

# Grays Town Centre

## Consultation with businesses and organisations based in Grays Report of Findings

March 2013



## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

### 1. Why do businesses and organisations locate in Grays?

The clear main reason for locating in Grays town centre is access to customers, with 71% of respondents identifying this as their reason for locating in Grays. Other reasons were identified with around 10% identifying town centre facilities, property prices/rental values, support services, and transport links. Respondents were also asked to identify positive reasons for locating in Grays. Access to customers was again the main positive reason. Other reasons featured more strongly with 41% of responses identifying proximity to amenities/services/other organisations and 21% of responses identify transport links.

### 2. What would Improve Grays?

A wide range of suggestions were made including;

- More police/better security/night time policing/CCTV
- Better parking/free parking/free parking for businesses/better sign posting of parking
- Better road system/improve one way system/traffic flow/deal with congestion/remove bus lanes.
- Wider range of shops and restaurants/cafes /more places to eat/more places for entertainment/big name retailers.
- Wider range of businesses/business centre/affordable business premises/attract blue chip companies
- Improve the appearance and make the town more welcoming/improve facilities such as toilets

### 3. What should the future role of Grays be?

Respondents generally see a mixed role for Grays in the future. The emphasis is on Grays being a place for entertainment, culture and socialising (60.9% of responses) and a place for markets and events (53.6% of responses). There was also strong support for convenience retail (40.6%). Developing Grays as a place for communities to meet and as a centre for business based around professional office based services and business centre floor space received lower levels of support. But the level of support for these was none the less significant with 34.8% and 23.1% of respondents support respectively in favour of these.

### 4. How good is the Grays town 'offer'?

Public transport and ease of access within the town centre are considered to be good or very good by most respondents. Opinions about car parking, and access in to the town were mixed. A large proportion of responses considered these to be poor/very poor but slightly more considered them to be good/very good (36.8% and 42% of respondents respectively).

Opinions about safety in the town were mixed but the balance of opinion (44.9% of responses) considered the town to be poor/very poor in this respect

Opinions about litter and graffiti were more mixed with similar numbers of responses rating the town as good/very good, average, and poor/very poor. However the balance of opinion (37.7% of responses) was that the town was poor/very poor.

In other respects the majority of respondents identified Grays as being average, poor or very poor. This was particularly the case for a range of issues that respondents see as the basis for the future of Grays; for example selection of shops, leisure and entertainment, cultural facilities, range of events all scored poorly in the survey.

**5. How likely are improvements to encourage people to visit Grays town centre?**

Respondents identified a wide range of potential improvements with the most popular being lower parking charges, wider range of shops, cafes and restaurants, better facilities for visitors and improvements to lighting and signage.

Grays market receives very strong support with over 80% of respondents supporting additional market days and a range of different types of market.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

The Councils Community Regeneration Strategy and Local Development Framework identify Grays as a growth hub where regeneration activity is to be focussed. A series of surveys have been completed to gather opinions about Grays Town Centre as it is now and about possible futures for the town centre and to develop an understanding of what form the regeneration focus should take.

The Council commissioned Enventure Research to carry out a series of surveys as follows;

- a) Telephone survey of residents in the 5 wards of Grays and the two wards of Chafford Hundred.
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The findings from these surveys are contained in a separate report. In total 1444 responses were received to these surveys.

The Council also carried out a questionnaire survey of businesses and organisations based in Grays. This report considers the responses to this survey.

### **Consultation Aims**

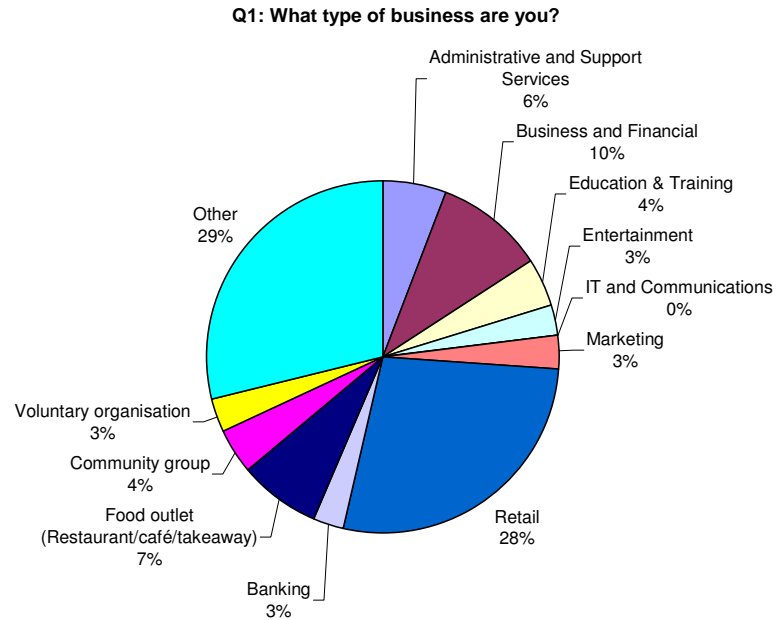
The aim of the survey of businesses and organisations was to understand why businesses and organisations have located in Grays town centre, what changes might improve Grays as a location, and what roles should be considered for Grays in the future.

### **Methodology**

270 questionnaires with pre-paid return envelopes were hand delivered to businesses and organisations in and around Grays Town Centre in February 2013. The area of distribution included High Street north and south of the rail line, New Road, Station Approach, Clarence Road, George Street, London Road, Orsett Road, Maidstone Road, Eastern Way, Hogg Lane, Derby Road, Stanley Road and immediate adjoining streets.

69 (25.5%) completed questionnaires were received. The profile at figure 1 shows a broad range of businesses and organisations responding to the survey.

Figure 1: Organisations responding to the survey



The other businesses were;

- Optometrist
- Estate and Letting agents
- St Lukes
- Charitable organisation
- Clothing alteration shop
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- Church
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### Reasons for locating in Grays

Organisations were asked why they had located in Grays. The main reason given by 49 (71%) of respondents was access to customers. About 11% of responses identified town centre facilities and property prices/rental values and 10% of responses identify access to support services and transport links. Three businesses had operated in Grays for over 100 years.

Other reasons were given for example;

- Our business is just outside the town centre, but the accessibility to banks, multi- storey car park and other prospective business which attracts customers to us as well
- Used to be a busy town back 18 years ago
- Its where I live

Organisations were also asked what the most positive aspect of Grays was for locating in the town centre. 53 responses to this question were received; some included more than 1 suggestion. These are summarised in Figure 2, access to customers, amenities, services and other organisations and transport links were the main aspects identified. 7 responses expressed the view that there were no positive reasons for locating in Grays.

