

Look and feel

Walworth Library and Southwark Heritage Centre Consultation Stage 3 Report

December 2019

Look and Feel engagement

1. What is the engagement about?

On 28 November 2018 council assembly approved the current Council Plan stating the commitment to build a new library on the Walworth Road. The new library and Southwark heritage centre will ensure that Walworth remains a destination, and provides community facilities to meet the needs locally and for the borough. On the 22 January 2019 Cabinet agreed that Council take a lease for 250 years on the ground floor of units 145-147 Walworth Road of the Elephant Park development.

A new library with integrated heritage centre brings exciting opportunities to increase access to the Southwark collections and extend the context of both the heritage and library service. The integrated facility can explore different ways of presenting information, learning and engaging and thus provide a unique resource for Southwark's diverse communities. We want to encourage a lot of new people to this unique place and re-connect with past users.

The vision for the Walworth Library and Southwark Heritage Centre

- A flexible modern facility with a quality visitor experience where people feel they belong
- A welcoming, democratic community facility for all that amazes, inspires and intrigues
- An integrated library and heritage centre with relevant resources and fascinating stories about Southwark, its people and objects from the collections
- A place that reflects the uniqueness of Southwark which promotes inclusivity and opportunities for participation.

The community engagement for the new library and heritage centre is to facilitate community input into the project development and delivery. Our aims for the engagement are to:

- raise project awareness and input into the Walworth Library and Southwark Heritage Centre design development
- ensure that the project outcomes reflect the community's aspirations by informing and engaging with key stakeholder groups, schools and the wider community through a range of communication and engagement tools
- facilitate the two way flow of information and knowledge about the project to both internal and external stakeholders.

The engagement plan includes; Bright ideas, concept design RIBA stage 2 and detailed design stage 3.

2. The Look and feel engagement process

From 21 November until 3 December Southwark Council with lead designers AOC undertook an engagement process to test detailed design ideas for the new Library and Heritage Centre on the Walworth Road and receive the communities input. The purpose of the look and feel consultation phase was to understand people's thoughts on the developing design and receive further responses. These responses will inform the design to complete stage 3 of the design process. The following table notes the activities used to communicate the process and to gather information. Questions to help determine the signage strategy of the facility were also included in this stage of consultation.

All engagement promoted the use of the online consultation to complete detailed responses.

Activity	Location	Circulation	No. respondents
Webpage update outlining consultation	www.southwark.gov.uk/WL&SHC		
Southwark e-comms consultation promotion			
Southwark Presents Culture e-newsletter consultation promotion September		4,671	
Elephant Website news item project introduction and consultation promotion	https://www.elephantandcastle.org.uk/latest-news/		
Direct email to interested groups and organisations list		60	
Direct email to all TRA's		330	
Direct email to all Southwark schools			
Internal stakeholder workshop 21.11.19	John Harvard Library	20	12
External invited stakeholder work shop 21.11..19	John Harvard Library	60 invited	10
Public look and Feel drop in 21.11..19	John Harvard Library	Open	5
Online consultation questionnaire	21 November - 3 December 2019 https://consultations.southwark.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/walworth-library-and-heritage-centre-designs/		35

Total

4. External Stakeholder session

A number of local groups, organisations, museums and culture providers were invited to attend a facilitated discussion on the new library and heritage centre which was attended by 10 representatives. A presentation was given on the project and its development to this point.

Talking points;

- Incorporate access user groups in consultation
- Environmental controls/conditioning for Heritage Workshop
- Adequate bike racks in proximity
- Strategy required to count visitors to the Heritage
- Carpets are not suitable for heritage collection care and create difficulty to move future. Wood and thick lino robust enough for moving furniture.
- Deck in contrast to pier option for the mezzanine.
- Options for balustrades to contain modules for display that will also look good when empty
- Managing risk from pipes – lagging and leak detection
- Make sure the temporary exhibition space is suitable for a range of activities
- Distinction between spaces and exhibits
- Ability to promote events/activities outside the premise
- Potential to incorporate public realm benches by using quotes etc

5. Internal Stakeholder session

Officers across Southwark from the internal stakeholder group participating in design discussions and priorities workshop.

Talking points;

- Faraday Cage (Digital quiet zone); mixed level of support but feel it is a good option to trial and allow future flexibility
- Site lines throughout premise to be considered for better management
- Lighting control zones for different spaces/uses
- Avoiding glare in heritage displays
- External signage strategy needs to include options for information on rotating exhibitions and events
- Crucial that finishes, fittings and furniture are robust and easily maintained

6. Chalk and talk public drop in session and online responses

Everyone was invited to attend a drop in session and talk with the lead designers and Southwark officers about the project. Display boards showed the project background, design options for discussion and materials for finishes. Attendees to all workshops were encouraged to complete the online questionnaire to provide detailed input and these are summarised below.

