

## **A2 Opportunities Public Exhibition**

**20<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

## **Feedback Report**

**Held at Towncentric, Gravesend  
8<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2008**









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## Executive Summary

In February 2008 Jacobs undertook a series of public and stakeholder consultations. The consultations were used to exhibit a conceptual masterplan for an Outdoor Activity and Cycling Centre, which would be located on the redundant section of land left over from the relocation of the A2 between Pepperhill Junction and Marling Cross. Participants were given the opportunity to fill in a questionnaire and give their opinion on the proposed schemes.

By the end of February, 315 people had returned questionnaires and voted on the following four topics:

- Highways Agency A2 Improvement Scheme
- The proposed Outdoor Activity and Cycling Centre
- A proposed Park & Ride site at Tollgate, and
- Options relating to the proposed reopening of Downs Road

Not all respondents completed all sections of the questionnaire but of the 272 that voted concerning the Highways Agency scheme, 79% were in support. Of the 311 people that voted concerning the Outdoor Activity and Cycling Centre, 84% were in support. 277 people voted concerning the Park & Ride proposal, of which 69% were in support.

Upon further analysis of the questionnaire results, 80% of all respondents would support the Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre in some form, with 18% against such a proposal. 2% were undecided. All questionnaires included a section for respondents to add comments. The vast majority of respondents against the proposed Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre gave the following reasons for their decision:

- Fear that illegal motorcycles would use the site,
- An unmanaged site would attract criminal activity and anti-social behaviour,
- The development would occur too close to residential boundaries, and,
- This type of land use would create a pollution problem, excessive noise levels being of particular concern.

At the manned exhibition it was explained that these issues could be addressed at the detailed design stage, however, such reassurance could not be given at the unmanned events.

There were a total of 286 respondents in relation to the Downs Road issue, of which 59% of people voted in favour of closing the road to vehicular traffic and restricting it to pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. 30% of respondents wanted the road opened to vehicles but with a restriction on HGV movements. 11% wanted it fully reopened to all traffic.

The consultation process evoked a huge response from local people. Of the 311 completed questionnaires, 198 gave postal address details with 168 respondents living in the immediate vicinity (post codes DA11, DA12 and DA13) and the remaining 30 coming from Medway and southeast London.

## Introduction

In 2007, Jacobs UK Ltd was commissioned by Gravesham Borough Council to undertake a feasibility study and develop a conceptual Masterplan for an Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre on the old A2 land between Pepperhill Junction and Marling Cross.

This report briefly summarises some of the responses that have been recorded following a programme of public and stakeholder consultations.

In February 2008, Jacobs exhibited the conceptual masterplan at a number of venues across Gravesend and invited comments from local councillors, stakeholders, interest groups and the general public. The exhibition material was also made available through the Gravesham Borough Council and Green Grid websites.

The following chapter looks in detail at the material contained within the exhibition.

The main exhibition was held at Towncentric, Gravesend, between Friday 8<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2008, with staff from Jacobs and Gravesham Borough Council manning the exhibition and answering questions between Friday 8<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

Exhibition material was also displayed at two local leisure centres, Cascades and Cygnet, with questionnaires available for visitors to use to make comments about the proposed schemes. A separate event was also organised at Painters Ash School on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008. This focused more on the issues raised with the closure of Downs Road but again also included the same exhibition material present at the other venues and questionnaires were provided for comments.

Due to high amounts of public interest in the scheme, a further exhibition was held at Marling Cross Library on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Staff from Gravesham Borough Council and Planning Aid were on hand to answer questions from the public.

## Exhibition Material

The exhibition sought to inform the general public, not only of the design proposed by Jacobs but also about the existing Highways Agency scheme, a proposal for a Park & Ride facility and facilitated discussion concerning the closure of Downs Road and whether it should be reopened.

### **Board 1 - Introduction**

- Introduction to Jacobs and the commission.
- Introduction to the client group.
- Introduction to what is being consulted on.

### **Board 2 – Context**

- Introduction to the Kent Thameside Green Grid and what it hopes to achieve.
- How this project relates to other schemes in the local area.

### **Board 3 – Project Stages**

- Introduction to the planning process and how the exhibition relates to this process.

### **Board 4 – Environment**

- Explanation of the landscape, archaeological and ecological consideration prior to development.

### **Board 5 & 6 – Outdoor Activity Park**

- Explanation of the facilities that would be provided in an Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre.

### **Board 7 – Park for the Community**

- Highlighting the aim of creating a park for the general public.

### **Board 8 – Park & Ride at Tollgate**

- Introduction to where the Park & Ride could be sited and who it will service.

### **Board 9 – Downs Road**

- Introduced the options for the future of Downs Road.

### **Board 10 – What Happens Next?**

- Invited people to answer a questionnaire on which schemes they preferred and why.

### **Masterplan 1 – Jacobs Proposal for an Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre**

### **Masterplan 2 – Highways Agency Scheme**

## Results

There were in total 311 completed questionnaires from the entire consultation period. Below are some of the typical comments made, both positive and negative.

### Positive

“My whole family love cycling and it’s a great place to build a bike park.”

“In full support – maybe locals will enjoy and take pride in the area.”

“Gravesend needs more facilities for young people...”

“This is a great idea because it would benefit the local community, young, middle and old age alike...”

“Unquestionably a great sporting facility”

### Negative

“I would not support any spectator sport activities.”

“No mass spectator sports which will bring total chaos to the surrounding area.”

“...the area should be planted and landscaped to replace habitats destroyed by the rail link and road construction.”

“This would just encourage motorcycles to use it at any time, especially late at night.”

“This would only encourage more traffic in the area.”

### Key Findings

#### A2 Opportunities

- 79% of respondents supported the Highways Agency A2 Improvement Scheme.
- 69% of respondents supported the concept of including a Park & Ride site within the development.
- 84% of respondents supported the proposed Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre.

#### Downs Road

- 59% of respondents wanted Downs Road closed to vehicles but left open for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.
- 30% of respondents wanted Downs Road open to vehicles and pedestrians but with restrictions on HGV’s.
- 11% of respondents wanted Downs Road reopened for all vehicular and pedestrian movements.

#### Further Analysis

- 54% of respondents supported **both** the Highways Agency A2 Improvement Scheme **and** the Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre.
- 5% of respondents supported **neither** the Highways Agency A2 Improvement Scheme **nor** the Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre.
- 13% of respondents supported **only** the Highways Agency A2 Improvement Scheme.
- 26% of respondents supported **only** the Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre.
- 2% undecided.

Appendix A show the survey results set out by venue.

## Conclusion

The majority of people were in favour of the Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre as this was seen as a positive improvement to the landscape, providing recreational and sporting facilities for the local community. The interest in this proposal was far reaching, with local and national cycling groups offering their support and even expertise in helping to develop this scheme further. 1/3 of people, who responded positively about the scheme, recognised this centre as a way of providing a safe environment for users, especially children, which would contribute to a healthier standard of living.

The Highways Agency scheme was also met with approval by the majority of respondents. Many people had been consulted about this proposal in the past and were therefore aware of what was planned. Of the 311 respondents, 13% supported only the HA scheme, with several comments indicating a preference for a return to a natural countryside rather than something that would attract visitors and potentially harm the local environment.

The Park & Ride scheme was met with approval from over 2/3 of respondents but concerns were raised about whether there was demand for such a service and if it would actually reduce local congestion enough to warrant such a development. Local residents also expressed concerns that although a Park & Ride site would reduce pollution overall, it may create more pollution in the local area.

The issue of whether to reopen Downs Road was the main point of interest at the Painters Ash School and Marling Cross Library Exhibitions with 59% preferring a complete ban of all vehicular movements, 30% wanting it left open for local traffic and only 11% wanting it open to all traffic modes. The general assumption made by most respondents was that by closing the road to vehicles, this would eradicate the problems of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. The 41% of respondents who wanted the road kept open for vehicular access made some very strong comments regarding the matter and raised petitions to reinforce their stance. These petitions have not been included in the survey results for reasons of consistency.