Figure 2: Reasons for locating in Grays

Clients/customers/footfall	17
Close to amenities/services/other organisations or businesses	12
Transport Links/road network	11
Parking	1
Few other similar shops (competitors)	1
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Other views included;

- “In 1935, Grays was a thriving community with good shops”
- “The new university of Essex planned to open in 2014 will bring more customers to our business”
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- “Central point”

### **What would improve Grays?**

Organisations were asked to identify two things that they considered would improve Grays as a location for their type of organisation. 48 responses were received with a range of suggestions. These cover the following broad range of issues;

- More police/better security/night time policing/CCTV
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- Improve facilities and meeting places
- Reduce business rates and rents
- Relocate Friday Market
- Improve the market and provide a free bus on market days
- Need retail and leisure for young people

### **What should the future role of Grays be?**

Respondents were asked to identify future roles for Grays from a range of options, 64 responses were received to this question. The majority of responses considered that Grays should focus on providing a place for entertainment, culture and socialising (60.9%) and for markets and events (53.6%). Full summary of responses is in Figure 3;

Figure 3: Future roles for Grays

Role	No (%)
A place for entertainment, culture and socialising	42(60.9%)
A place for markets and events	37(53.6%)
A place for convenience shopping (food and household)	28(40.6%)
A place for communities and community groups to meet	24(34.8%)
A centre for business	15(23.1%)
Other	14(20.3%)

Other comments made include;

- “Lower business rates to encourage a wider mix of shops”
- “Development of the state cinema into a conference centre”
- “Look back into the past- great shops, ease of movement, nothing complicated”
- “Some substantial office development”
- “Costa Coffee, more restaurants not takeaways”
- “Later opening so Grays doesn't become a ghost town after 6pm”
- “A mix of all”
- Professional businesses, White collar businesses, Financial
- “Business centre for marketing, finance and business support. Better quality shops/restaurants”
- “People can't seem to drink in Grays without trouble over the years. No nightclub. Make the town student friendly.”

### **How good is the Grays town offer?**

Respondents were asked to rate Grays on a number of attributes. Findings are summarised in Figure 4, it should be noted that some respondents did not provide an answer to some of the categories. The highest scores in the ‘very good/good’ and the ‘poor/very poor’ categories are highlighted in red.

Figure 4 shows that the only characteristics where the town centre scores well are in relation to the quality of public transport and the ease of access around the town centre once people have arrived with 51 (73.9%) and 39 (56.5%) respondents respectively scoring these as good or very good. For all other attributes responses were mixed or judged the town centre to be poor or very poor.



Figure 4: Grays Attributes

	Very Good/Good	Average	Poor/very poor
Personal safety	14	23	31
Litter and graffiti	20	23	26
Selection of Shops	6	18	44
Selection of cafes and restaurants	22	18	28
Leisure and entertainment	3	7	56
Cultural facilities	6	17	40
Public transport	51	12	5
Car Parking	25	19	24
Ease of access in to the town centre	29	17	22
Ease of access around the town centre	39	17	12
Range of public events	3	21	43

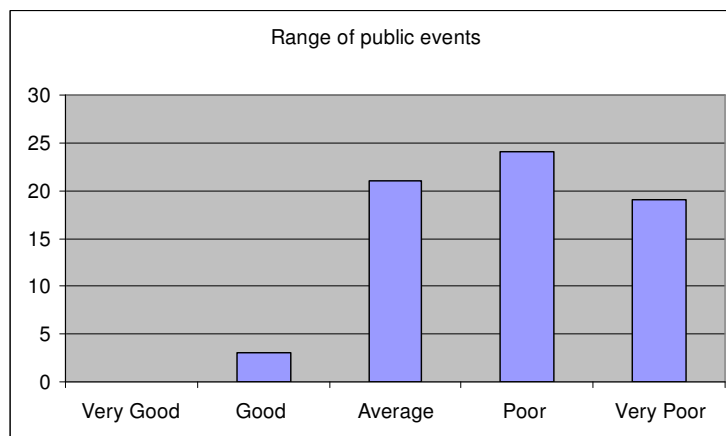
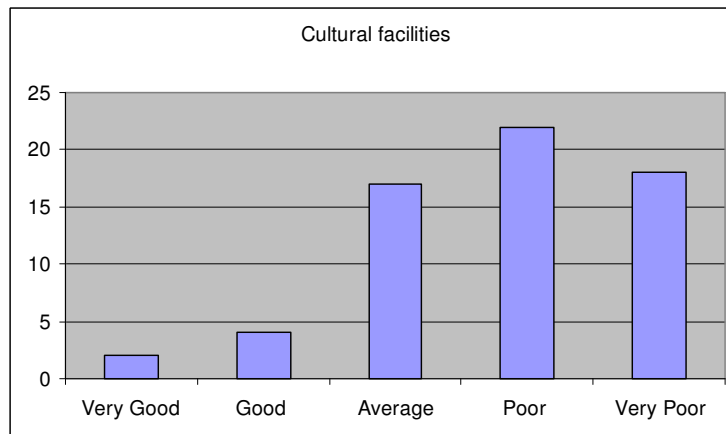
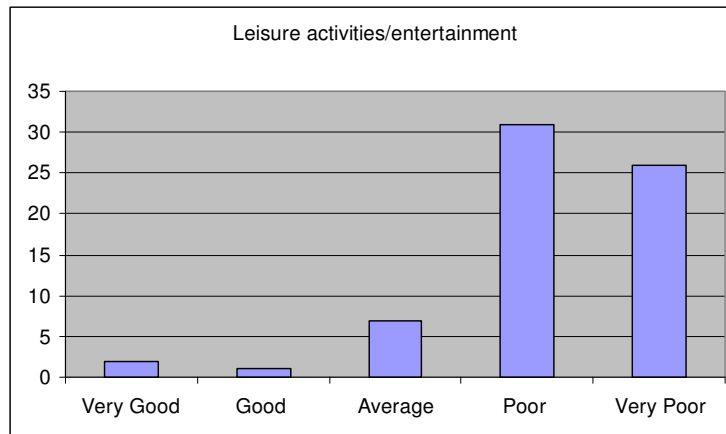
Opinions about car parking, and access in to the town were mixed. A large proportion of responses considered these to be poor/very poor but slightly more considered them to be good/very good (36.8% and 42% of respondents respectively).