Question 1: Have you got any comments on the stage 3 layout?

29 responses were given. 13 responses included stated positive comments supporting in general the proposals shown. Many of the comments were broad based, however responses considering the following key issues related to layout;

- 9 responses discussed acoustics and the need to contain and absorb noise in an open plan environment, and that the library and museum should be calm and quiet spaces.
- 3 responses discussed the proposed digital silence 'Faraday Room' and saw it as a positive contribution to managing the proliferation of electromagnetic waves in public space.
- 4 responses discussed the position of the children's library and the lounge from a position of safe guarding and optimising soft seating options.
- A number of responses wanted more information on the balance and location of youth and adult library provision.
- A number of responses were keen to know more about the staff point of contact and privacy around data entry
- A number of responses discussed the amount of soft seating and study desks
- 4 responses discussed the detailed arrangement of the heritage area wanting to know more about how the exhibitions will be arranged

Question 2: We have been exploring the potential of including a digital free space in the library. It is located on the mezzanine. Are you interested in a digital free space within the library without wireless access for quiet working?

Yes	47%	No	43%
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Question 3: What is most important to you about the temporary exhibition space and how it is used?

There were 28 responses

- Some responses raised concern regarding too little space for the exhibitions
- 9 responses consider an ambition for flexibility and the need for regular changing exhibits
- 6 responses considered the relevance of exhibits including curation by locals and local artists – representing the views of a diverse community and local users
- Some responses were keen to ensure that the exhibitions made space and a focus for children
- Some responses were focussed on enabling resourcing by staff, and ensuring space for temporary equipment storage and screening off the gallery area to allow for rehanging.

Question 4: What is most important to you about the Southwark stories permanent exhibition and how it is developed?

There were 26 responses

- 3 responses focussed on the strength of Southwark's history and how well the story can be told in a clear and accessible manner.
- 9 responses focus on an ambition for broad inclusive interest, and the potential of local engagement and co-curation.
- Some responses wanted to make sure it was suitable for kids.
- 8 responses related to making the best use out of the fantastic artefacts in the collection, as many as possible, including new oral histories and newly donated materials.
- A detailed response asked to make dense display with additional pull out shelves or cupboards for additional special interests and additional content.
- 4 responses suggested that the permanent exhibition shouldn't be that permanent, and evolve and change.
- 1 response suggested that the exhibition should work to signpost other places and cultural points of interest in the borough.

Question 5: Which signage approach do you prefer for the new frontage:

Option 1: A large sign painted onto the brick façade	82%
Option 2: Discrete signage on the new entry lobby	15%

Question 6: Which paving approach do you prefer for the new frontage:

b1: A contrasting pattern of stone making a graphic pattern	41%
b2: A contrasting pattern of stone making a statement eg 'wisdom at your fingertips'	56%

Question 7: The new lobby is proposed to be made of brickwork to fit well with the existing building. New automatic entrance doors will be glazed with anodised aluminium frames. Please note your preference on the proposed external materials

Brickwork	contrasting colours	56%
	matching colour	35%

Stone Pavers	Graphic pattern	38%
	Text of quote or statement	56%
Signage	Painted on Brick	59%
	Metal signage	35%

Are there any comments you would like to make about the material approach?

There were 21 responses. Quite a range of additional comments often related to the queries already commented on in questions 5-7.

- 8 responses discussed the size and extent of the large painted text – wanting it big and bold and the full width of the frontage - other responses wanted the clarity of a new lobby in contrasting brickwork.
- 2 responses were concerned about the ease of walking over a graphic floor finish – with varied views on graphic or text responses
- 2 responses particularly wanted to ensure Walworth was in the name of the centre.

Question 8: The windows give fantastic views into the life of the centre and will be a key communication about the facility with descriptive signage incorporated along each window.

Select items you would like to include in the window text proposals?

Southwark logo	35 %
Centre logo	29 %
Quotes	35 %
Activities	50 %
Collection items	32 %
Other	15 %
Not Answered	9 %

Question 9: Do you prefer? Please choose your preferred options below

Materials	that express natural grain (e.g. a3)	65%
	Materials that express colour (e.g. a4)	29%

collection	muted background (e.g. b3)	56%
	contrasting but complimenting (e.g. b4)	29%

Question 10: We have included some material samples in the pictures above. Generally we are developing our material palette, but are interested to hear what you prefer

Wall shelves	- timber finish	76%
	- colour finish	15%

Free-standing shelves	- timber finish	65%
	- colour finish	26%

Floor	- carpet	35%
	- timber	50%

Ceiling	- Acoustic plaster	71%
	- Acoustic metal tile	9%

Balustrade	- Acoustic Fabric Faced	15%
	- Acoustic Wood Faced	71%

There were 15 responses with comments made for this part of the question.