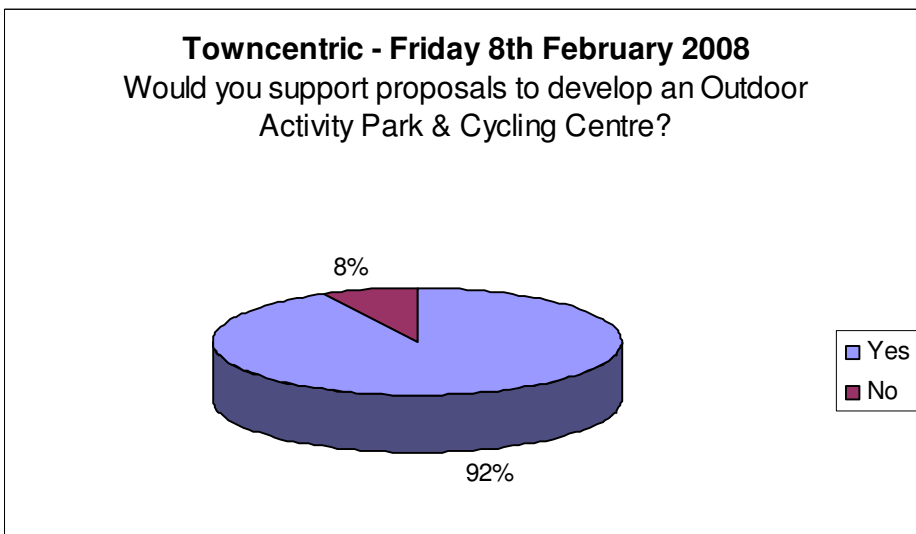
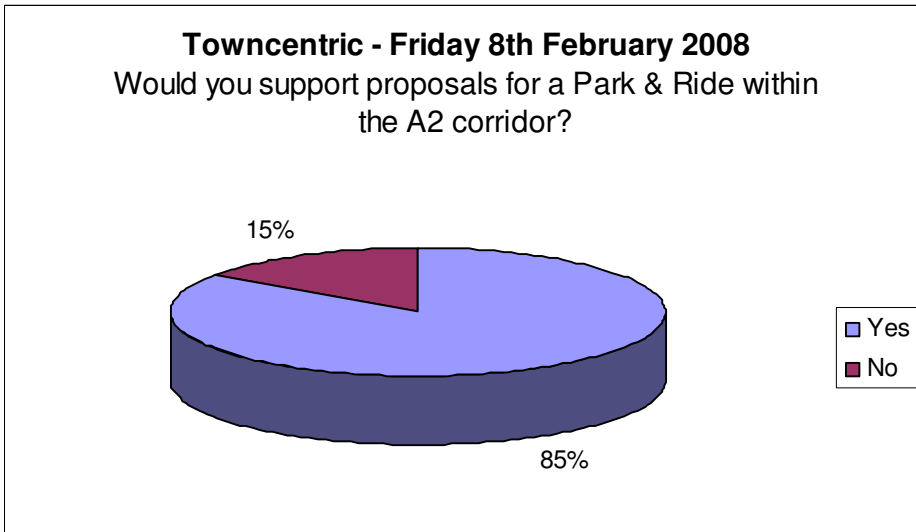
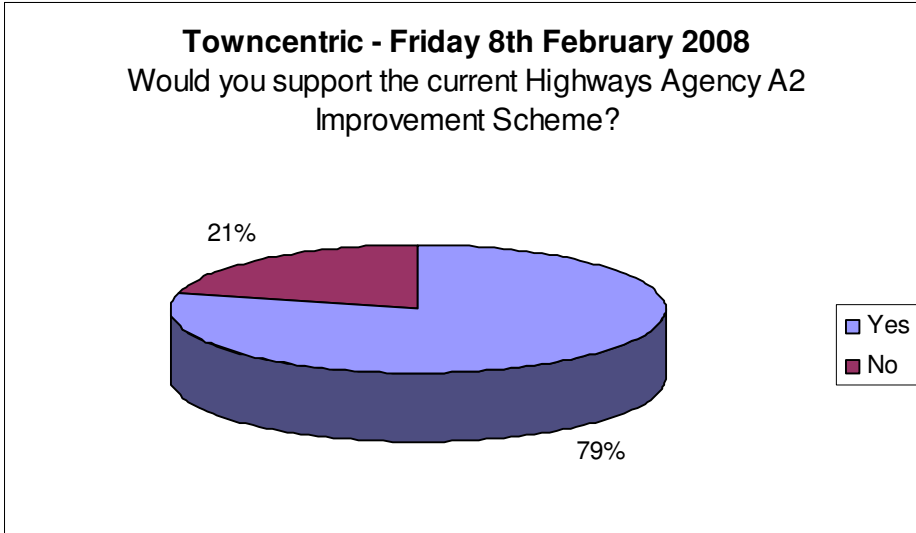
Throughout the consultation process many new ideas for inclusion in the Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre have been brought forward by members of the public, below are some of these:

- Indoor bowls centre
- Concrete skate park facility
- Motorbike track
- A gallop – track/course for horse riders

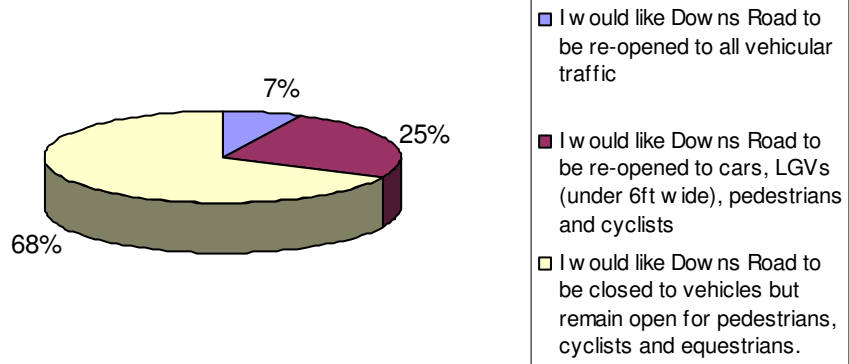
In conclusion, the Outdoor Activity & Cycling Centre has been met with considerable support from the local community and other sporting groups. It is seen by many as a welcome addition to Gravesham and something that would greatly benefit many different groups of people for a variety of reasons.