Opinions about safety in the town were mixed but the clear balance of opinion (44.9% of responses) considered the town to be poor/very poor in this respect. Opinions about litter and graffiti were more mixed with similar numbers of responses rating the town as good/very good, average, and poor/very poor. However the balance of opinion (37.7% of responses) was that the town was poor/very poor.

On all other items the town centre scores poorly with high scores in the 'poor/very poor category' for leisure and entertainment 56 (81.2%), selection of shops 44 (63.8%), range of public events 43(62.3%), and cultural facilities 40 (58%). These are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Ratings for Grays facilities

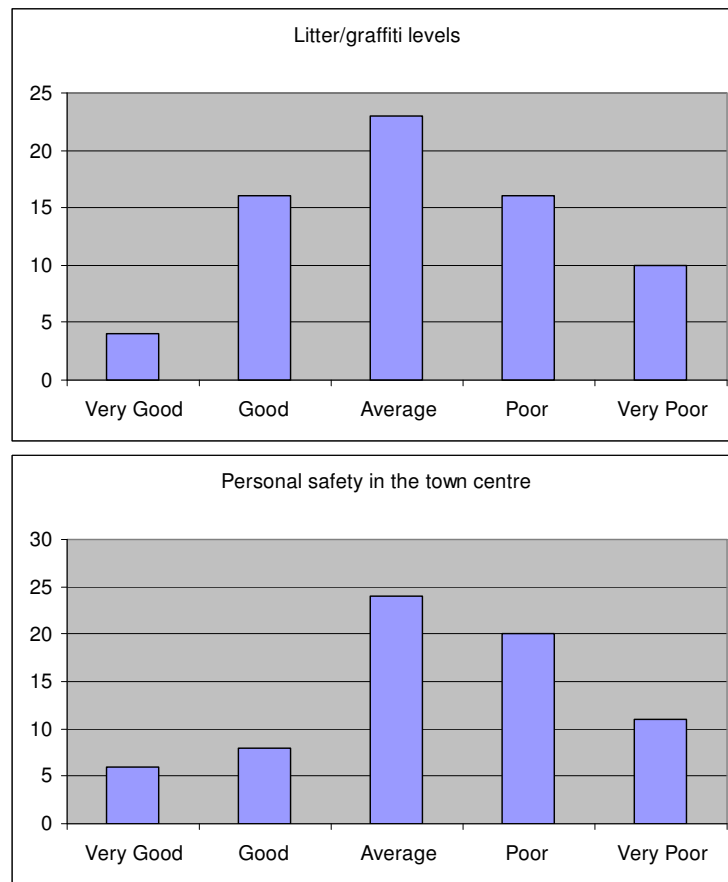




The 'preferred future roles' identified by respondents for the town centre and summarised in Figure 3 focussed on developing the town centre as 'A place for entertainment, culture and socialising' and as 'A place for markets and events'. The tables in figure 5 show that these are currently regarded as being poor.

The attractiveness of the environment of the town centre, as illustrated by responses about litter and graffiti, and about personal safety in the town centre were mixed. Many respondents judged these to be average but a significant proportion, 37.7% and 44.9% respectively judged these to be poor or very poor as illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6: Perceptions of Grays town centre



Poor scores for personal safety will reflect respondents direct experience with these issues and perceptions. Personal safety perhaps illustrates this in that crime rates in Grays are relatively low and the perception of crime can be relatively high.

**How likely are improvements to encourage people to visit the town centre?**

Organisations were asked to rate how likely it was that certain types of improvements would encourage people to visit the town centre. Findings are summarised in Figure 7. The highest scores for 'likely/very likely' and 'not likely/not at all' are highlighted in red.

Figure 7: What would encourage people to visit Grays?

	Likely/very likely	Not likely/not at all	No answer
Improved evening offer	51	14	4
Use of river-walks	51	15	3
Use of river Café/bar/restaurant	55	13	1
Lower parking charges	61	7	1
Events	52	13	3
Culture and entertainment	50	16	3

Wider range of shops	67	1	1
Open Space	40	25	4
Activities for the young	51	17	1
Facilities for community groups	46	20	3
Increased office space	39	29	1
Improved public transport	47	17	5
Better facilities for shoppers (more seats, toilets, crèche etc)	58	9	2
Improvements to street lighting/walls/street signs etc	57	9	3

All the items listed score well in the 'likely/very likely' category. Open space and increased office floorspace score relatively poorly. Use of the riverfront for cafes etc, lower parking charges, wider range of shops, better facilities for shoppers and improvements to street lighting etc all scored over 50 (77%) in the likely/very likely category. Lower parking charges and wider range of shops received the highest number of 'very likely' scores as is illustrated in Figure 8.

