

Title Frequently Asked Questions on the proposal to consult on moving Muswell Hill Library

For Muswell Hill community; Library users.

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CONSULTATION

1. What is the background to this consultation?

Muswell Hill Library is a small and well used branch library in a listed building in central Muswell Hill. Haringey Council recently commissioned a feasibility study looking at how we could make this building more accessible including lift access to the children's library on the first floor, accessible toilets as well as improvements to heating, cooling and lighting.

Three options for adapting the building were explored, the most simple would cost over £680,000 and the most expensive (including an extension to the library on the land at the rear of the building) would cost over £1,650,000.

The Council cannot prioritise spending this level of investment on a branch library at this present time and is proposing to move the library to a new, modern and accessible facility at 54/56 Muswell Hill (the site of the old Green Man pub) where a new library could be re-provided. This will form the basis of the consultation in May 2016.

2. What are the public to be consulted on?

The public consultation will present two options: staying in the existing library building, but with no investment for adaptations; or moving to the new facility at 54/56 Muswell Hill where a modern, accessible and flexible library service could be provided.

It is the council's preference to relocate the library to the new facility, which would have lower running costs and enable the council to realise the capital receipt from selling the existing building. This would provide much needed resources for the council and allow it to invest in other high profile areas. The new space is also 25% larger than the existing library (450m² instead of 360m²).

3. What is the timetable for consultation on the options for the future of Muswell Hill Library?

A full public consultation will commence on in May. It is proposed to run a 12 week consultation period to maximise the time available for consultation and engagement. A series of engagement sessions and meetings will be held during the consultation to discuss the plans further and answer questions from the community and interested parties.

4. Why are the options to improve/extend the current library not being considered?

The council faces many competing needs for resources at a time when budgets are under increasing pressure. The council does not think investing in this building is a priority as it would not deliver value for money. It would therefore be misleading to consult with the public on options which are not financially viable.

5. Is it really an option (in the consultation) to not invest in Muswell Hill Library and leave the building as it is?

Yes, it is possible that we can choose to accept that this is an old building and that the library has its limitations and leave the building as it is. However, we do get complaints from people who are unable to use the library, or find the building difficult to access, so this is not our preferred option.

6. Why aren't there more options for the consultation?

We are only consulting on the two viable options. The other options coming out of the feasibility study are not financially viable for the council to pursue because it is not a council priority to invest such sums in a small branch library.

7. Does this consultation represent a choice?

Yes. We want to capture as many views as possible from the community, including library users, residents and traders about our proposals. We will actively publicise and encourage the community to participate in the consultation through social media channels, a series of drop-in sessions, questionnaires and other outreach activities with the community. The consultation feedback will be carefully considered before the future of the library is decided.

8. If the Library is relocated would users have an input into the design and service provision?

Yes. The council would be looking to engage with library users on the future design, layout and services for the new building, and would seek community input into designing the new library through a series of design workshops.

9. We need to be able to visualise the proposed new building before we are able to make an informed decision as part of the consultation. Can we see plans for the new space?

We are proposing to produce a plan of the proposed new building layout to accompany the public consultation showing the space available in comparison to the existing library. These plans will be indicative uses of the space – the final design of the library space would be made in partnership with the community through a series of design workshops.

FUNDING AND SALE

10. What is Capital funding?

Capital funding covers construction and infrastructure improvements, and building projects such as this. This is different to 'revenue' costs, which cover things like salaries and on-going running costs.

11. Is there funding available for the alterations works to the existing building?

No. The feasibility study on the existing Muswell Hill Library looked at three options for making the building more accessible. The cost of delivering these options ranged from £680,000 to £1,600,000. The financial business case for adapting the library cannot be made given the many other competing priorities facing the Council at this time.

12. Why would there be funds available to fit out a library at the new location?

The move to the new library facility would be funded by the sale of the existing library building. The value for money case in investing in a new building is that it is cheaper to maintain in the long run and delivers a larger and more modern facility, that is fully accessible and all on one level.

13. Have alternative sources of funding been considered, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund?

Whilst we continue to explore available funding sources, we are not aware of any grants that provide 100% funding for projects such as ours. All funding grants require a level of match-funding which we are not able to provide.

