



Community Consultation Report

The Arches, 346–347 Beck Road, Hackney (E8)

Collage Workshop & Public Engagement Event

21 March 2026

1. Introduction

This report summarises findings from a public engagement event held at Arch 346 on 21 March 2026, as part of the ongoing community consultation led by muf architecture/art on behalf of The Arches (London Community Network).

The session was designed as an informal, creative workshop to support open conversation and collective visioning around the future use of Arch 346. The event forms part of a wider process to understand community needs and inform future funding applications and development proposals.



**Collage Workshop
Community Ideas Session
For Children & Adults**

Help Shape The Future of Arch 346!

The Arches E8 invite local residents to a free, informal collage workshop and conversation about the future of Beck Road Arch 346. Come and share your ideas, hopes and needs for this emerging community and creative space. No experience needed, all materials provided.

When: Saturday 21st of March, 12-4
Where: Arch 346, Beck Road, E8
Free & open to all

This session is part of a wider community consultation for the artist and maker studios at 346–347 Beck Road, commissioned by The Arches (London Community Network Charity No 1114909) and delivered by muf architecture/art.

Have your say, drop in and get involved!

If you can't make it scan the QR code to share your email and we will be in touch with updates on the project and future events.



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Flyers distributed to advertise the event

2. Event Overview

Date: 21 March 2026

Time: 12:00–16:00

Location: Arch 346, Beck Road, Hackney

Format: Drop-in collage workshop, supported by conversation and feedback activities
Attendance: Approx. 50+ participants (including passersby)

The event was structured to encourage both short, informal interactions and longer, in-depth conversations.

A member of the project team was positioned outside the arch to engage passersby and invite participation. Inside the arch, facilitators supported the collage activity and hosted discussions. Information boards introduced the project and shared early findings

Arch 346 and 347 Introduction

1



What is this project?

The Arches (London Community Network) is exploring how Arch 346 on Beck Road could become a welcoming space for local people, artists and makers.

We want to understand what this space could be used for in the future and how it can best support the community.

This is the start of a wider project to improve the arches so they can be used all year round.

What is today about?

This is first public event, before the design process really gets underway. We aim to start a conversation about the future arch. We want to hear about your experience of Beck Road, and your aspirations for the future of the arches. We will show you what we have found out so far, but please tell us anything you think we might have missed.

If you have any questions about the project, email us jenny@muf.co.uk

Some of our previous work



Kings Crescent Estate, Hackney



Wonderlab, Science Museum



Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, Hackney

Who are we?

The Arches (London Community Network) – a local charity with a board of trustees who are responsible for the arches.

muf architecture/art – leading the community consultation. We are a local architecture practice who design public spaces. We also work on parks, town squares and museums, including the Wonderlab Galleries at the Science Museum.

We try to advocate the value of the existing before proposing the new. We have good experience in designing spaces for arts, play and learning.

Together, we are working to shape the future of this space with local people.

What happens next?

We will take note of everything we hear from you today, then digest it, draw it and turn it into a brief for the arch and the types of activities that could happen here.

There will be more events in the Spring/ early Summer, when you can review our initial findings and feedback your thoughts on them, so that we can make changes and add anything we have left out.

After that, the trustees of the arches will use the design brief and consultation feedback to commission designers and help to secure funding to make the project happen.

Sign up to the mailing list to hear more about the project as it develops.

THE ARCHES

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Arch 346 and 347 Problems and Opportunities

2

What we've heard so far

We spoke to people connected to The Arches, including artists, stakeholders and local users, to understand how the space is currently used and what it could become in the future.

What we heard is that The Arches are valued as a rare, affordable and flexible space for creative work in Hackney. At the same time, there are big questions about how Arch 346 could evolve. Balancing the needs of artists, local residents and the wider community, while keeping the unique character of the space.

These conversations revealed a strong desire to grow and open up the space, alongside concerns about losing what already works.



What is missing in your local area?

How would you use this space?

What would make you feel welcome here?

THE ARCHES

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Arch 346 and 347 Where Do You Go?

3

Where are the arts and community spaces?

Where do you go for creative activities?

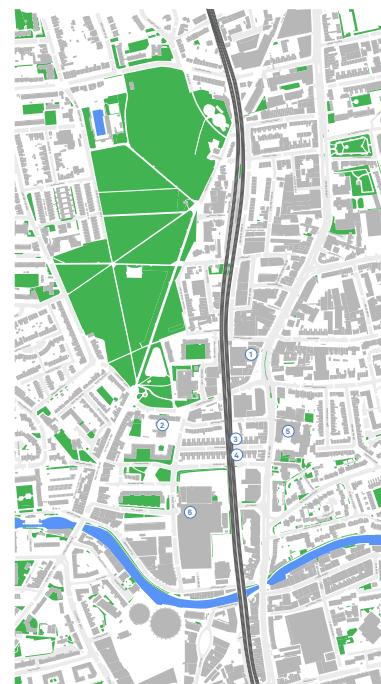
Where do you spend time in your community?

What spaces do you use regularly?

What do you do there? (e.g. making, meeting, learning, relaxing)

Mark places you go on the map

- ① Space Studios
- ② London Fields Primary School
- ③ Arch 347
- ④ Beck Road Studios
- ⑤ St Joseph's Hospice
- ⑥ The Depot Makers' Space
- ⑦
- ⑧
- ⑨



THE ARCHES

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3. Participants

Attendees included:

- Local residents of Beck Road (majority)
- Artists from nearby studios, including the southern arches
- Residents from the Arden Estate, including the Chair of the TRA
- Local workers, including individuals in music education and art therapy
- Passersby who live or work in the area

Children and young people engaged in lighter-touch ways:

- Children interacted with the space externally
- Teenagers contributed written responses via post-it notes



4. Activities

Collage Workshop

Participants were invited to create collages imagining the future use and atmosphere of Arch 346.

