

Richmond Riverside

Virginia Woolf Statue Consultation

Summary of Results

1. Background

Arts and education charity Aurora Metro has launched a heritage project to create a life-sized statue of the famous writer Virginia Woolf. By crowd funding the charity has raised £36,500 of the £50,000 cost of designing and manufacturing the statue. There was a previous consultation in 2017, where the majority of respondents were in favour of the statue being built.

The proposed location for the statue is the upper terraces near the entrance to Heron Square at Richmond upon Thames Riverside, for which planning permission has been granted. Virginia Woolf lived in central Richmond with her husband for 10 years where she founded the Hogarth Press. The statue will celebrate her life and achievements as a woman writer, feminist and LGBTQ+ icon. The statue will provide a longstanding and interactive memorial, which the public can view and learn from and will help put Richmond on the British Literary map.

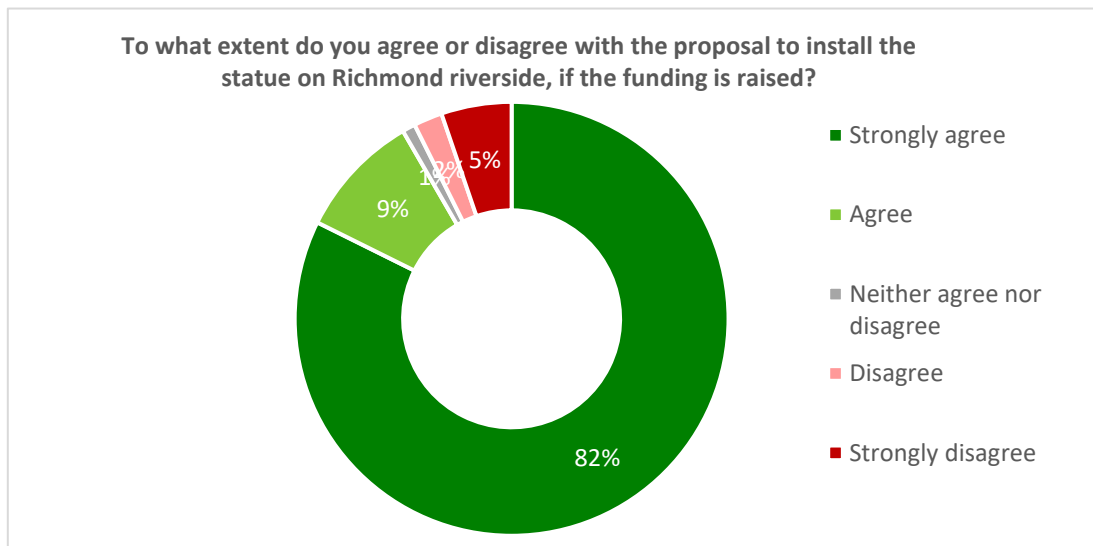
The proposed statue would feature Virginia Woolf on a bench (Appendix 1). It would be designed and made by award-winning sculptor Laury Dizengremel. It will be cast and patinated in bronze.

This consultation took place between 10th June and 1st July 2021.