14. Why has Alexandra Palace been granted funding from Heritage and lottery streams for their project?

These projects are very different in nature to the one at Muswell Hill Library – they are bringing back into use disused heritage and cultural spaces, compared to our project which is about maintaining an existing and functioning library.

15. Why is selling the new site at 54/56 Muswell Hill to fund improvements to the existing library not being proposed as an option?

The new facility provides us with an opportunity to re-provide the Library in a modern accessible building in the heart of Muswell Hill. The new facility will offer the council savings in running costs compared with the old building, and in its operations as it is all on one floor, as well as a receiving a sum of capital money from selling the old building. The financial business case to sell the new building to fund works to the old building is not financially viable. This is because a new modern building is cheaper to operate and maintain than an older building.

Selling the new site would require consent from the landlords who have given agreement for the space to be used on the basis of planning category 'D1' use only, which is limited to community functions such as education, medical, community centres, nurseries,

libraries, etc. Within this D1 constraint, the council would struggle to raise sufficient funds by selling the new site to pay for adaptations to the existing library building.

16. What will proceeds from the sale of the building be spent on?

A portion of the sale would be spent on fitting out the library in the new site while the remaining funds would be used to support other council priority projects across the borough, from fixing pot holes to improving homes.

17. The council will get six units of housing at 54/56 Muswell Hill which could produce significant sums if sold - so why can't this money be used to sustain the current library?

Any sums that the council generates through the sale of its assets go to supporting the council's many priorities. It is not one of the council's priorities to invest such large sums into a branch library but we are continuing to invest in our main libraries at Marcus Garvey, Wood Green and Hornsey, as well as in IT for all libraries

18. Could the council sell part of the land at the rear of the existing library to pay for the adaptations to the building?

We have not included the option of selling the land at the rear of the library to fund adaptations to the existing building as we do not think it is financially viable, or indeed feasible.

Any development on the rear site would need accessible pedestrian access. We have reviewed the use of the pedestrian footpath on Avenue Mews which runs directly alongside the library in line with current British Standards legislation document and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. This code of practice states the minimum widths of footpath necessary for accessibility, and it is clear that the footpath running directly alongside the library barely complies with the current legislation for use in 'exceptional circumstances'. This means that safe and accessible pedestrian access to the land at the rear of the library is not possible, and thus limits its development for residential or other properties.

If in future Ave Mews could be pedestrianised, then access to the library from its side elevation or a potential extension to the rear on the existing vacant land could be considered. However, given the need for vehicles to be able to access rear driveways of the business premises located on Muswell Hill Broadway for refuse/recycling, deliveries, collections and emergencies, it is highly unlikely this would ever happen.

EXISTING LIBRARY BUILDING

19. What is the proposed new site for the library and what is the size compared with the existing library building?

The council have agreed the principles for the lease of the Ground Floor of 54/56 Muswell Hill. This decision was made independent of any library proposals and was subject to a separate Cabinet decision for a land exchange with the Peter Rigby Trust. The gross internal area of the new unit is 528m².

Of this space the London Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy (LCCCP) will occupy a small unit of approximately 75m², leaving the council with approximately 453m² of space. In comparison, the existing Muswell Hill Library building has a net internal area of 360m² over the two floors (excluding approximately 50m² of unusable space for the entrance and stairs).

As such, the proposed new location would be approximately 25% larger than the existing library.

20. What is the planned use for the existing building should the library be relocated?

With regard to the future use of the existing library building, the council are considering a number of potential future options but nothing has been formally proposed to date. The council will not formalise any plans for the building until the future of the library has been decided. With this in mind, we are proposing to start consulting on the potential move of the library after the Mayoral election in May (as we are restricted in what activities we can perform as a council in the run up to elections).

In order to sell an asset the size of Muswell Hill Library, the disposal would need to be approved by Cabinet and represent best value for the Council and for residents.

21. What is the distance between the existing library and the proposed new site?

Less than 150m.

22. It has been suggested that the existing library site is being proposed as a new Health Centre?

The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has looked at the Muswell Hill Library site in their own feasibility study as a potential future site for providing GP practices. The CCG has the opportunity to make a capital bid for a new facility, but in order to do this they needed to develop a speculative model for Muswell Hill. This bid in no way ties them to the library site but it does allow them to start the process of trying to access funding.