**Figure 8:**

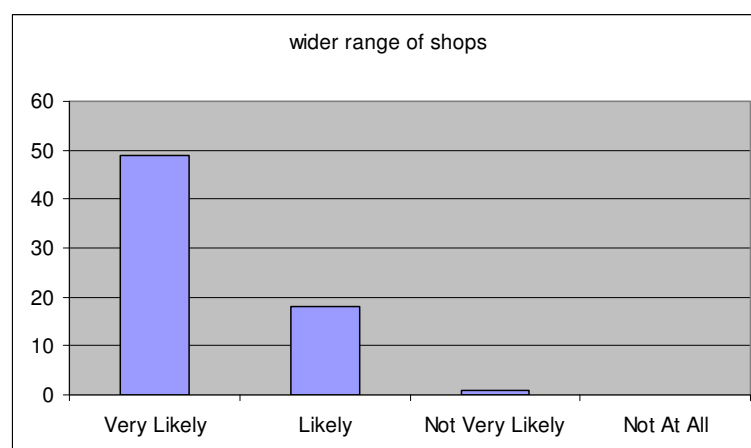
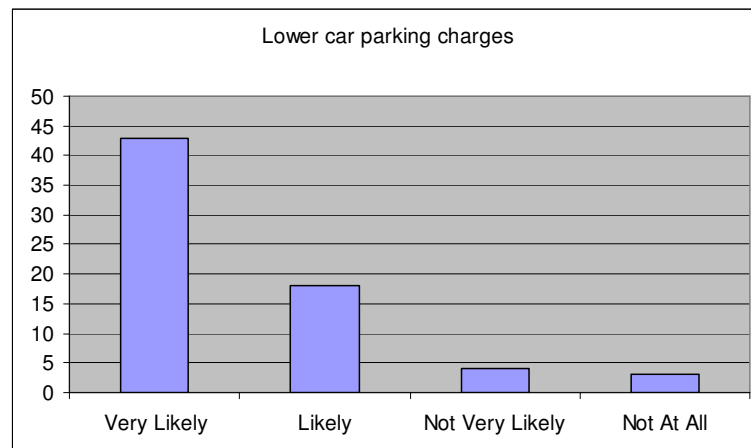
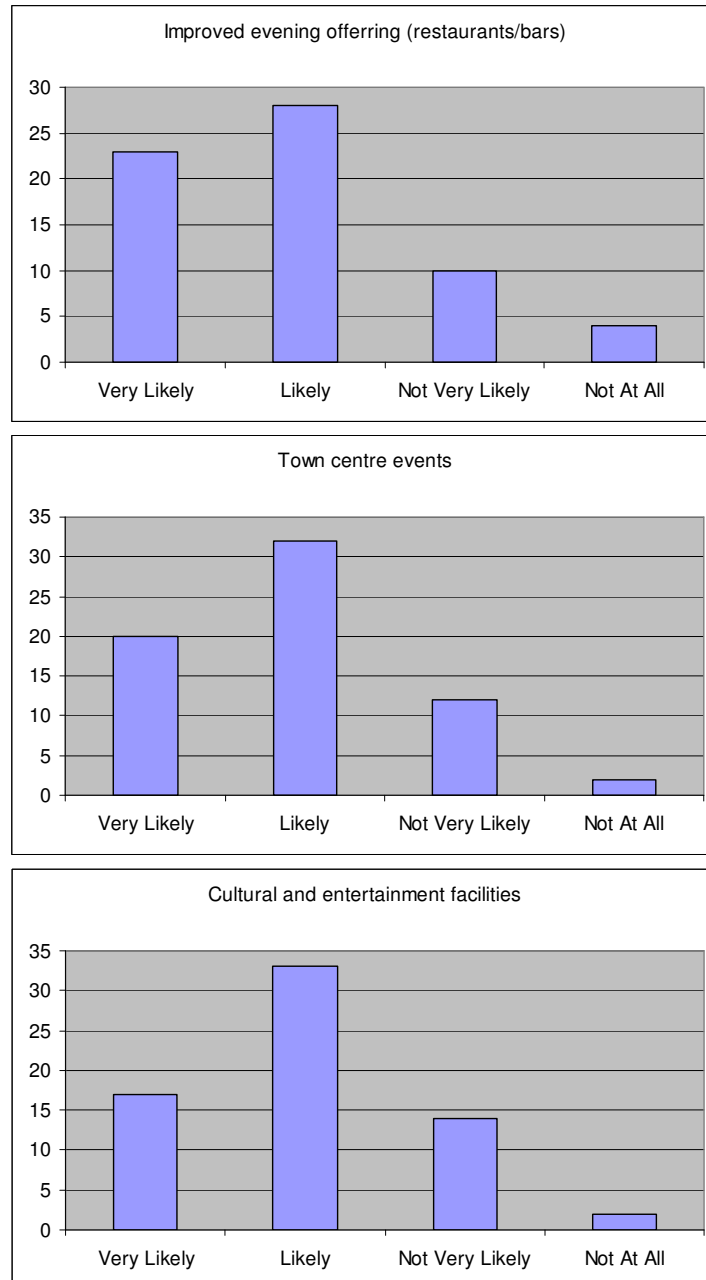


Figure 3 summarises the future roles for Grays identified by respondents as 'a place for entertainment, culture and socialising' and 'a place for markets and events'. These preferred future roles are supported by the responses summarised in Figure 9 in relation to improved evening economy, events, culture and entertainment which all have a high score for 'likely' and 'very likely to encourage more people to visit Grays'.

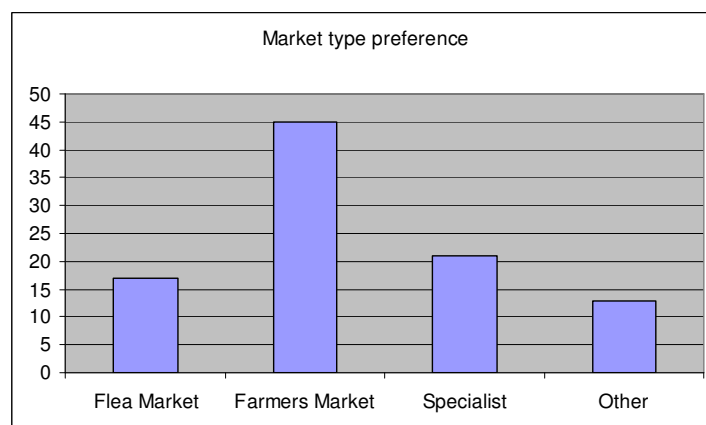
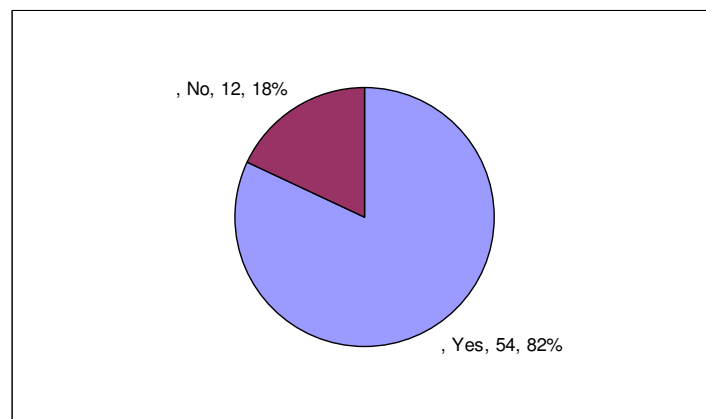
Figure 9:



## Market provision in Grays

82% of respondents support further market provision in Grays. Of those that do not support additional market days, 5 did support different types of markets. Many respondents support a wide range of types of markets as summarised in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Support for Additional Market days



Other markets suggested were antiques, Christmas, French, German, Craft, and men's clothing markets, and pop ups for small businesses

Additional comments about the market were;

- "Anything to bring people in to the town"
- "Not markets that detract from the established businesses"
- "Improved stalls"
- "Support market but not as it is now"

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

A study carried out by Roger Tyms and Partners in 2007 to inform planning policy identified the impact that Lakeside has had in Grays town centre, many will recall the closure of outlets such as Marks and Spencer

when Lakeside opened. The study also identified a continuing impact from Lakeside on Grays town centre. One consequence of this identified by that study has been that Grays has had a low representation from major High Street outlets that are typically found in other similar town centres.

