walker



The opportunity for natural play was praised by parents and grandparents who visit the park with children

“The outdoor play area sounds really good.”

30s, Female, Family



Consideration given to wildlife is a positive

With **older respondents**, in particular, valuing the preservation of natural habitats and ensuring that plans don't affect the park's natural environment.

"Great if it can encourage biodiversity!"

Female, 60s, Walker

Sustainability measures were well-received

And many expected sustainability to be considered in the plans. Visitors across all demographics were particularly positive about the use of the green roof.

“It's the rule rather than the exception now”


80s, Male, Car





“I like the fact that it's going to be much greener... So, a better and more thoughtful design. A longer lasting design. I'm all for that.”

60s, Female, Cyclist



**The plans did
raise some
questions and
concerns**


Will it result in even more congestion?

This was the greatest concern expressed by existing park visitors.

There were some concerns that a new café and landscape development could attract more visitors to the area, adding to the congestion and overwhelming the café. Visitors seek reassurance that the plans will be successful in easing traffic in the area and catering to the crowds. **The traffic calming measures, and number of car parking spaces eases concerns.**

“There are enough people that tumble into the park at weekends.”

70s, Female, Car

A large, bright yellow abstract shape, resembling a stylized letter 'S' or a curved 'C', is positioned on the left side of the image. The background is a solid dark grey. The text is centered in the right half of the image.

“Is the thing going to cope with the extra people? It’s bound to attract more people than it does at the moment.”

50s, Male, Cyclist


Some Cyclists are resistant to change

They feel the current café caters to their needs, providing opportunity to get a quick coffee to enjoy outside. Whilst the additional bike parking is viewed as a positive by most, some say they would not use it and would not sit indoors for fear of bicycle theft. **Plans for covered outdoor seating go some way to mitigate this.**





**Signs that the
redevelopment
will attract a
new audience**



“Usually if we're walking, and we're going to get something to drink, we go to Pen Ponds, but it doesn't mean that if this didn't come up trumps, we wouldn't head this way.”

60s, Male, Walker

They will go out of their way to visit

While many of the park visitors were quite set in their ways in terms of how they access the park and the routes they take whilst on a visit, the promise of a new café has potential to subvert this ingrained behaviour. Those who are less likely to regularly visit Roehampton Gate, if at all, (most notably at the Pen Ponds engagement day) indicated that the restoration would encourage them to visit this area of the park and try the new café.

“I would make more of a point to walk down and take advantage and have a coffee.”

60s, Female, Walker

A place for families

The redevelopment feels like a safer, calmer place for families to socialise, eat, drink and play.

Improved toilets, increased seating and space, traffic calming measures and opportunities for natural play all appeal to families, amongst both existing visitors and those who typically visit other areas of Richmond Park.

“I’d be more inclined to take children there”

40s, Male, Father with young children

“More internal seating will completely change who you attract, because the other one has hardly any seating, and it’s easily going to encourage families a lot more. Cyclists don’t mind the outside but if you want something a bit more civilised...”

50s, Male

Any questions?

Please contact:



Tel:

+44(0)161 235 5270



Email

Hannah.crayk@mustard-research.com



Website

www.mustard-research.com



Visit

3rd Floor, 56 Princess Street
Manchester, M1 6HS, UK