Any decisions on the future use of the Muswell Hill Library building would only be taken after the future of the library has been considered by Members and financial considerations examined. Given the size of the asset, this decision would need to be made by the Council's Cabinet.

The CCG understands that the library building is not up for offer unless the council agrees to move the library following consultation. They are also aware that that a council decision making process would need to be followed to decide the future use of the building.

23. Could the new site at 54/56 Muswell Hill be used for a doctor's surgery instead of the library site?

The site at 54/56 Muswell Hill is not large enough for the CCG's desired facility. If the CCG were to purchase the existing library building then they would need to build on the land at the rear of the site to have enough space for their new facility.

24. Would the CCG be interested in the land at the rear of this building?

Yes, to create a site large enough for their purposes they would need to develop the land at the rear of the building. The CCG can access health funding (from the NHS) to re-develop the site – a funding pot that we have no access to.

25. The report from CCG on 5th February stated this site (library) is "likely to be available" – How did they know that before we did?

This is the opinion of the CCG and does not represent a position offered by the Council.

26. Will public access be maintained to the existing mural on the first floor?

It is our intention to try to protect the mural however we will not know exactly what will happen to the mural until a proposal for developing the library site is prepared. Any decision on the future use of the building will be informed by this requirement.

27. Could you build housing at the rear of the current library to fund improvement works to the existing library building?

The feasibility study found (as part of Option 3) that accessibility to the rear of the site via Avenue Mews does not meet current legislative requirements as a route for general pedestrian access, so it would not be a suitable location for a new accessible entrance (for housing or a library).

28. £1.6m seems like a lot of money for building a simple extension to the library?

We employed a company called Frankhams to do this feasibility work, and they are a professional, independent organisation. As is standard for all construction projects at this stage in design, this estimation includes project management costs, design fees, legal and procurement fees and project contingency costs. We also know from the works we are doing to Marcus Garvey and Wood Green libraries, as well as other corporate building projects, that the construction industry is very buoyant at the moment and costs for such works are currently high.

29. Is there a covenant on the existing library building?

The building has a covenant to be used a library or other public non-trading purpose. We have been advised that the covenant applies to the council and not the land, and thus is enforceable against the council not the successors in title. As such, the covenant does not prohibit the sale of the building and its future development.

30. If this building is sold are there any safeguards to protect the facade of the building?

Yes – the building is listed which means the facade would have to be protected regardless of who developed the building.

31. The mural on the first floor is also listed so how would this affect the development of the building?

The development of the building would have to consider any listed elements to ensure their protection in line with guidelines for listed buildings.

32. Is this library more expensive to run than it would be in a new building?

The library service has many pressures on its budgets and running services in old buildings, with increased heating and maintenance costs, as well as being split over two floors and needing extra staff for this, makes it more expensive to run. A modern library on one level, which would only need one information point, would be cheaper and more sustainable for the service to run.

33. This building has been a library for over 80 years - why is it only now been decided that it is unsustainable?

We know that this is a much loved building, but we also know that the accessibility of the building is poor. This came up during the Libraries Review of March 2015, and was the basis of our recent feasibility report.

The feasibility report found that to make the building more accessible would cost between £680,000 (option 1) to £1,650,000 (option 3). The council cannot prioritise spending such large sums on a branch library at this time, although we continue to invest in our main libraries at Marcus Garvey, Wood Green and Hornsey.

34. What will happen to current groups and events run at the library if the service is relocated?

The proposed site for a new library at 54/56 Muswell Hill is 25% larger than the current library and provides a modern and flexible space, with potential to support a variety of groups, events and partnership activities.

35. Can we pedestrianise Avenue Mews to make access to the rear of the library building possible?

We do not believe it is viable to pedestrianise the Mews as it provides emergency and refuse/recycling access at the rear of the properties on Muswell Hill Broadway. There are also properties with gated access directly onto this area.

36. I visit this library every day and the fact there isn't a toilet here isn't an issue.

Those who visit this library everyday do not have any problems with this building. We also recognise that there are people who choose not to visit this library because they know they can't get in, or they find the stairs difficult, or they are worried about the lack of accessible toilets should they need to use them. We receive complaints from people who tell us how difficult they find this building to use, or that they can't use library at all.

37. Have you sub-let the private car park at the back?

No. The council enforces parking at the rear of the library.