Grays, in common with other town centres, has suffered from the wider economic recession. However Grays has not seen such high levels of vacancy as other town centres. In 2007 Grays had about 9% of units vacant compared to a national average of about 6%. In Grays vacancy has remained at about 9% while the national average has risen to over 14%. In part this is because national chains that had not located units in Grays have been particularly badly affected by the recession (e.g. Jessop, HMV etc). However, many have referred to the relatively poor 'offer' in Grays and this is reflected in the response to this survey.

It is important to recognise that there are positive aspects to Grays which are reflected in responses to the survey. Many respondents to the survey identify the importance of Grays as a location because it provides access to customers, a range of facilities, services, amenities and other businesses, and has good transport links. Grays Market has strong support and some businesses have indicated that they have their best day's trade on a Friday, in part as a consequence of the market.

South Essex College will be opening the Thurrock Learning Campus in 2014, which will bring 2000 students and staff in to the town, the Council intends to locate more of its staff in Grays, and in one year 2.8 million passenger movements passed through Grays Rail Station, all of which provide opportunities for the future.

However the survey clearly illustrates that there are important issues that respondents consider need to be addressed.

1. Facilities for socialising

The response to the survey indicates clear support for developing a future role based around culture, entertainment, cafes and restaurants, events and the market. With the exception of the market, the town centre scores poorly on existing facilities but there is clear support for improving what the town centre has to offer.

2. Retailing and Grays market

There is clear support for developing a wider range of retail in Grays. This would need to be considered carefully. Lakeside will continue to expand. Furthermore, despite the economic recession there are clear trends in retailing as people continue to choose to drive to large and out of town centres for much of their shopping and one of the few growth areas in retailing is in online and mobile shopping. Opportunities for expansion in retailing may therefore be limited and it would be important to ensure a sustainable approach.

The market has strong support and the majority of respondents would support more market days and a wider range of markets.

3. Grays as a meeting place for communities

The survey indicates support for developing Grays as a place for communities to meet and for community groups to meet.

4. Grays as a centre for business

A future role as a centre for business distinct from retail, restaurants etc, received the lowest level of support as a future role for Grays (23.1%). But responses to other questions in the survey indicate broader support for this role with a range of specific responses suggesting a need for pop up markets for business start ups, substantial office development, developing professional businesses, and developing further business centre spaces.

5. Access and Parking

Public transport and access within the town centre score well in the survey. Ease of access in to the town centre received a mixed response with almost as many respondents identifying this as poor/very poor as those identifying it as good/very good. Specific references were made to the need to improve traffic flows and the one way system. Parking received a similarly balanced level of response with specific comments about the need to improve accessibility and signage to parking spaces and a desire for cheap or free parking spaces.

6. Personal Safety

Views about personal safety were mixed, but there was none the less a clear majority of respondents that consider this to be poor or very poor. The scope of the survey did not enable a distinction to be made between views based on direct experience of crime and views based on perception. However for the purposes of this study the distinction is irrelevant. Both of these will influence peoples decisions about whether to visit the town centre and so this would act as a barrier to developing other aspects of the town centre 'offer' particularly those elements based around evening entertainment and socialising. These issues would therefore need to be addressed and specific suggestions were made about improving security in the town centre.

7. 'Environmental' issues

Views about litter and graffiti were mixed with more respondents expressing a view that this was poor or very poor and specific references were made about the need to improve the appearance of the town, and to make the town more welcoming and to improving facilities.



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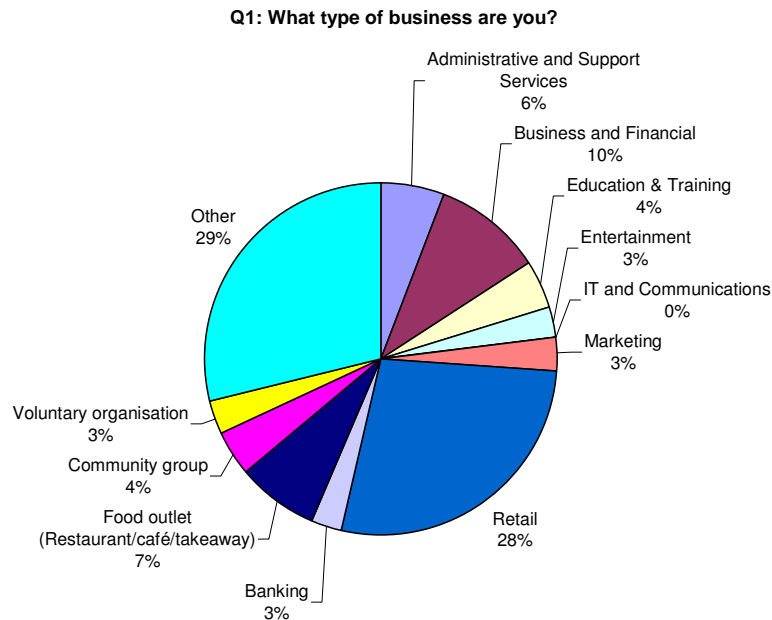
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- Need retail and leisure for young people

### **What should the future role of Grays be?**

Respondents were asked to identify future roles for Grays from a range of options, 64 responses were received to this question. The majority of responses considered that Grays should focus on providing a place for entertainment, culture and socialising (60.9%) and for markets and events (53.6%). Full summary of responses is in Figure 3;

Figure 3: Future roles for Grays

Role	No (%)
A place for entertainment, culture and socialising	42(60.9%)
A place for markets and events	37(53.6%)
A place for convenience shopping (food and household)	28(40.6%)
A place for communities and community groups to meet	24(34.8%)
A centre for business	15(23.1%)
Other	14(20.3%)

Other comments made include;

- “Lower business rates to encourage a wider mix of shops”
- “Development of the state cinema into a conference centre”
- “Look back into the past- great shops, ease of movement, nothing complicated”
- “Some substantial office development”
- “Costa Coffee, more restaurants not takeaways”
- “Later opening so Grays doesn't become a ghost town after 6pm”
- “A mix of all”
- Professional businesses, White collar businesses, Financial
- “Business centre for marketing, finance and business support. Better quality shops/restaurants”
- “People can't seem to drink in Grays without trouble over the years. No nightclub. Make the town student friendly.”

### **How good is the Grays town offer?**

Respondents were asked to rate Grays on a number of attributes. Findings are summarised in Figure 4, it should be noted that some respondents did not provide an answer to some of the categories. The highest scores in the ‘very good/good’ and the ‘poor/very poor’ categories are highlighted in red.