# Questionnaire Results

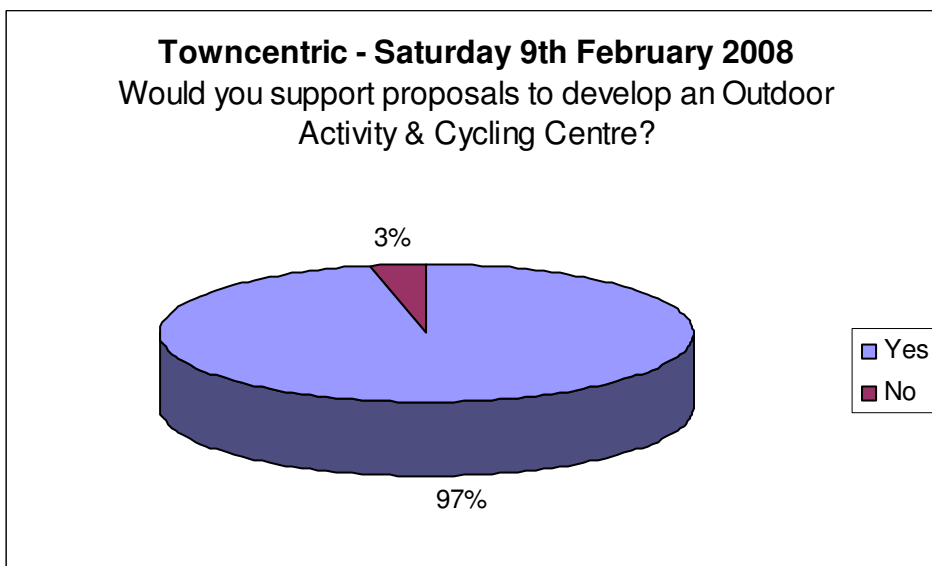
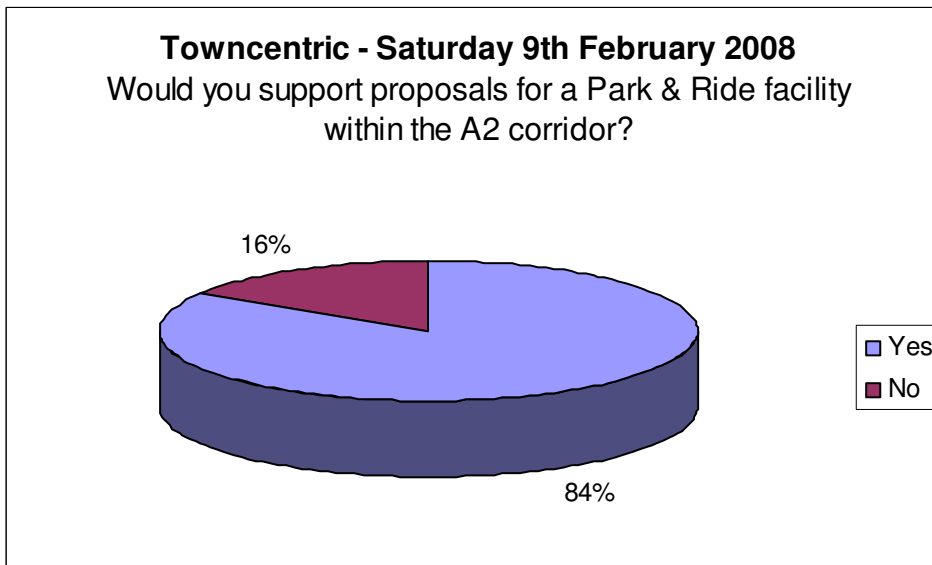
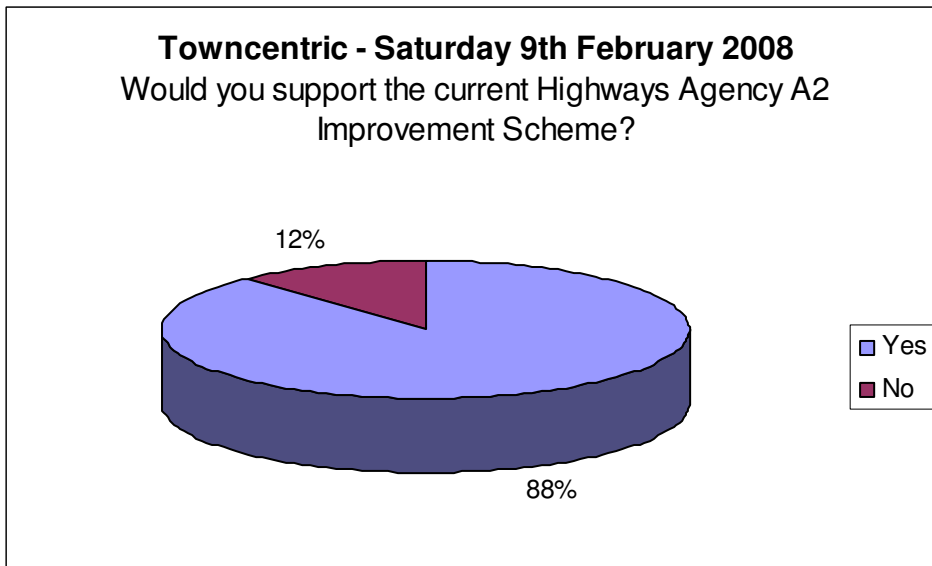
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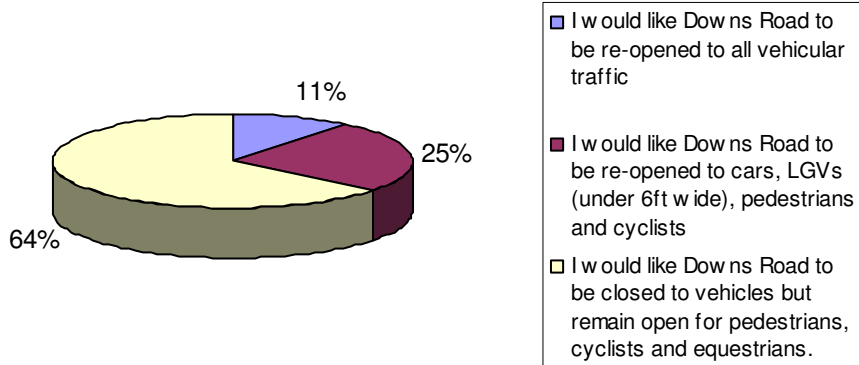
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Downs Road