- 9 responses were concerned with overall ambience – wanting a calm environment with natural neutral finishes with some highlights
- 2 further responses went on to discuss the need for a warm feeling and welcoming
- There were ambitions to let the books and artefacts do the hard work
- 5 responses asked for robust materials and appropriate long lasting finishes
- 2 responses requested sustainable material and construction choices
- At least 3 responses thought that variety and differentiation in the furniture design was important
- Inclusivity was important, 1 response requested a focus on autism and dementia

Engagement Summary

Decisions taken forward in developing stage 3 designs

Question 1: Have you got any comments on the stage 3 layout?

Detailed acoustic modelling has been undertaken and acoustic finishes have been developed to suit the careful arrangement of uses and spatial division. In terms of acoustic ceiling and wall finishes, we have been working iteratively with the acoustic consultant to carefully balance floor finishes, with hard finishes downstairs, and soft carpet upstairs.

The team hopes to include the Faraday room to provide an area of digital silence and the team is working out the detail of how this space will look and feel – but hope to include items from the collection specifically related to the work of Michael Faraday.

Following the development of the plan it has been decided to relocate the community lounge and children's library back to the position previously shown at prior consultation events, balancing safeguarding and the provision of soft seating concerns.

Further development of the library layout is ongoing, including the relationship of youth and adult library spaces and developing detail on the staff desk.

Development of the gallery areas for exhibitions will be ongoing and include a detailed workshop with specialists, curators and gallerists.

Question 2: We have been exploring the potential of including a digital free space in the library. It is located on the mezzanine. Are you interested in a digital free space within the library without wireless access for quiet working?

The team are hoping to include the Faraday room to provide an area of digital silence

Question 3: What is most important to you about the temporary exhibition space and how it is used?

Detailed design of a flexible gallery space is ongoing, with particular consideration of how it can accommodate different types of exhibition using standard storage and providing flexible partitioning to help screen off the space in different ways – for both curation and changeover. Development of the gallery areas for exhibitions will be ongoing and include a detailed workshop with specialists, curators and gallerists.

Question 4: What is most important to you about the Southwark stories permanent exhibition and how it is developed?

There will be a Southwark Stories exhibition which sets out a clear and comprehensive history of the borough. The 'Wow wall' showcase and the embedded collection focus on sharing the breadth of the collection through artefacts, the embedded collection will be made relevant to the library audience.

The detailed design of the exhibition furniture is ongoing, but will look to provide additional storage and display.

It is envisaged that the permanent exhibition spaces have potential for variety and change, to share more of the collection than ever before and to revolve to a schedule determined by the culture team. The development of the exhibition curation is ongoing, however signposting the places of southwark and local points of interest is an ambition.

Question 5: Which signage approach do you prefer for the new frontage:

The design team are taking forward a combination of both options; A large sign painted onto the brick façade communicating at scale is supported by discrete signage on the new entry lobby

Question 6: Which paving approach do you prefer for the new frontage:

With a roughly equal split in opinion the culture team are considering the preferred option taken forward.

Question 7: The new lobby is proposed to be made of brickwork to fit well with the existing building. New automatic entrance doors will be glazed with anodised aluminium frames. Please note your preference on the proposed external materials

The proposed new lobby has contrasting white brickwork. The new stone paver doormat will be either a graphic or text based pattern – this is still to be determined. There will be two scales of primary signage – with large format signage painted onto the existing brick, with smaller scale metal back lit signage on the new entrance lobby structure.

Question 8: The windows give fantastic views into the life of the centre and will be a key communication about the facility with descriptive signage incorporated along each window.

Select items you would like to include in the window text proposals?

The proposal is to include activity based text incorporated into the window reveal.

Question 9: Do you prefer? Please choose your preferred options below

We hope to integrate an appropriate range of materials, including solid wood furniture using timber from trees felled on site through redevelopment. The range of materials will help differentiate the different library and heritage functions within the space without feeling unordered. The materials will give an overall calm and welcoming ambience – a muted background which lets the books and the collection ‘do the work’.

Question 10: We have included some material samples in the pictures above. Generally we are developing our material palette, but are interested to hear what you prefer

We hope to integrate an appropriate range of furniture, including solid wood furniture using timber from trees felled on site through redevelopment. The range of furniture will help differentiate the different library and heritage functions within the space without feeling unordered. The current proposal is to balance predominately timber finished wall shelving with colour finished free standing shelves. However this proposal will develop into the next stage of the design. The ground floor is proposed to be a mix of robust and easy to maintain hard materials; acoustic grade linoleum and engineered timber flooring. Upstairs the floor finish is softer, a sound absorptive carpet. The ceiling is proposed to be a mix of plaster and metal tile to meet the acoustic challenges whilst also allowing the maintenance and co-ordination of the above ceiling services. The balustrade is proposed in a wood faced acoustic panelled system.

All the raw consultation data and this report will be shared as part of the design process to help understand the communities needs and make this new facility a success.