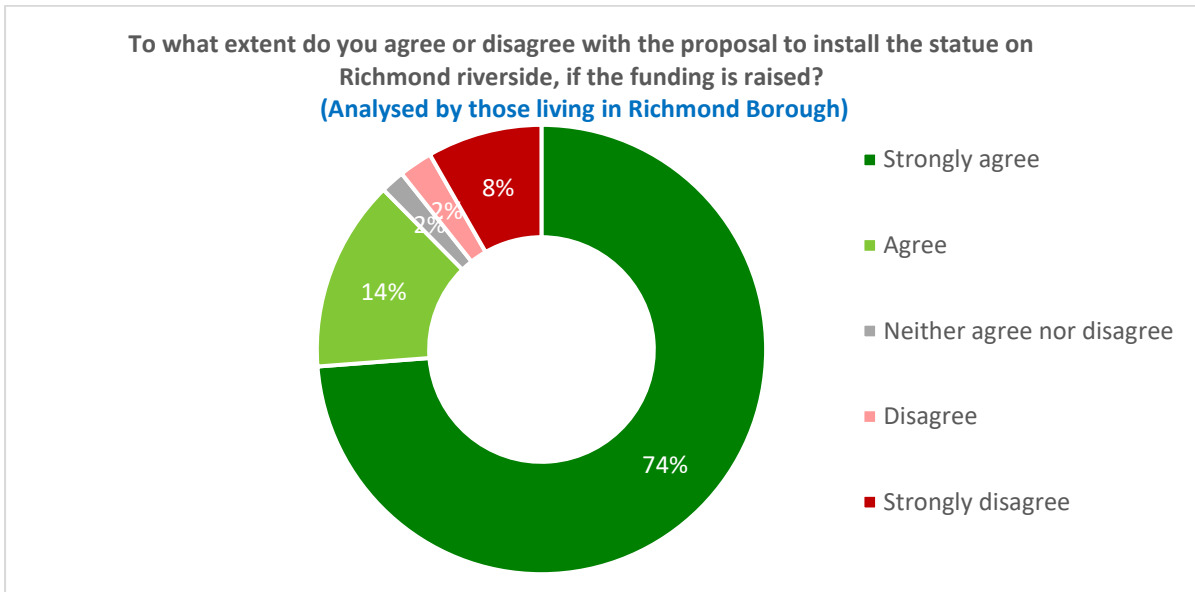
2. Summary of Results

515 people responded to this consultation via the online [survey](#).

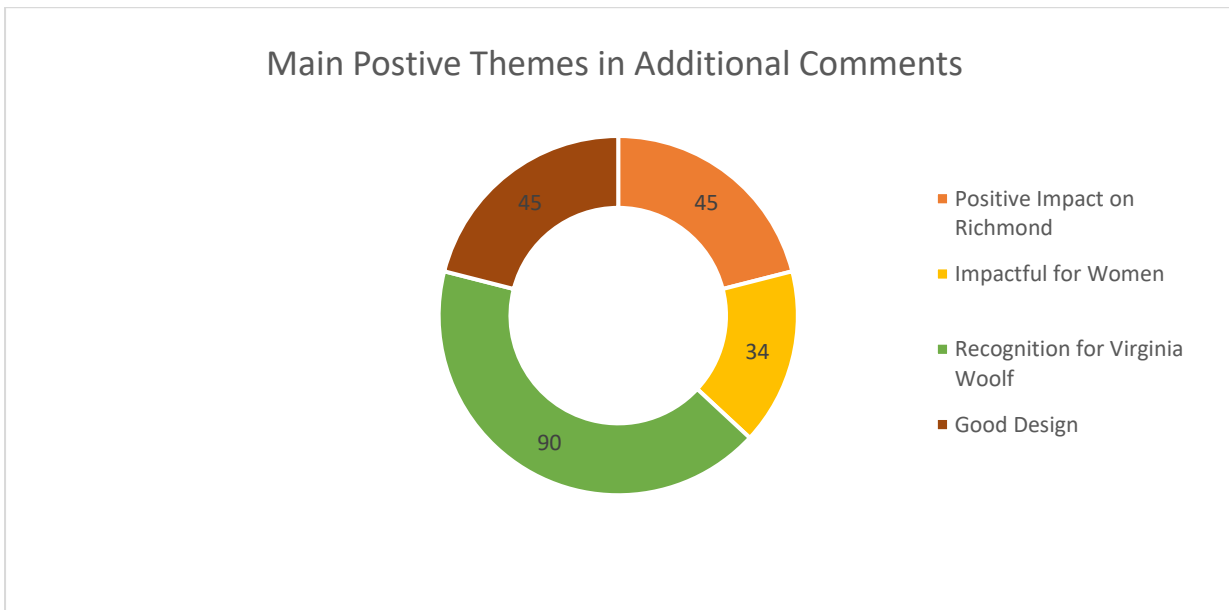
To the question of whether they agree or disagree with the addition of the statue on the terraces at Richmond upon Thames Riverside, 472 of respondents (91%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal. In contrast, 38 respondents (7%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal. 5 respondents (1%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.



Of the 515 respondents, 290 live in the borough with 244 (88%) either strongly agreed or agreed, 31 (10%) respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed. Five of the respondents neither agree nor disagree.