Figure 4 shows that the only characteristics where the town centre scores well are in relation to the quality of public transport and the ease of access around the town centre once people have arrived with 51 (73.9%) and 39 (56.5%) respondents respectively scoring these as good or very good. For all other attributes responses were mixed or judged the town centre to be poor or very poor.



Figure 4: Grays Attributes

	Very Good/Good	Average	Poor/very poor
Personal safety	14	23	31
Litter and graffiti	20	23	26
Selection of Shops	6	18	44
Selection of cafes and restaurants	22	18	28
Leisure and entertainment	3	7	56
Cultural facilities	6	17	40
Public transport	51	12	5
Car Parking	25	19	24
Ease of access in to the town centre	29	17	22
Ease of access around the town centre	39	17	12
Range of public events	3	21	43

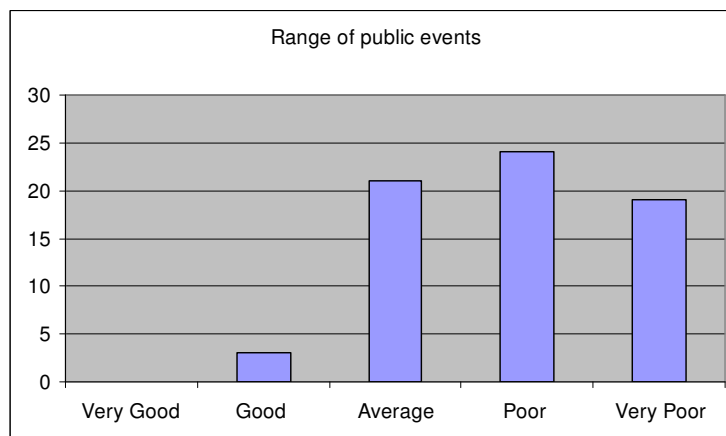
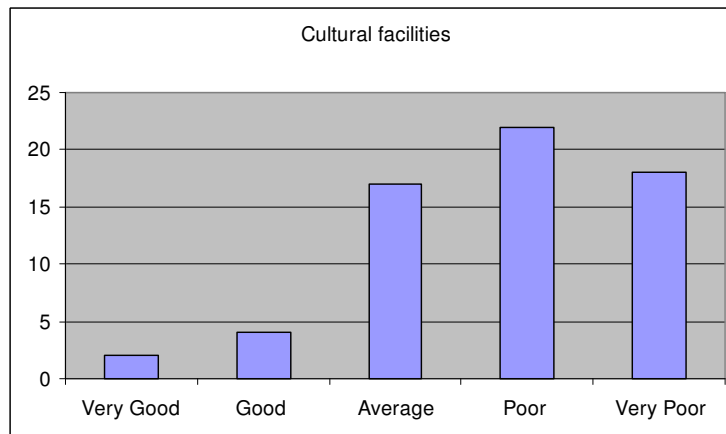
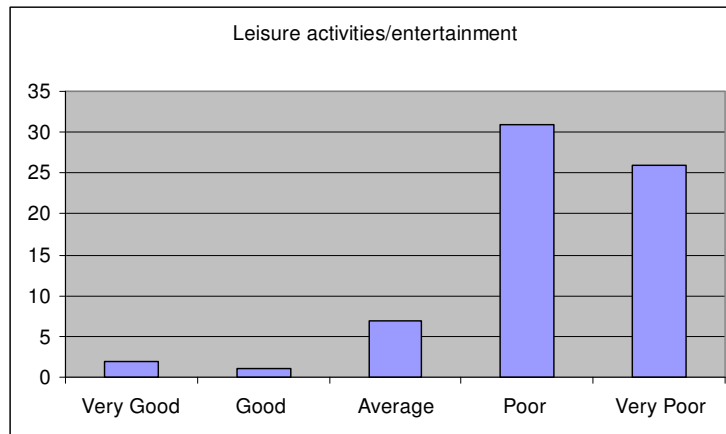
Opinions about car parking, and access in to the town were mixed. A large proportion of responses considered these to be poor/very poor but slightly more considered them to be good/very good (36.8% and 42% of respondents respectively).

Opinions about safety in the town were mixed but the clear balance of opinion (44.9% of responses) considered the town to be poor/very poor in this respect. Opinions about litter and graffiti were more mixed with similar numbers of responses rating the town as good/very good, average, and poor/very poor. However the balance of opinion (37.7% of responses) was that the town was poor/very poor.

On all other items the town centre scores poorly with high scores in the 'poor/very poor category' for leisure and entertainment 56 (81.2%), selection of shops 44 (63.8%), range of public events 43(62.3%), and cultural facilities 40 (58%). These are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Ratings for Grays facilities

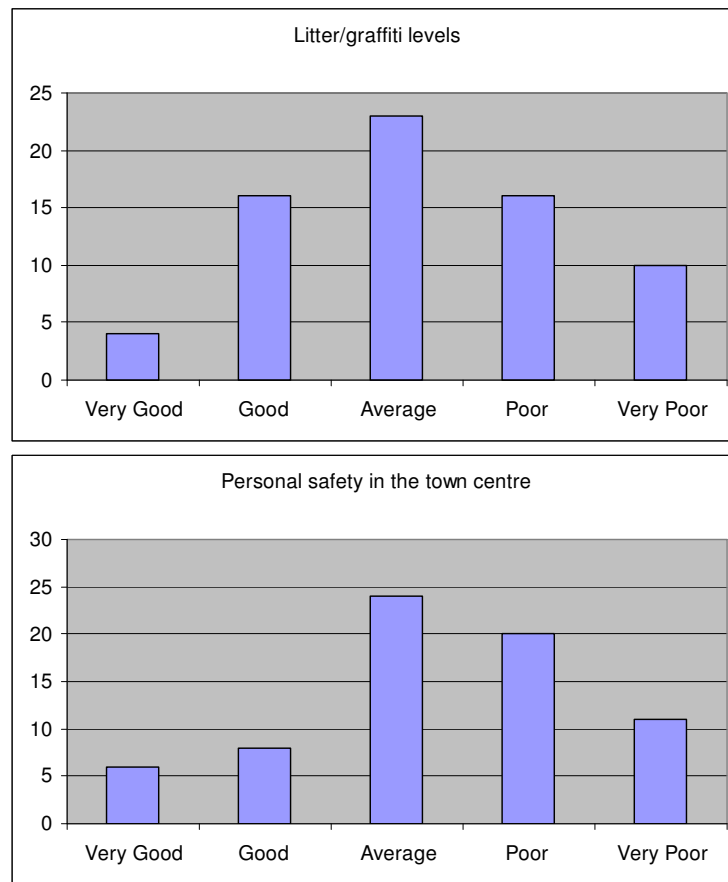




The 'preferred future roles' identified by respondents for the town centre and summarised in Figure 3 focussed on developing the town centre as 'A place for entertainment, culture and socialising' and as 'A place for markets and events'. The tables in figure 5 show that these are currently regarded as being poor.

