

Islington Museum Redesign: early ideas

Islington Museum brings the story of Islington to life through a collection of fascinating objects. Unaltered since opening in 2008, the museum is getting a full redesign in 2022-23.

After collecting and analysing initial feedback from the community, the museum team has developed a number of early concepts to share with local adults, families and teachers at three focus groups in February 2022. We now want to share these ideas more widely, collecting additional feedback and making sure a range of local voices have a hand in shaping the new museum.

Consider the images and ideas in this document, and share your views in the questionnaire.

Changes to the entrance and welcome area

In our first round of consultation, the public told us they wanted to see changes to the entrance and welcome areas of the museum. Based on these suggestions, we worked with illustrator Lucia Vitni, to reimagine our entranceway.

Please note that these illustrations are intended to bring to life very early concepts and are not necessarily representative of the style, images or colours to be used in future design.

Glass Wall



Top left: current signage

Main image: Suggested changes to signage

We suggested replacing current signage on the glass wall with a more vibrant decal featuring photographs of key collection items and Council branding to highlight the entrance.

Focus Group Feedback:

- Adults commented that they often walk by without noticing the museum. They wanted welcoming signage, with council branding and photographs, which make it clear this is a museum for adult visitors as well as families.
- Teachers want to be able to locate the museum more easily.
- Families want more signage at the front of the museum, in the street, rather than just the side.

Museum Courtyard



Top left: Current courtyard area

Main image: Suggested changes to the courtyard area

To make better use of the courtyard, the team is considering providing weatherproof seating along the concrete bench, featuring images linked to the collection on the courtyard walls, and offering an opportunity to buy refreshments.

Focus Group Feedback:

- An adult visitor said the museum looks miserable from the outside. Adults were interested in the courtyard becoming a part of the museum and were keen on a refreshments stand.
- Teachers wanted pupils to feel excited when entering the museum. They want to see timelines or maps in the courtyard to inspire students as they approach.
- Families want this area to be a multi-purpose space for adults and children.

Museum Frontage



Top left: Current museum frontage

Main image: Suggestions for future frontage

Early ideas for the future frontage include a decorative decal on the windows highlighting the entrance and showcasing photos of some key objects in the collection. The decal would not fully obscure the windows, allowing visitors to continue to see inside.

Focus Group Feedback:

- Adult visitors say they currently have difficulty identifying how to get into the museum. They liked the idea of highlighting the automatic door and removing the rotating doors.
- Teachers felt that there should be better signposting to the entrance.
- Families want to see a more welcoming entrance.

Welcome Area



Top left: Area by entrance currently used as a play area, while the welcome desk is positioned far from the doors

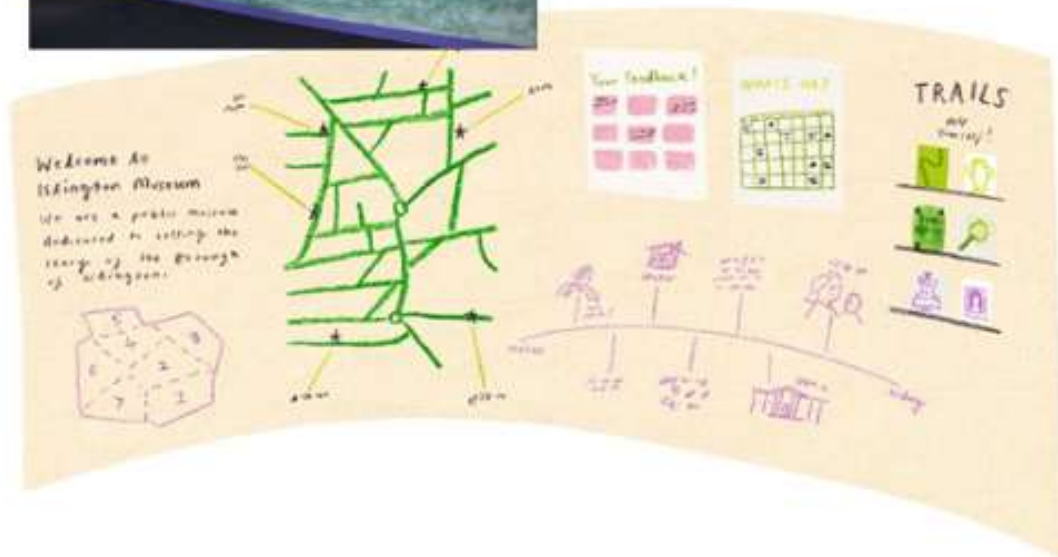
Main image: Suggestion for future use of area by automatic doors.