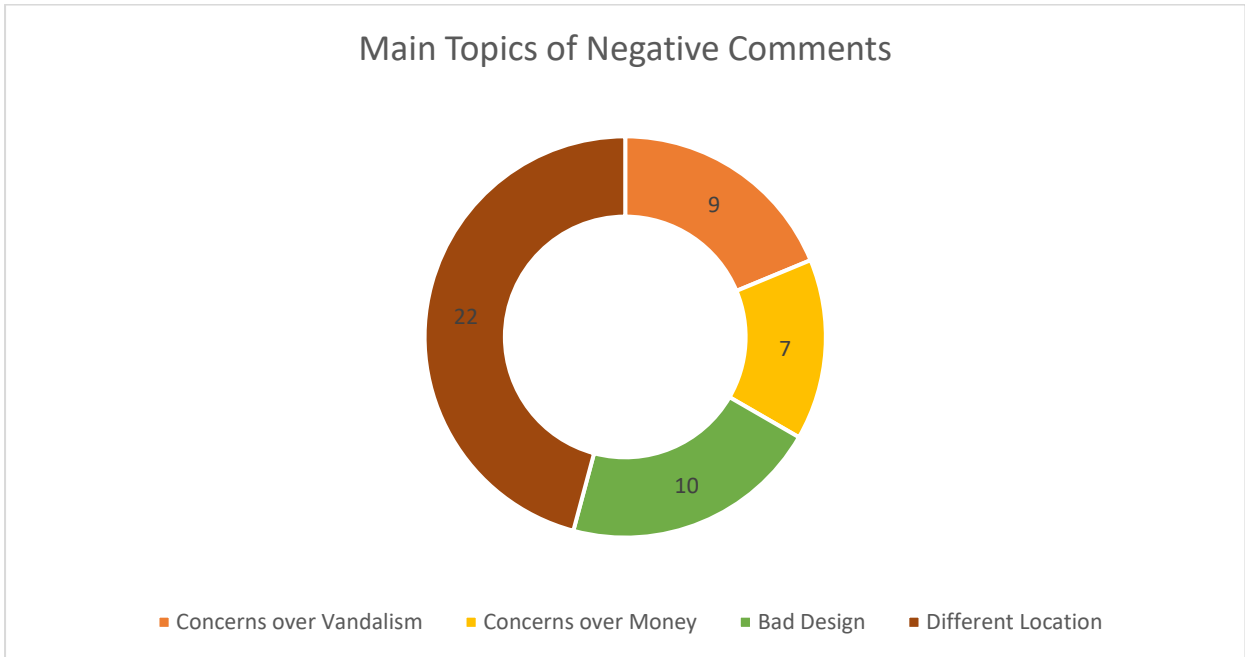


Respondents were asked if they had any additional comments. 275 comments were made excluding those that stated 'n/a' or 'no'. Most of the additional comments made were in agreement and listed specific reasons why they felt the statue to be a good idea.



90 Respondents stated that the proposal of a statue was a suitable way to pay tribute and recognise the impact Virginia Woolf had. 45 of the respondents believed that the installation of the statue would have a positive impact on Richmond, in terms of bringing more tourists to the area and commemorating Richmond's contribution to Woolf's work. Another 45 of the comments stated that they liked the design, additionally there were 5 comments made about how they enjoyed the interactive aspect of the design and another stated they would like this to go further with the addition of QR codes in order to make the statue a learning experience. 34 respondents recognised that this would have a positive impact on women as there are a disproportionate number of male statues compared to female.