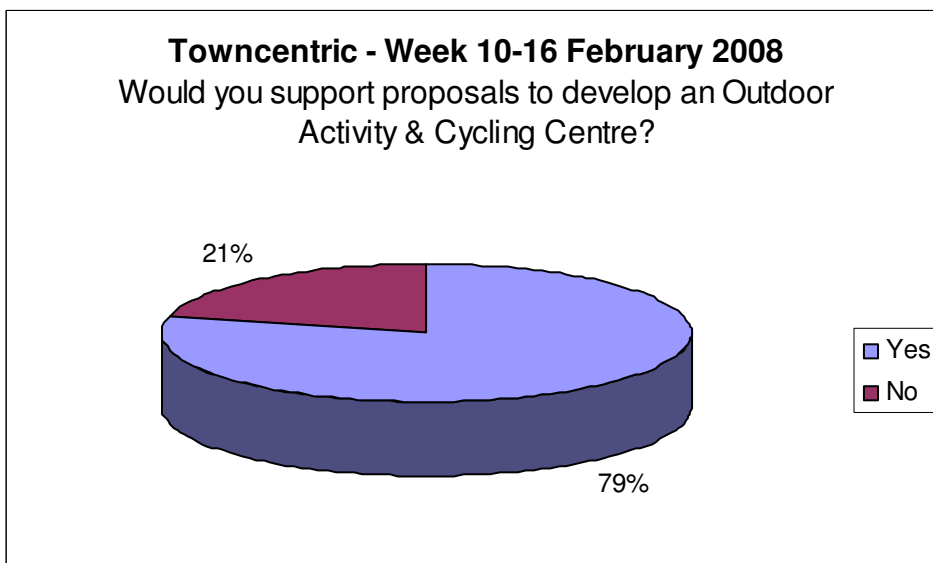
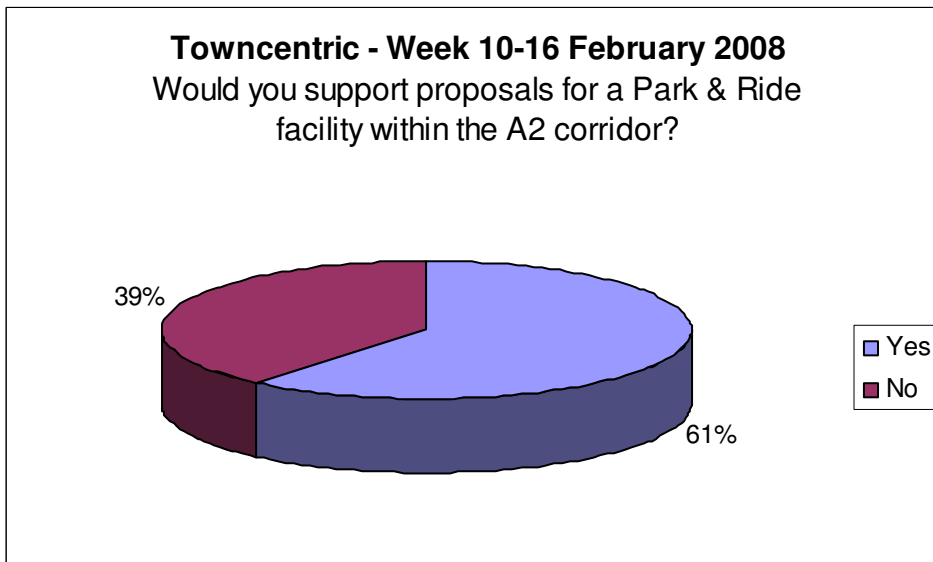
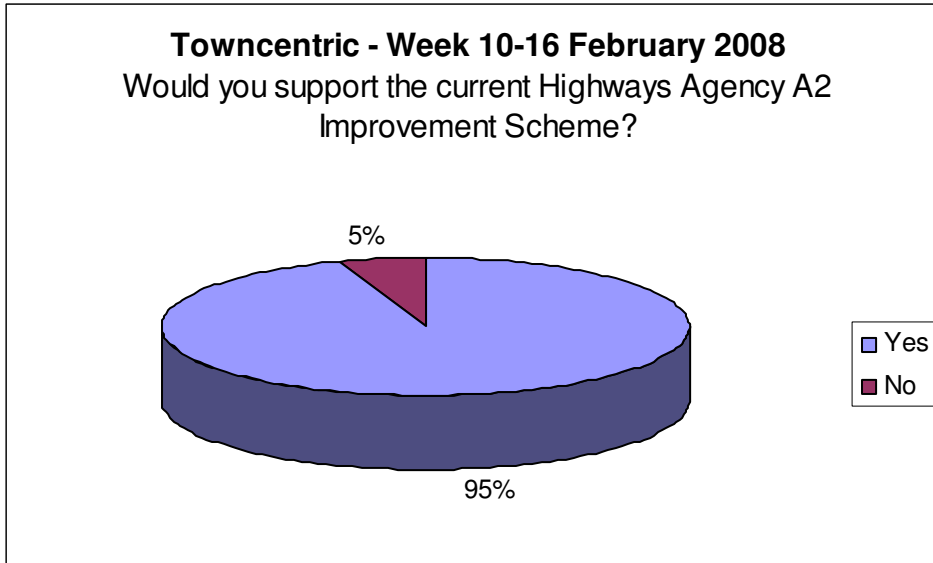
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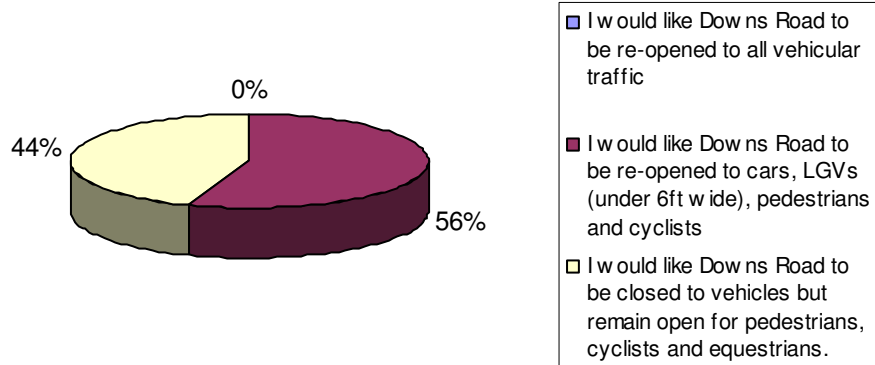
**Towncentric - Saturday 9th February 2008**  
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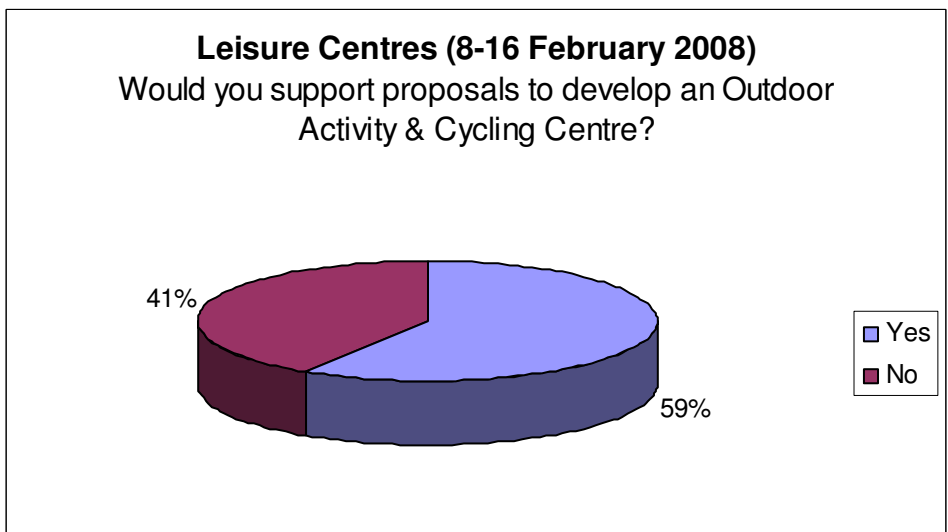
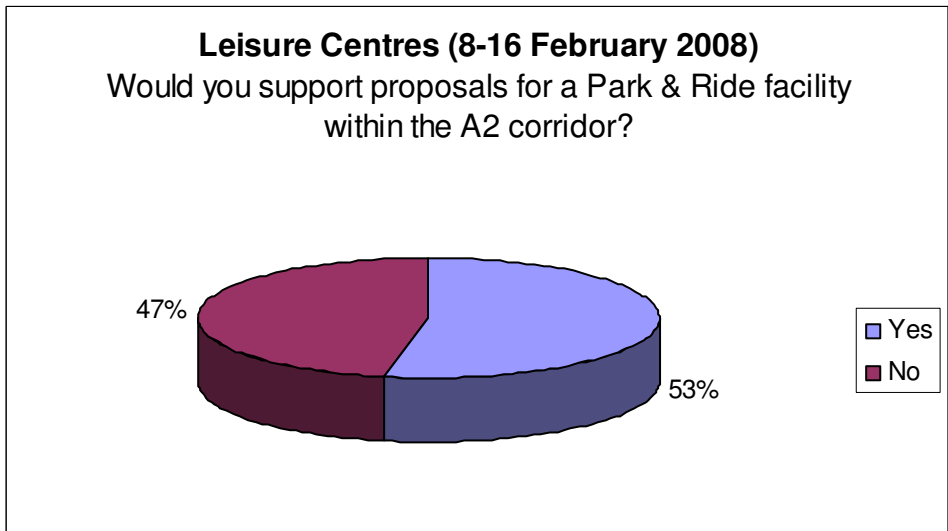
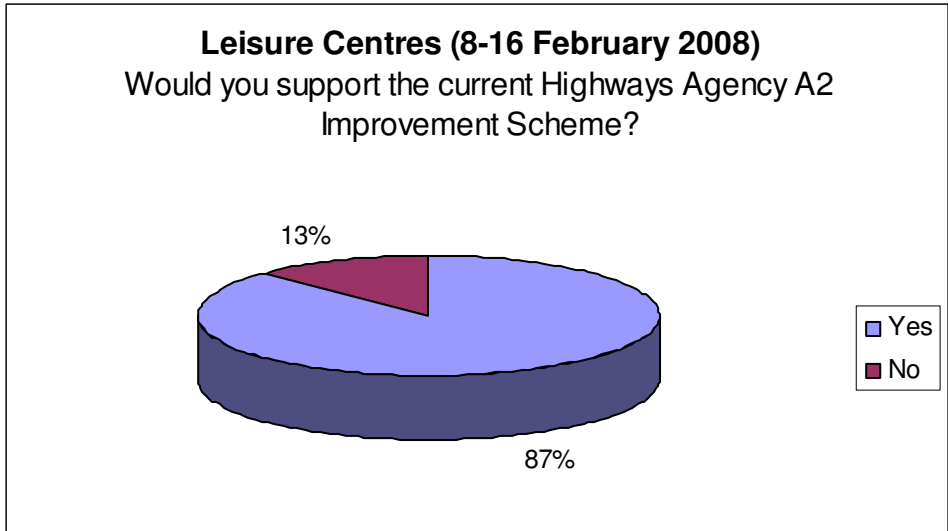
Unmanned Exhibition between 10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2008



**Towncentric - Week 10-16 February 2008**  
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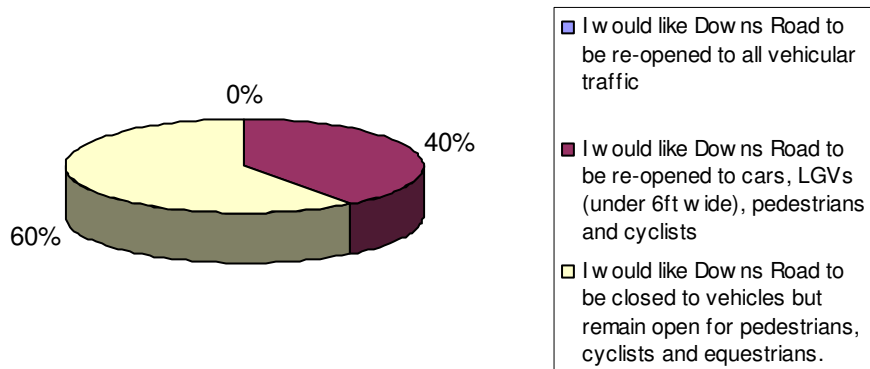


Responses from Leisure Centres between 8<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February

