

McDonald Research

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Traders' Survey carried out by Farnham Theatre Association

A survey was carried out over approximately two weeks from late August to early September 2007 by the Farnham Theatre Association Ltd to assess the opinions of local businesses and traders about the entertainment facilities they would like to see in the proposed East Street redevelopment. The survey consisted of a single page of questions, hand-delivered, together with an explanatory letter from the Association. These went out to all businesses and shops in central streets in Farnham. FTA volunteers collected completed questionnaires one to two weeks after delivery. 169 out of 262 traders replied, a response rate of 65%.

Almost all the traders agreed that the proposed new facilities would attract more people into the town, and over nine tenths agreed that they would provide venues suitable for all ages, would make Farnham more interesting, and would mean that Farnham residents would not have to travel elsewhere for their entertainment. Just under nine tenths thought that they would bring more business to Farnham traders and shopkeepers. A smaller number, but still two thirds, thought they would increase tourist visits.

Those who agreed that the new facilities would increase business or tourism, or both (i.e. nine tenths of respondents) were asked what kind of facilities they would prefer: just a cinema, just a theatre or both (a smaller cinema plus a theatre). There was some variation in these replies, but the clear first preference was the combined option (smaller cinema plus theatre), which 72% of these respondents gave as their first choice. The second preference was the cinema alone (19% first choice) and the third was the theatre alone (10% first choice), but both these alternatives were close and well below the first preference for the combined option.

Spontaneous comments made by the traders endorsed these benefits. When asked what disadvantages there might be, about a quarter of the traders expressed worries about traffic congestion, lack of parking facilities and general overcrowding. Much smaller minorities had concerns about bad behaviour, drinking, vandalism and litter, or fears that the siting of the development might draw business away from their street. But two thirds of the traders foresaw no disadvantages.