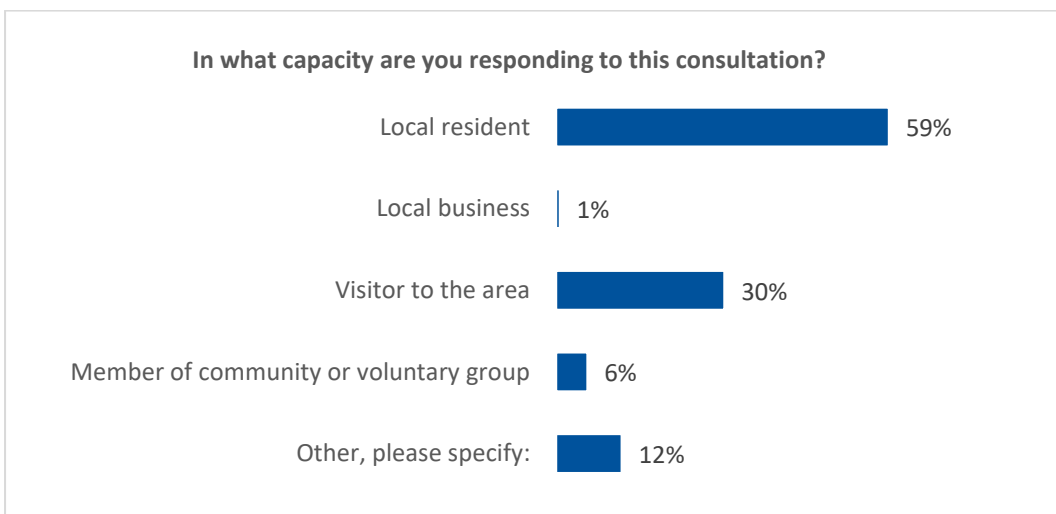
Of the 275 comments 42 of the respondents made a comment in disagreement or part of their additional comment was negative.



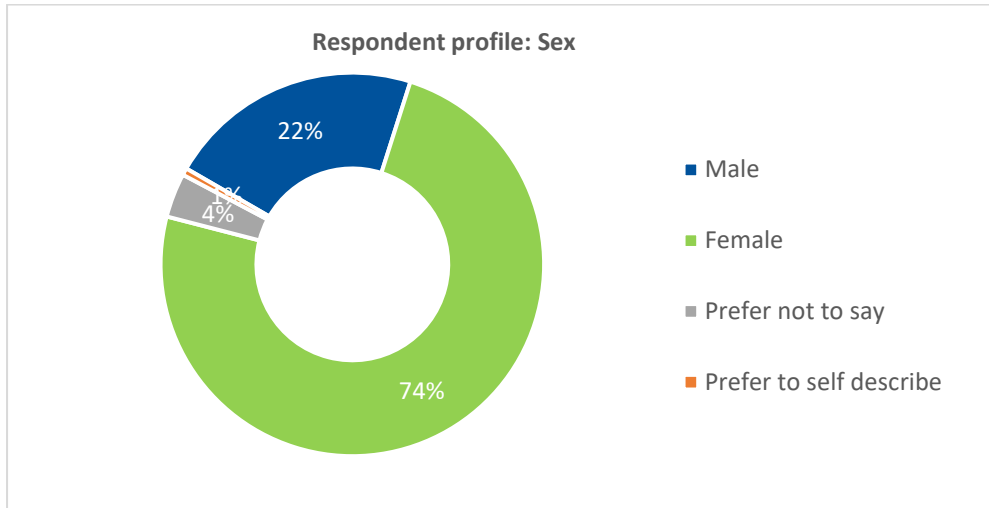
The main topic of concern was regarding the location (22). Many respondents noted Woolf's famous quote about Richmond "if it is a choice between Richmond and death, I choose death." Comments made also stated that the riverside was not a suitable location and even inappropriate as Woolf died by drowning in The River Ouse. Some suggested near the previously named Hogarth House or the Green. Others (10) noted that they did not approve of the design, particularly Virginia Woolf's face as it didn't resemble her. There were concerns over the cost of the statue however this is funded by the charity and the cost of maintenance of the statue following concerns of vandalism (9).