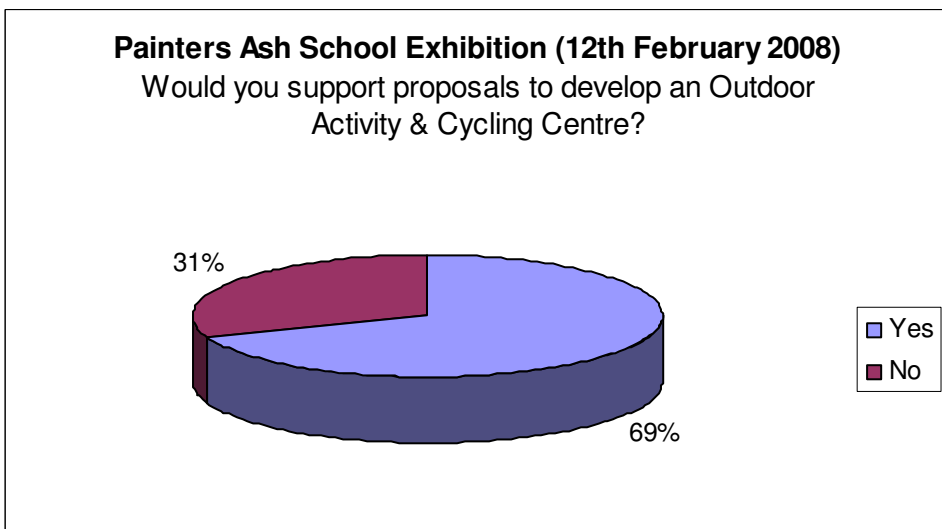
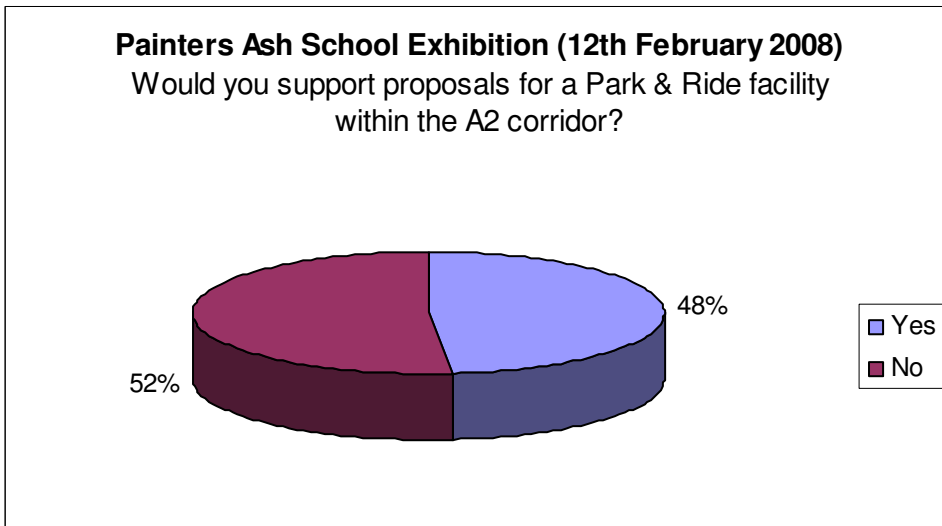
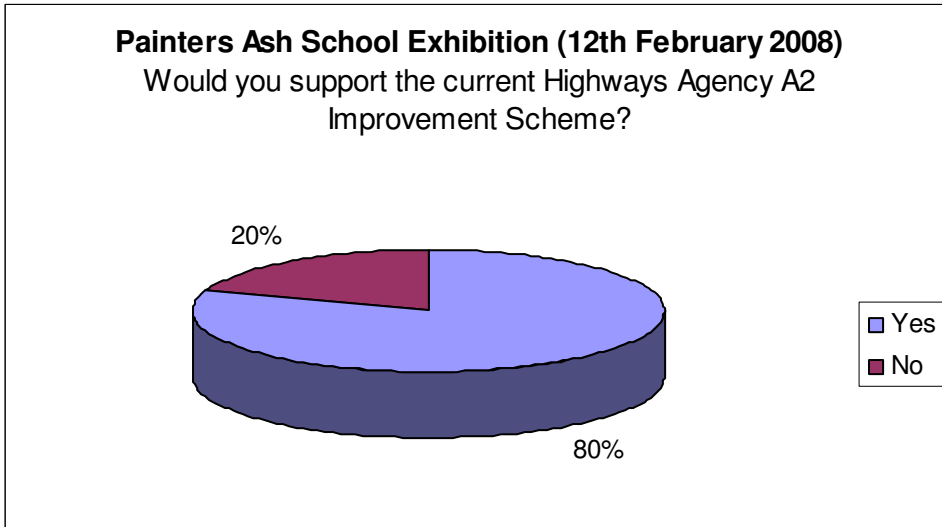


**Leisure Centres (8-16 February 2008)**

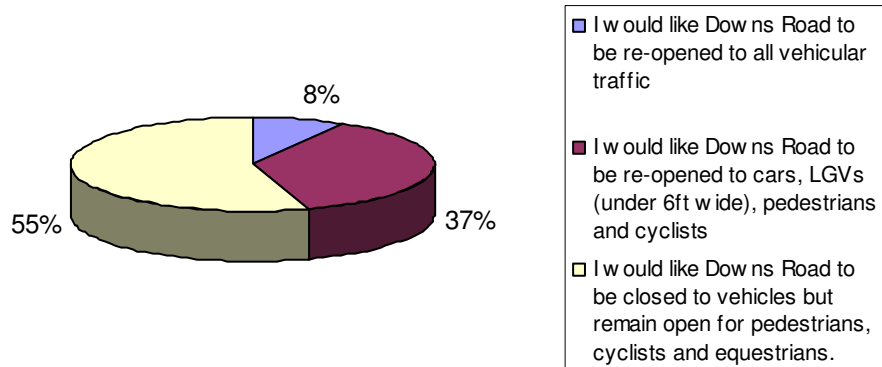
**Downs Road**



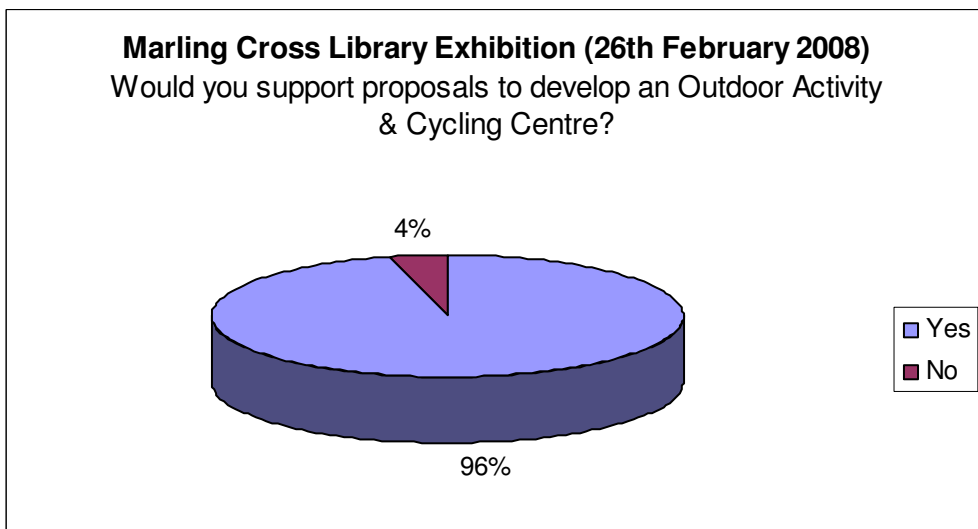
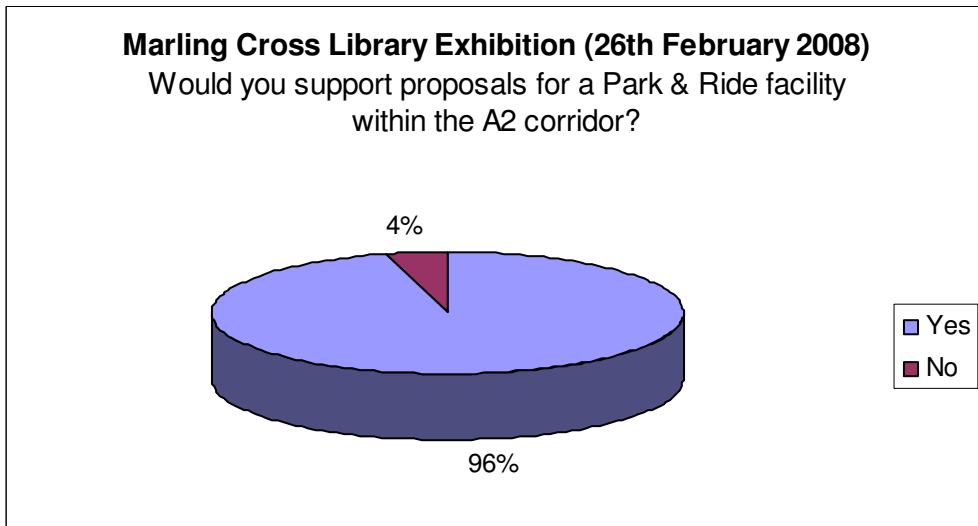
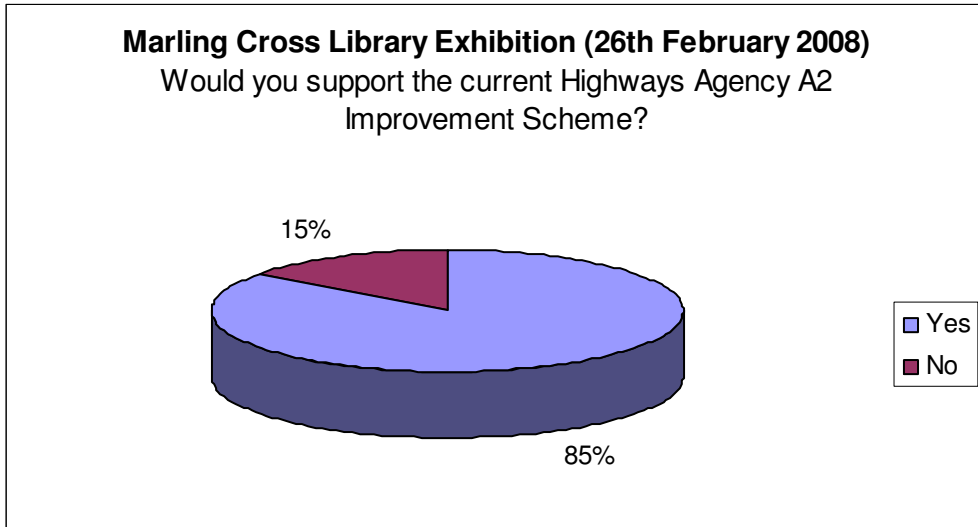
Painters Ash School Exhibition – Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008