38. When we asked about costing from the feasibility study an officer told us that it would cost £100,000 for a lift so why can't the council just install a lift?

A lift is a single item purchase so there would be other construction costs attached to that. A basic lift could be purchased for £100,000 but this does not mean that it is suitable for this building, and would not include the wider construction project required to adapt this building.

PROPOSED NEW SITE

39. Can you confirm the exact measurements of the new site at 54/56 Muswell Hill? Green Man pub?

The floor plans we have available for the site show that the area we will take a lease on will be approximately 448m². This excludes a space of 74m² which we will make available to the London Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy (LCCCP).

40. If the library building is sold how much of the sale will be used for the new library?

This depends on who we sell the building to, how much we raise from the sale, and how much the re-provided library would cost to fit out. We will make some estimation of costs of fitting out the new library building in readiness for the consultation.

41. Would the Library be closed for any period of time if it is relocated to the new location?

The existing library could remain operational whilst the new location is fitted out. There would be a minimal period of transition whilst equipment and stock is moved between sites; it is anticipated however that the library service in Muswell Hill could remain operational throughout.

42. How much will the new library cost to fit out?

We will do some initial designs for the building and provide some estimates of the fit out. We will then update this document.

43. Will the new site have parking provisions?

There is opportunity for disabled parking bays at the new site.

44. What are the service charges for the new site?

The principles for the lease are currently being negotiated with the developers. As such, we are unable to answer this question at present.

45. How did the council secure a 999 year lease at 54/56 Muswell Hill?

Securing this lease was part of the deal for the sale of the former Greenfields School on Coppetts Rd and purchase of part of 54/56 Muswell Hill from the Peter Rigby Trust. This deal was part of a separate cabinet decision in October 2015.

46. Have the council explored the possibility of the site at 54/56 Muswell Hill being used for education?

If the consultation process shows there is no support for moving the library to the space at 54/56 Muswell Hill then we will explore other uses for this space. This could include education or nursery facilities.

47. If the new library is all on one level, how will noise from the children's library be managed?

All of our branch libraries incorporate a children's library, and noise from children is well managed and rarely leads to complaints. The performance specification and requirements for the new library space will be incorporated into the design documents including acoustic, heating, cooling and lighting requirements suitable for a library building of this size.

48. How high will the ceilings be in the proposed library compared to the existing library?

We are seeking this information from the developers and will update this document when it is available.

49. Will there be enough natural light in the new building if the restaurant/retail unit is at the front of the building?

The restaurant/retail unit runs along part of the front of the building – the library space would have natural light from at least two different sides of the building. Lighting requirements for the building will be considered as part of the building design to make sure that all parts of the internal space are appropriately lit, from both natural and artificial light.

50. When did you acquire the 999 year lease?

The Cabinet decision in October 2015 approved the undertaking of the deal to secure the lease at 54/56 Muswell Hill. The Heads of Terms (principles) of the lease are currently being negotiated. This means the lease will be acquired once the building is finished and practical completion has occurred on the site (expected to be in September 2016).

51. How will the quality of a modern library be the same as the one provided in a heritage building?

The new library service would be equal to the existing service, but we believe the quality of the new building would exceed the current building in many areas, for example, space available, heating and cooling, lighting, flexibility of space and accessibility.

52. Have you decided where entrance will go on the new proposed site?

The site plans show that the entrance point for our part of 54/56 Muswell Hill will be on Muswell Hill, at the top end of the site. This means library users will not have to walk down the steep hill to access the library. A site plan for the ground floor will be included in the consultation documents.

53. Noting the refurbishment happening in Marcus Garvey Library, is there a co-ordinated plan for Haringey's libraries?

We have three main libraries in Haringey and an operational decision was made on Marcus Garvey and Wood Green that they will incorporate Customer Service Centres, allowing residents to access a wider range of council services in one place. These new centres will be open during the summer of 2016. This provided a strong business case to prioritise these two busier main libraries in the borough over smaller branch libraries. There will also be investment in Hornsey library during 2016/17, as well as investment in libraries IT across all sites.

54. The site acquired at 54/56 Muswell Hill includes six affordable housing units. What is 'affordable housing'?

The council has acquired space over three floors – the ground floor for which we propose to consult on its potential use as a library, and two upper floors which we plan to convert to six residential flats. These will then be offered as shared ownership as a form of affordable housing.