The attractiveness of the environment of the town centre, as illustrated by responses about litter and graffiti, and about personal safety in the town centre were mixed. Many respondents judged these to be average but a significant proportion, 37.7% and 44.9% respectively judged these to be poor or very poor as illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6: Perceptions of Grays town centre



Poor scores for personal safety will reflect respondents direct experience with these issues and perceptions. Personal safety perhaps illustrates this in that crime rates in Grays are relatively low and the perception of crime can be relatively high.

**How likely are improvements to encourage people to visit the town centre?**

Organisations were asked to rate how likely it was that certain types of improvements would encourage people to visit the town centre. Findings are summarised in Figure 7. The highest scores for 'likely/very likely' and 'not likely/not at all' are highlighted in red.

Figure 7: What would encourage people to visit Grays?

	Likely/very likely	Not likely/not at all	No answer
Improved evening offer	51	14	4
Use of river-walks	51	15	3
Use of river Café/bar/restaurant	55	13	1
Lower parking charges	61	7	1
Events	52	13	3
Culture and entertainment	50	16	3

Wider range of shops	67	1	1
Open Space	40	25	4
Activities for the young	51	17	1
Facilities for community groups	46	20	3
Increased office space	39	29	1
Improved public transport	47	17	5
Better facilities for shoppers (more seats, toilets, crèche etc)	58	9	2
Improvements to street lighting/walls/street signs etc	57	9	3

All the items listed score well in the 'likely/very likely' category. Open space and increased office floorspace score relatively poorly. Use of the riverfront for cafes etc, lower parking charges, wider range of shops, better facilities for shoppers and improvements to street lighting etc all scored over 50 (77%) in the likely/very likely category. Lower parking charges and wider range of shops received the highest number of 'very likely' scores as is illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8:

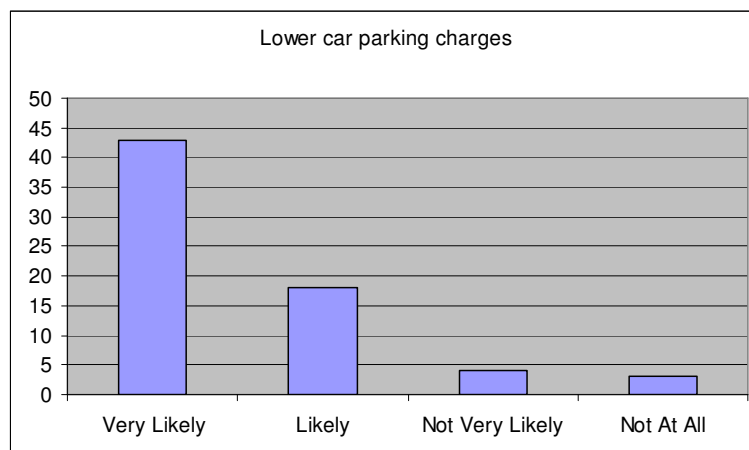
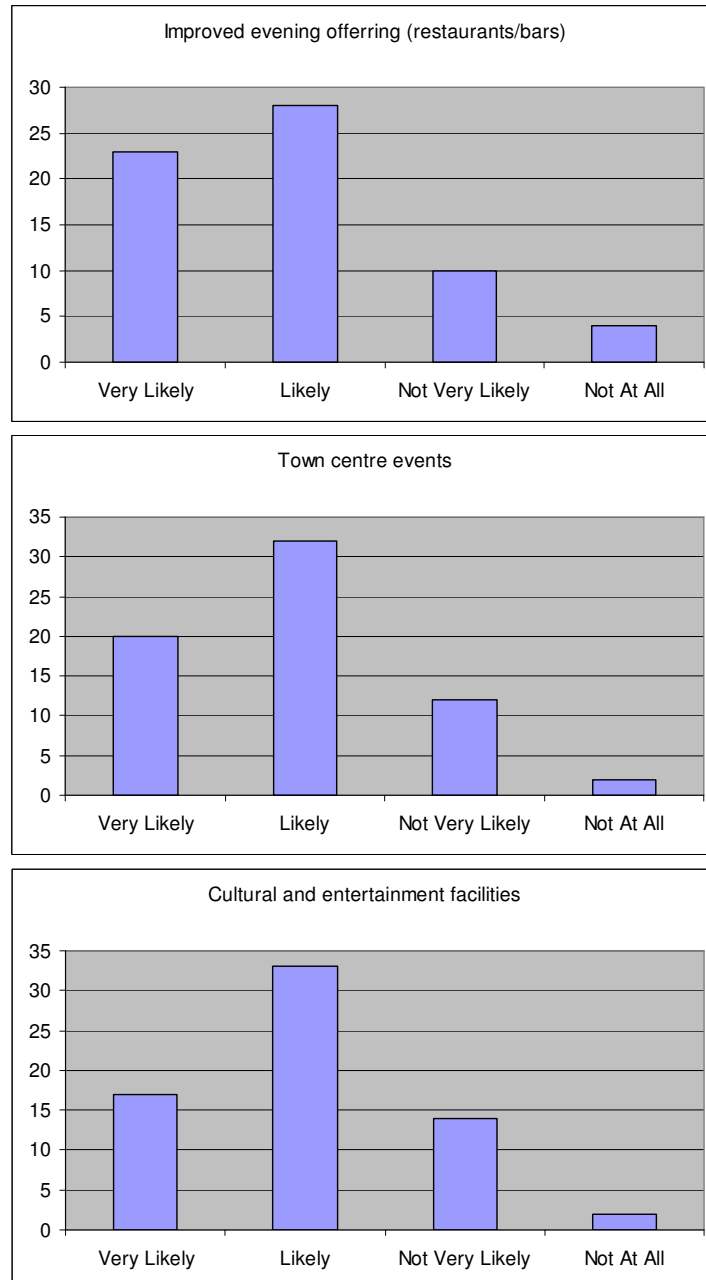


Figure 3 summarises the future roles for Grays identified by respondents as 'a place for entertainment, culture and socialising' and 'a place for markets and events'. These preferred future roles are supported by the responses summarised in Figure 9 in relation to improved evening economy, events, culture and entertainment which all have a high score for 'likely' and 'very likely to encourage more people to visit Grays'.