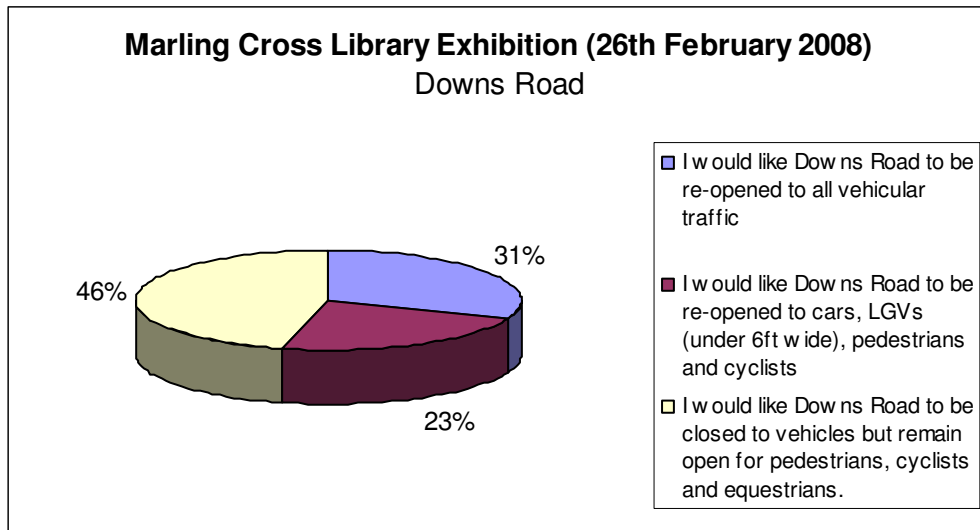


**Painters Ash School Exhibition (12th February 2008)**  
Downs Road

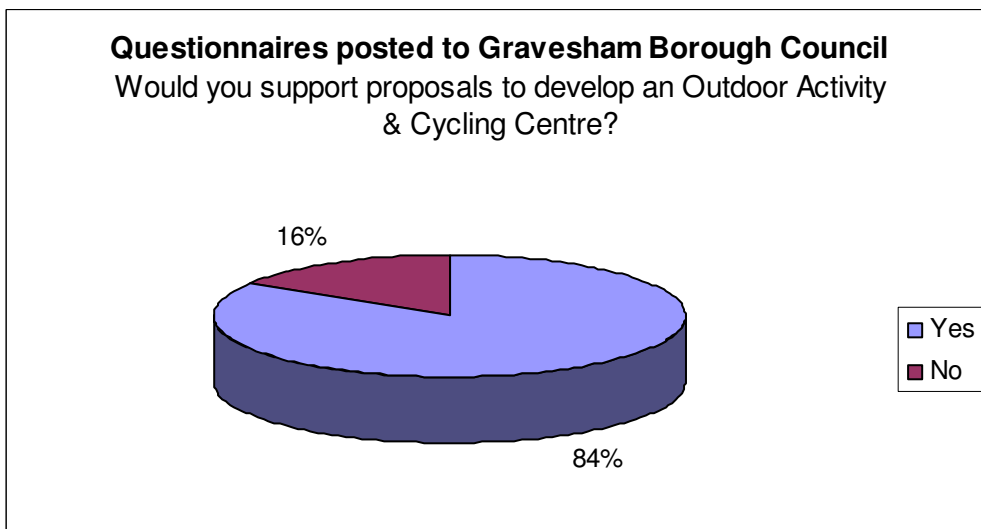
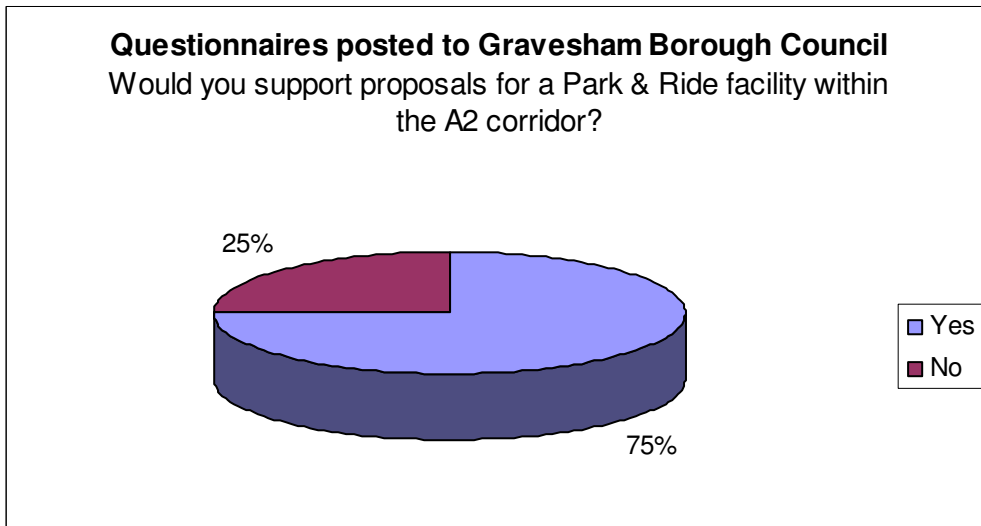
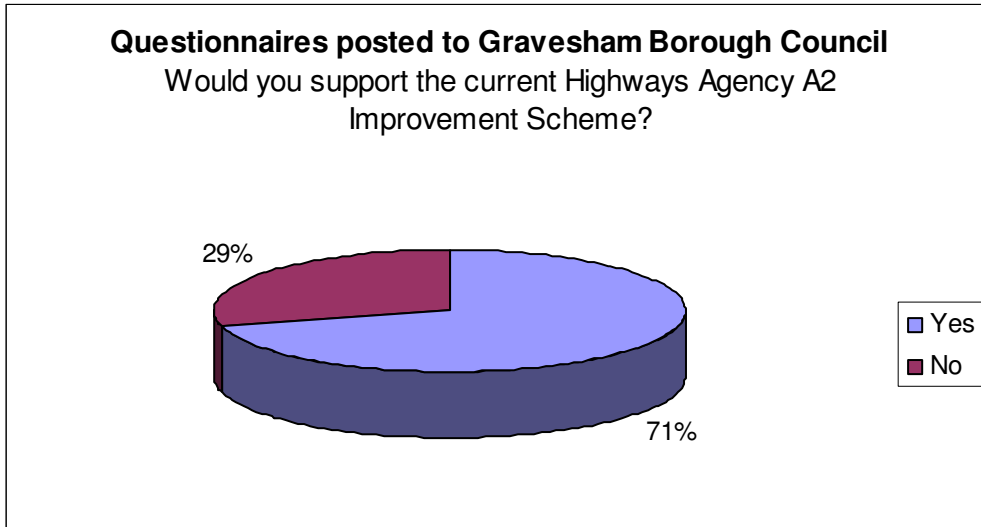