Based on visitor feedback, the team suggests moving the welcome desk into this space to allow visitors to be better welcomed on arrival. This area could include museum maps, feedback opportunities, trails, and event information.

Focus Group Feedback:

- Adult visitors say they have difficulty finding the information desk.
- Teachers say that they want more timelines, maps, and resources available on entry.
- Families want to connect immediately with the museum and activities.

Welcome Wall



Top left: current welcome display

Main image: Suggested changes to welcome display




Visitors encounter this wall when they first enter the museum. Based on feedback, the team suggests either removing this wall in its entirety or using it to display a range of clearer orientation tools. This could include trails, large maps, links to locations throughout the borough, and a timeline of Islington's development.

Focus Group Feedback:

- Adult visitors say they have difficulty finding information about using the museum. Many felt the welcome wall blocked their way into the museum and should be removed.
- Teachers want timelines to help students make sense of Islington's story but wanted to see the tools shown in the illustration to be distributed around the museum rather than on one wall.
- Families want to be able to plan their visit once they arrive. The current wall left them confused where to begin or go.

Ideas for interactives

The museum team are considering different interactives to introduce into the new gallery. Consider some of these options and feedback in the questionnaire.

 A photograph showing several colorful wooden boxes (orange, blue, green) with circular openings, arranged on a display. These are sensory boxes designed for interactive learning.	<p>Sensory Boxes¹</p> <p>Sensory boxes with a scent, an object to touch or a sound to listen to. In Islington Museum, this could include sniffing the scents of Islington's dairies and cattle markets or feeling the wool of the sheep brought here from Wales.</p> <p>© More Creative Company</p>
 A photograph of several printed trail sheets for a museum gallery. The sheets feature illustrations of historical figures and events, such as 'DICK TERPIN' and 'REAL', and include text and checkboxes for visitors to complete.	<p>Trails²</p> <p>Free themed trails for family or adult audiences. In Islington Museum, this could include a trail providing activities and prompts for family groups as they move around the gallery or an adult trail highlighting key objects in Islington's story.</p> <p>© Inchpunch Design Limited</p>
 A photograph of an orange fabric play bag filled with various toys and objects. Visible items include a green duck, a white cat, a yellow ball, and a red toy phone, all designed for interactive play.	<p>Play bags³</p> <p>Play bags full of tools for exploring the museum including themed toys, object replicas, and activities. In Islington Museum, this could include an Entertaining Islington bag featuring musical instruments, circus toys, conversation prompts, and activities linked to clowning.</p> <p>© Museum of the Home</p>



Digital Interactives⁴

Touchscreens and other digital media to explore pictures and stories in more depth. In Islington Museum, this could look like an interactive historical map of Islington, options to explore collections that aren't on display or to look more closely at photos and paintings.

©The Acropolis Museum



Oral history stations⁵

Interact with a historical object and hear the story of someone from Islington's history, in their own voice. In Islington Museum, this could look like:

- Using a historic phone model to listen to oral histories from people who lived during World War Two
- Listening to the stories of Caribbean nurses who migrated to the UK in the 1950s and 60s while looking at photos

© blackbox-av, The Scottish Parliament





Object replicas⁶

Copies of objects that can be handled by visitors. In Islington Museum, this could include handling the pieces of a clock and fitting them together to learn about the clock-making trade or feeling the fabrics of the clothes of historic figures.

© The Victoria and Albert Museum

Different forms of interpretation

Museums have many different ways of interpreting history and communicating information. Here you can see a range of ways information could be displayed in future. Share your views on which work best for you in our questionnaire.