3. User information

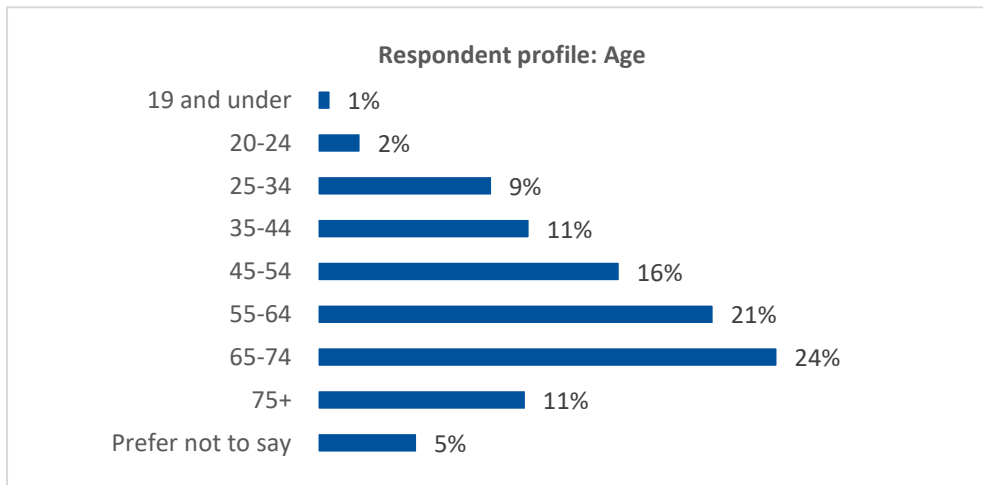
308 (60%) of the respondents were local residents or businesses. 154 (30%) respondents are visitors to the area, 30 (6%) are a member of a community or voluntary group.



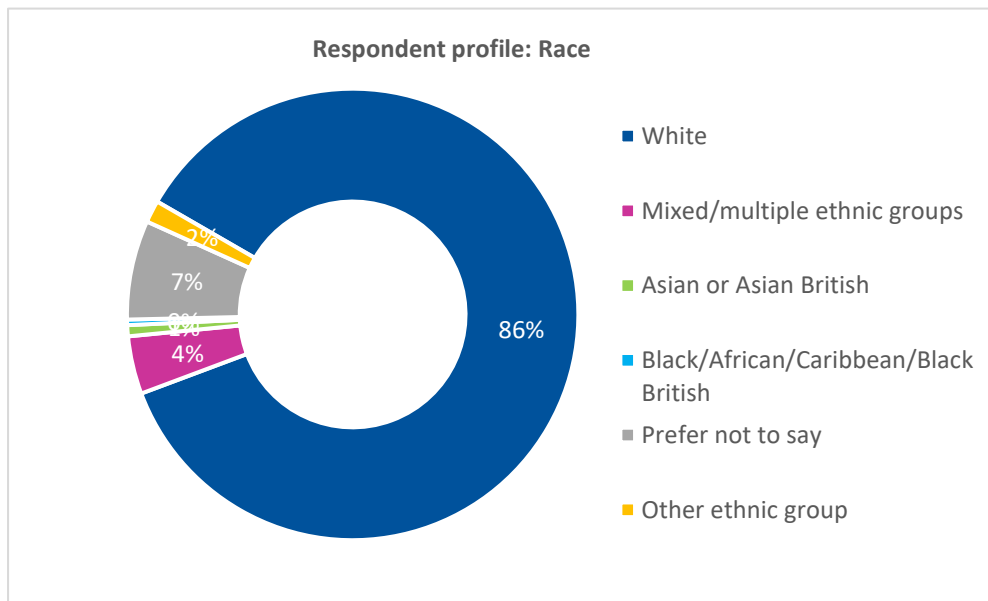
510 respondents supplied their gender: 110 (22%) were male, 378 (74%) were female, 19 prefer not to say (4%) and 3 (1%) prefer to self-describe.



513 respondents provided their age:



506 respondents provided their ethnic group:



4. Recommendation

It is the recommendation of the Parks Team following overwhelming support to approve the installation of the statue while addressing the concerns of the respondents. We know the location of the statue is contended due to the manner of Woolf's death, however the majority supported the location and believed it to be good spot for tourism and locals. We would recommend making the installation more interactive and have resources nearby for learning about Woolf's contribution to Literature and discuss a way to prevent vandalism of the statue. We do not believe this requires further consultation.

5. Next steps

The Parks and Open Spaces Team plan to:

- Share the report with Aurora Metro Charity and Ward Councillors.
- If approved by Councillors, inform the charity so they can work towards raising the rest of the funds needed.
- When funds are raised, and the statue has been made inform the Grounds Contractors regarding its installation and location.
- Inform residents when statue will be placed in situ via posters on site and on the Councils Consultation webpage.

Appendix:

- 1) Statue mock-up of life-sized model of Virginia Woolf sat on a bench.