Marling Cross Library Exhibition – Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008

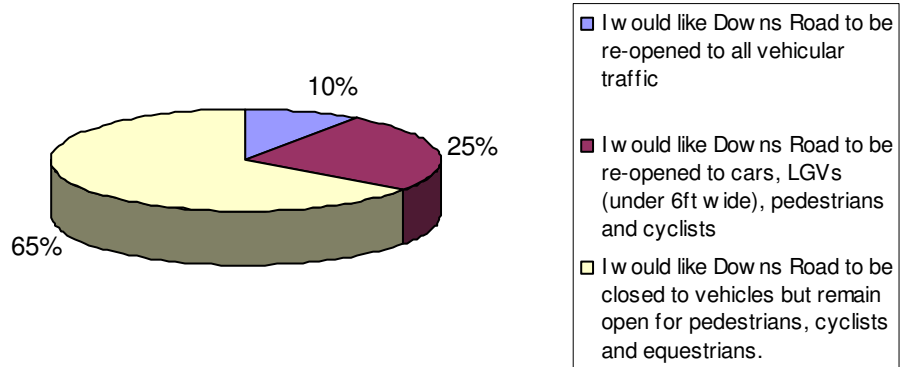




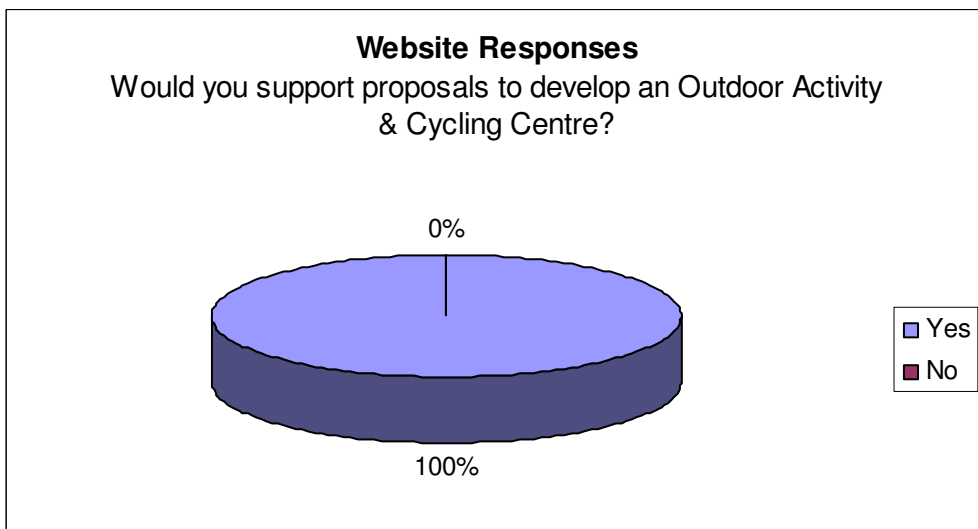
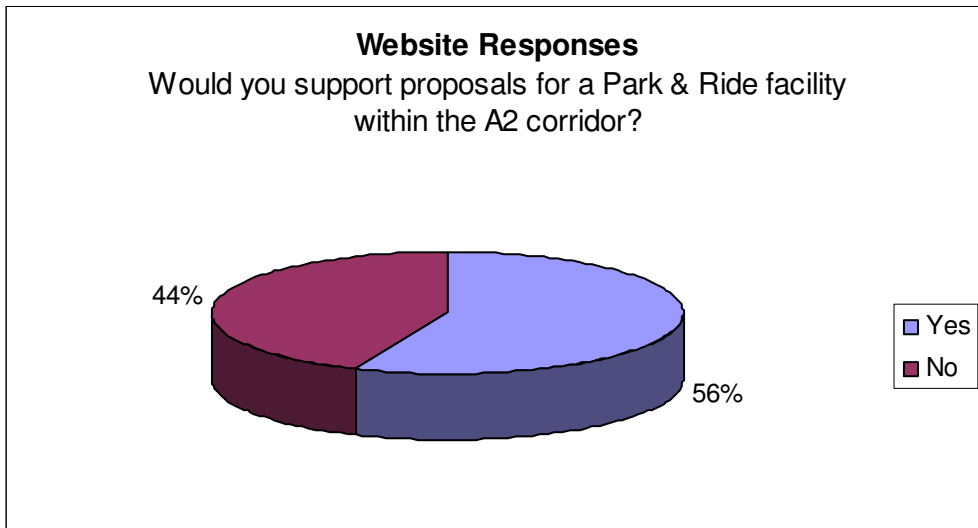
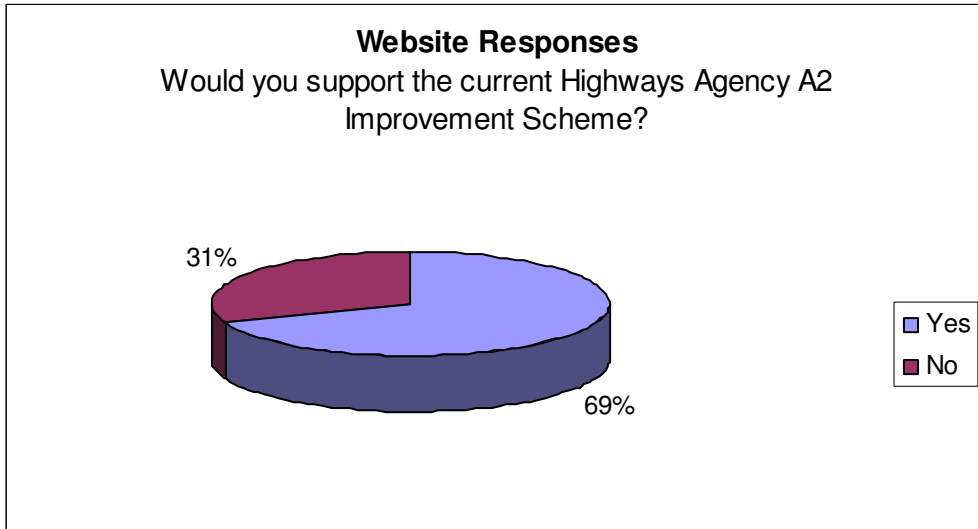
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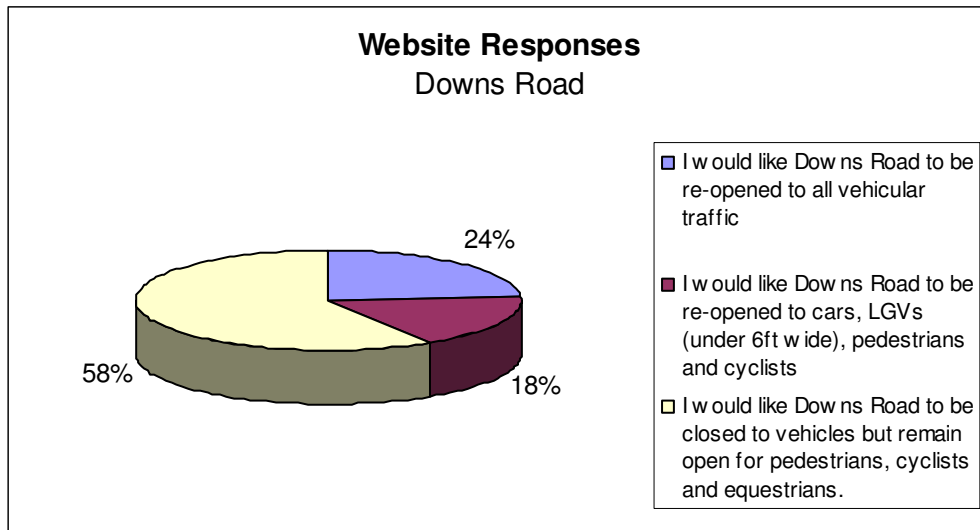