	<p>Introductory Text Panels⁷</p> <p>These introductory text panels will usually contain a title, basic background information, images, and maps. They are meant to introduce you to the topic of the display and direct you towards the relevant objects.</p> <p>© Museum Partners Consulting LLC</p>
	<p>Timeline⁸</p> <p>A timeline provides a list of dates and will include of images and text to explain why particular dates are important to a story.</p> <p>© Freed from Time blog</p>



Open Display⁹

Sometimes objects don't have to be in cases. Open display objects feature a label with information but can be touched, handled, and physically investigated by visitors.
© The Victoria and Albert Museum



Visually driven displays¹⁰

Some displays focus on objects, images, and creating an environment. While there will be text giving information about the objects, it is off to the side and fairly short.
© Museum of the Home



Text driven displays¹¹

Some displays focus on text with small images and diagrams to add to the information available. This is often meant to give more information when the object on display needs a lot of explanation to make sense.
© Courtauld Institute

Take down policy

The images used for this consultation (within this document and the linked questionnaire) are examples of best practice from some of the top museums around the world. Beneath each image, you will find the museum and partner information, and websites where you can find more information. We encourage you to visit these museums and galleries to discover the incredible offerings pictured here!

The upcoming Islington Council-funded museum redesign offers an opportunity for us to make our facilities and displays more engaging and accessible. These examples from world-renowned and critically acclaimed museums are being used as inspiration for our local museum's audiences to help imagine potential future offerings and to provide context for resident feedback. This consultation runs until 1st April 2022.

These images are not being used for profit, however, if an image belongs to you and you wish to have it removed, please speak to museum staff on 020 7527 2837 or email islington.museum@islington.gov.uk.

References

1. From the More Creative Company's website, in partnership with the Living Rainforest Museum in Oxford (https://www.morecreativesolutions.co.uk/what_we_do/museum_spaces/). Visit the Living Rainforest Museum in Oxford! (website: <https://livingrainforest.org/>).
2. From Inchpunch Design Ltd. website in partnership with the York Castle Museum (<https://www.inchpunch.co.uk/museum-trails-and-activity-sheets.html>). Visit the York Castle Museum to try the trail! (website: <https://www.yorkcastlemuseum.org.uk/>)
3. From the Museum of the Home, visit to try these backpacks for yourself! (website: <https://www.museumofthehome.org.uk/visit-us/family-visits/>)
4. From the Acropolis Museum, Athens, Greece. Visit the museum to try out these displays! (website: <https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en>).
5. From Balckbox-av in partnership with the Scottish Parliament (website: <https://www.blackboxav.co.uk/project/trench-telephone-the-scottish-parliament/>) Visit the exhibitions at the Scottish Parliament! (website: <https://archive2021.parliament.scot/visitandlearn/events-and-exhibitions.aspx>)
6. From the Victoria and Albert Museum blog Hoskin, D. (2014) 'Please Touch' available at: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/creating-new-europe-1600-1800-galleries/please-touchaaa###>. Visit the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to see this for yourself! (website: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/touch-objects-in-museum-009crop.jpg>)
7. From the Museum Partners Consulting LLC for Building a Better World exhibition at Newark Public Library, NJ, USA, ended 31 December 2019 (website: <https://museumpartnersconsulting.com/work-samples-exhibition-development/>) Visit the Newark Public Library to see current programmes (website: <https://npl.org/>).
8. From Freed from Time's (2017) 'Museum of London' blog post (website: <https://picturethisuk.org/2017/02/12/museum-of-london/>). Visit the Museum of London to see the timeline! (website: <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london>)
9. From the Victoria and Albert Museum blog Hoskin, D. (2014) 'Please Touch' available at: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/creating-new-europe-1600-1800-galleries/please-touchaaa###>. Visit the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to see these for yourself! (website: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/touch-objects-in-museum-009crop.jpg>).
10. From the Elmwoods Projects website, in partnership with the Museum of the Home (website: <http://www.elmwoods.com/project/the-museum-of-the-home/>). Visit the Museum of the Home in London to explore this exhibit! (website: <https://www.museumofthehome.org.uk/>).
11. From the Courtauld Gallery virtual tour, Room 2-2 (website: https://courtauld-website-static-hosting.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/vr_tour/indexv2.html?xml=room_02-1.xml). Take the virtual tour or visit the gallery in London! (website: <https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/>)