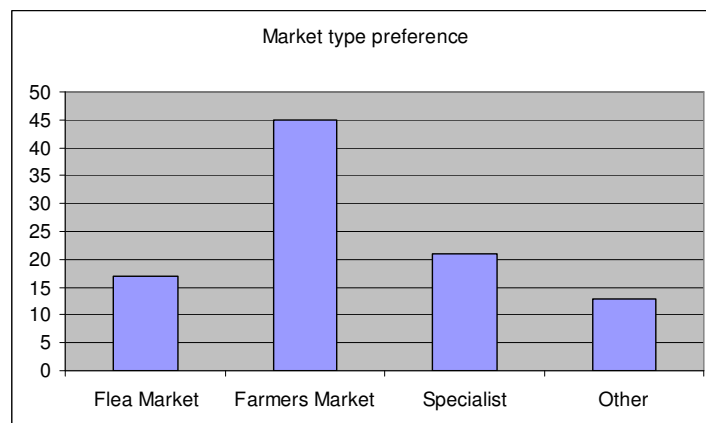
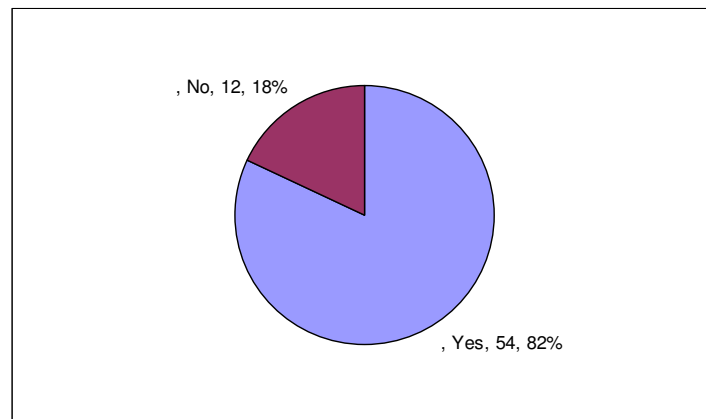
Figure 9:



## Market provision in Grays

82% of respondents support further market provision in Grays. Of those that do not support additional market days, 5 did support different types of markets. Many respondents support a wide range of types of markets as summarised in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Support for Additional Market days



Other markets suggested were antiques, Christmas, French, German, Craft, and men's clothing markets, and pop ups for small businesses

Additional comments about the market were;

- "Anything to bring people in to the town"
- "Not markets that detract from the established businesses"
- "Improved stalls"
- "Support market but not as it is now"

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

A study carried out by Roger Tyms and Partners in 2007 to inform planning policy identified the impact that Lakeside has had in Grays town centre, many will recall the closure of outlets such as Marks and Spencer

when Lakeside opened. The study also identified a continuing impact from Lakeside on Grays town centre. One consequence of this identified by that study has been that Grays has had a low representation from major High Street outlets that are typically found in other similar town centres.

Grays, in common with other town centres, has suffered from the wider economic recession. However Grays has not seen such high levels of vacancy as other town centres. In 2007 Grays had about 9% of units vacant compared to a national average of about 6%. In Grays vacancy has remained at about 9% while the national average has risen to over 14%. In part this is because national chains that had not located units in Grays have been particularly badly affected by the recession (e.g. Jessop, HMV etc). However, many have referred to the relatively poor 'offer' in Grays and this is reflected in the response to this survey.

It is important to recognise that there are positive aspects to Grays which are reflected in responses to the survey. Many respondents to the survey identify the importance of Grays as a location because it provides access to customers, a range of facilities, services, amenities and other businesses, and has good transport links. Grays Market has strong support and some businesses have indicated that they have their best day's trade on a Friday, in part as a consequence of the market.

South Essex College will be opening the Thurrock Learning Campus in 2014, which will bring 2000 students and staff in to the town, the Council intends to locate more of its staff in Grays, and in one year 2.8 million passenger movements passed through Grays Rail Station, all of which provide opportunities for the future.

However the survey clearly illustrates that there are important issues that respondents consider need to be addressed.

1. Facilities for socialising

The response to the survey indicates clear support for developing a future role based around culture, entertainment, cafes and restaurants, events and the market. With the exception of the market, the town centre scores poorly on existing facilities but there is clear support for improving what the town centre has to offer.

2. Retailing and Grays market

There is clear support for developing a wider range of retail in Grays. This would need to be considered carefully. Lakeside will continue to expand. Furthermore, despite the economic recession there are clear trends in retailing as people continue to choose to drive to large and out of town centres for much of their shopping and one of the few growth areas in retailing is in online and mobile shopping. Opportunities for expansion in retailing may therefore be limited and it would be important to ensure a sustainable approach.

The market has strong support and the majority of respondents would support more market days and a wider range of markets.

3. Grays as a meeting place for communities

The survey indicates support for developing Grays as a place for communities to meet and for community groups to meet.

4. Grays as a centre for business

A future role as a centre for business distinct from retail, restaurants etc, received the lowest level of support as a future role for Grays (23.1%). But responses to other questions in the survey indicate broader support for this role with a range of specific responses suggesting a need for pop up markets for business start ups, substantial office development, developing professional businesses, and developing further business centre spaces.

5. Access and Parking

Public transport and access within the town centre score well in the survey. Ease of access in to the town centre received a mixed response with almost as many respondents identifying this as poor/very poor as those identifying it as good/very good. Specific references were made to the need to improve traffic flows and the one way system. Parking received a similarly balanced level of response with specific comments about the need to improve accessibility and signage to parking spaces and a desire for cheap or free parking spaces.

6. Personal Safety

Views about personal safety were mixed, but there was none the less a clear majority of respondents that consider this to be poor or very poor. The scope of the survey did not enable a distinction to be made between views based on direct experience of crime and views based on perception. However for the purposes of this study the distinction is irrelevant. Both of these will influence peoples decisions about whether to visit the town centre and so this would act as a barrier to developing other aspects of the town centre 'offer' particularly those elements based around evening entertainment and socialising. These issues would therefore need to be addressed and specific suggestions were made about improving security in the town centre.

7. 'Environmental' issues

Views about litter and graffiti were mixed with more respondents expressing a view that this was poor or very poor and specific references were made about the need to improve the appearance of the town, and to make the town more welcoming and to improving facilities.