**Questionnaires posted to Gravesham Borough Council**  
Downs Road

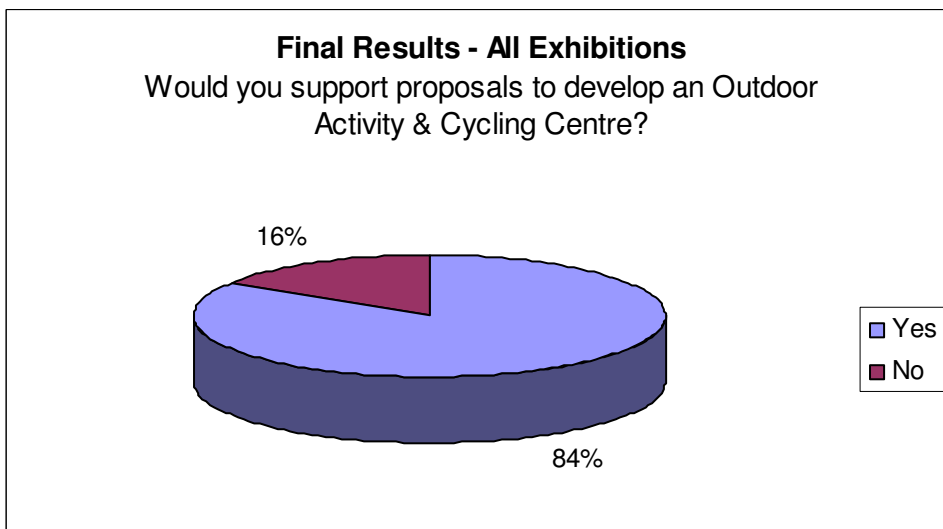
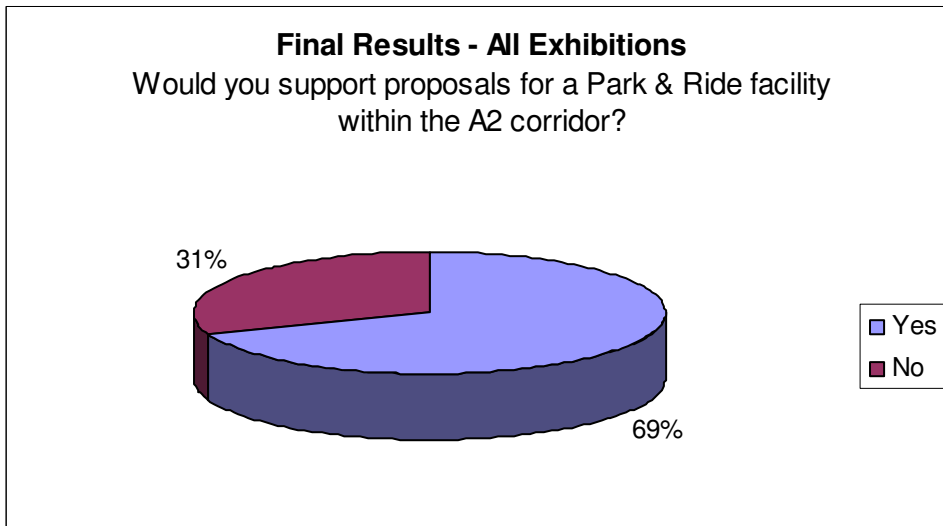
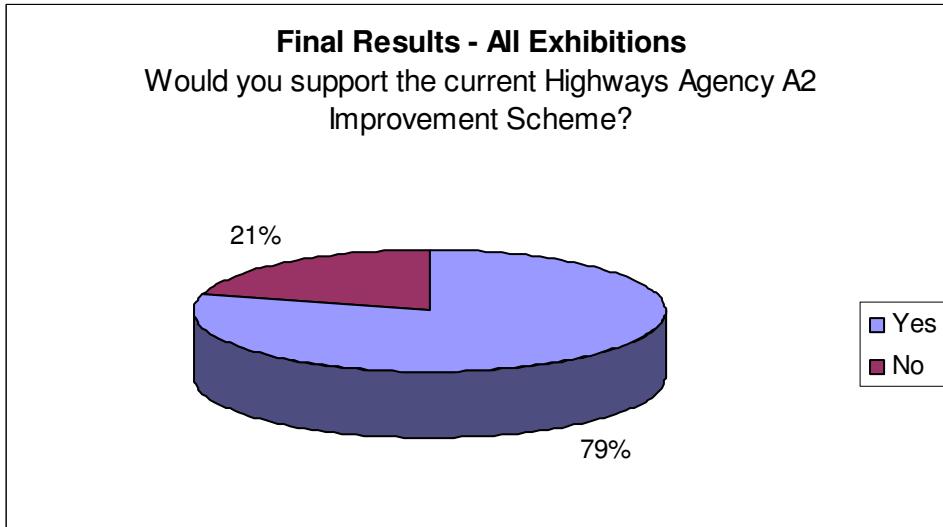


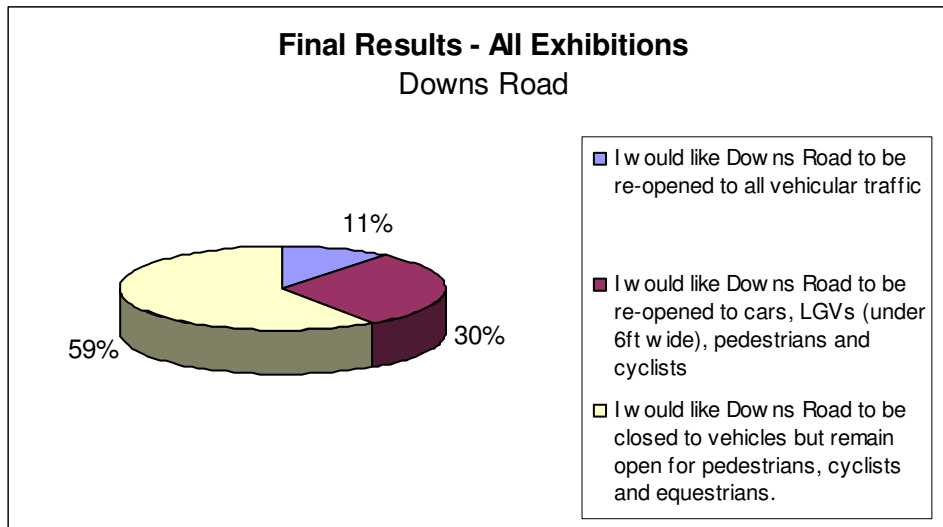
Website Responses



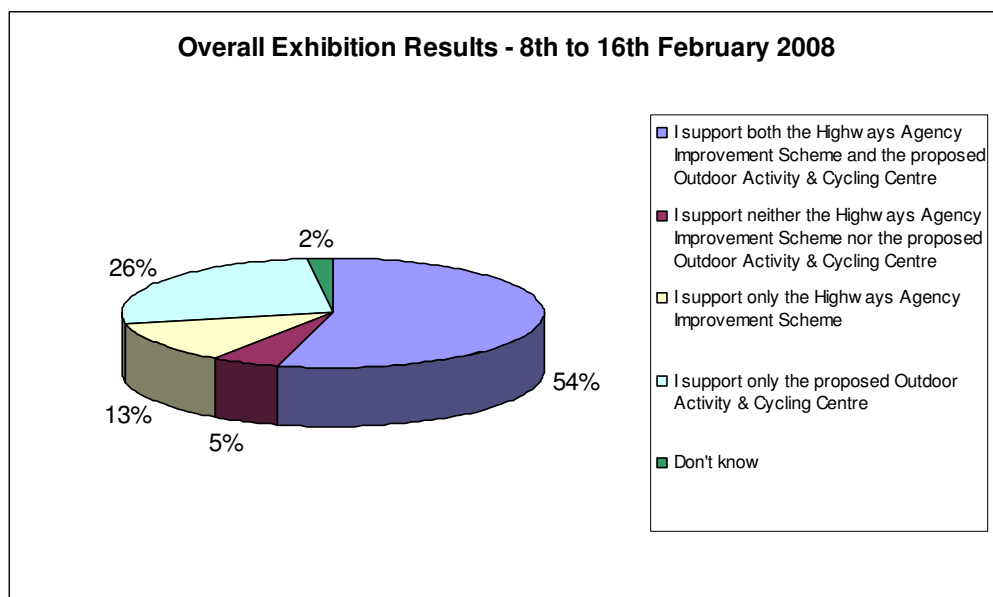


Final Results





**Further Analysis**



**Appendix B – Completed Questionnaire Forms**