The arch itself was used as a visual backdrop

Materials included images sourced from Hackney archives, alongside other visual prompts

Participants were encouraged to explore ideas of:

- Use
- Atmosphere
- Identity
- Community role

18 collages were produced.

Conversation & Feedback

Alongside the workshop:

- Open discussions took place throughout the session
- Participants contributed ideas via post-it note boards
- Facilitators captured informal verbal feedback

This combination allowed for both creative expression and direct commentary.



Arch 346 and 347

Problems and Opportunities

2

Community Juice/Wine Making D2Hilling

Wellbeing Workshops

LOCAL MEETING ROOM FOR RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

People forget music is Art Music Studio!

COMMUNITY SPACE & GARDEN

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LOCAL KITCHEN & SUPPER CLUB COMMUNITY KITCHEN

CHOIR practice space

"Affordable space like this is rare in Hackney."

SHARED GARDEN - OPEN UP TO A COMMUNITY SPOT BETWEEN SPOT SCHOOL CLUB & NET GALLERY -> MEETING & LUNCH

"We don't want to lose what makes it special."

There's a real sense of mutual support here."

Community space to have for a robot face or one face to other community groups that could be used for meetings, art workshops, informal exercise, parties, and children parties etc...

Pottery

WORKSHOP BUT NOT NICHE FOR ROCK ROAD

WORKSHOP for young people into days, mornings, evenings etc...

It's a lot of potential but currently underused."

Board games chess club

COMMUNITY SPACE! WHO IS THE COMMUNITY?

Event space (for hire)

CLASSES Room for meeting Flexible space

"Could it be a shared community space?"

CLASSES FOR WHOLE COMMUNITY

- FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY for Hackney residents

Multi-purpose space - ART + THERAPY

Workshop spaces for community - choir, meetings people,

"Spaces like this can feel hard to enter."

Cross subsidised Activities FOR KIDS

"Beautiful open space... the light, the brickwork, the sound of the train"

ART THERAPY SPACE

FILM CLUB/ CINEMA

THEATRE SPACE / DANCE THERAPY

THE ARCHES

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What is missing in your local area?

How would you use this space?

What would make you feel welcome here?

Post-It suggestions added to boards

5. Key Findings

5.1 Strong Support for Community Use

There was clear and consistent enthusiasm for Arch 346 to become a community-focused space.

Suggested uses included:

- Workshops and creative classes
- Community meetings
- Events and gatherings
- Informal shared space (“third place”)

“We would hold our community meetings here.”

Feedback indicated a clear local demand for accessible, flexible community infrastructure.

5.2 Youth Provision as a Priority

A strong and repeated theme was the need for activities for children and young people, particularly those who may not be able to afford existing creative provision in the area.

Participants highlighted:

- A lack of accessible creative opportunities locally
- The importance of inclusive, low-cost or free provision

5.3 Balancing Openness and Identity

Participants expressed a desire for the space to be welcoming and inclusive, while also retaining a strong local identity.

Two interpretations of “community” emerged:

- A focus on Beck Road residents
- A broader inclusion of wider Hackney communities

This reflects an ongoing question about scale and reach of the project.

5.4 Concerns About Gentrification and Exclusivity

There was a strong sensitivity around the space becoming:

- Overly polished or “*over-professionalised*”
- Exclusive or culturally narrow

“Make sure it’s not too exclusive.”

“It shouldn’t become a gentrified space.”

Some participants explicitly raised concerns about the space being:

- “Colonised” by a narrow demographic
- Detached from local needs

This highlights the importance of access, affordability and governance in future planning.

5.5 Limited Support for Continued Storage Use

There was limited support for retaining Arch 346 primarily as storage.

While recognised as useful by some, the majority view was that:

- The space has greater potential
- Active uses should be prioritised

5.6 Management and Delivery Considerations

Participants identified practical challenges, particularly:

- The need for a dedicated programmer or coordinator
- Concerns about the cost and sustainability of this role

This points to the importance of developing a realistic operational model alongside spatial proposals.

5.7 Value of Character and Materiality

There was a strong appreciation for the physical qualities of the arch:

- Brickwork and raw materiality
- Atmosphere and informality
- Relationship to Beck Road’s artistic history

“Keep the brick arch feel.”

Collages frequently reflected a desire to:

- Maintain the existing character
- Enhance comfort and usability (e.g. warmth, lighting, accessibility)

6. Overall Tone Of Feedback

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with:

- Strong support for change and activation of the space
- Clear appetite for community-oriented uses
- Constructive concerns focused on how the space develops, rather than whether it should

Outputs and Documentation

- Approx. 50 participants engaged
- 18 collages produced
- Post-it note contributions and written feedback collected
- Photographic documentation of the event

These materials will inform the next stage of consultation and design development.

Implications for Next Stage

The event highlights several priorities moving forward:

- Develop a community-focused brief centred on accessible and inclusive use
- Explore youth-oriented programming
- Define a clear but flexible identity for the space
- Address concerns around gentrification and exclusivity
- Consider operational models, including staffing and governance
- Retain and celebrate the existing character of the arches

Participants engaged thoughtfully and enthusiastically, offering both ideas and critical reflections. The challenge moving forward will be to balance growth and openness with the informality, affordability and character that make The Arches unique.

7. Appendix of Collages

