

What do you need?

New Southwark Pensioners Centre

We want to encourage lots of people to this great new facility and need your ideas on what could be done and how you would use the space.

SPC User Forum

24 October 2023

Group discussion and 25 individual responses

After an introductory presentation on Fraser Brown Mackenna (FBM) the project architects, by Sean Rafferty of FBM the following questions were asked and responses given.

Q1. How are you addressing accessibility and sustainability in the design? Respiratory illness is key for this group and need good ventilation and see the basement as a problem.

A. Insure that design standards are met, BREEAM excellent certification is required by the brief making sure high environmental standards are achieved. We are also investigating the use of WELL certification. FBM has used light wells successfully in other projects and there is likely to be an element of mechanical ventilation in the design.

Q2. How is funding assured and what is the programme? Concerns about increasing costs.

A. Southwark Council has committed £1m funding and there is a match target for the SPC to raise £1m. Some funders require planning permission to secure funding and our programme is to submit planning in the Spring 2024.

Q3. We must plan for a pandemic and ventilation is very important in the design. How will members be represented on the Steering Group?

A. Ventilation will be addressed through the design process and a suitable solution found. Cathy is establishing the Steering Group and that will have member representation. There will also be consultation with members and the wider community.

Q4. What happens if the planning process is not successful?

A. There is a pre-application process for planning with the opportunity to discuss designs and address any concerns raised by the Planning Authority. Most of the works are to the interior as it is an existing building and this reduces the risk of being unsuccessful through the planning process.

Q5. How will you bring natural light into the basement as this is important? Also need to provide lift access, stairs and be safe for fires.

A. Light wells are a technique that is very successful for bringing natural light into basement spaces and this will be developed through the design process balancing all the project needs. There is an existing lift well that needs to be investigated and the building will have a compliant fire strategy and address needs of main user group.

Q6. Where is it and how much space is there?

A. 201-205 Camberwell Road, almost twice the size of the current centre. 218sqm v 418sqm. Rooms will be designed for flexibility to meet the needs of activities and users.

Q7. Design with carbon neutrality to help costs and allow access to more funding.

A. change of use from retail to community space will necessitate an improvement in building performance, being more airtight, better glazing, ventilation and insulation. Working to BREEAM excellent which requires a high level of building performance.

Q8. How will the centre meet the running costs of a bigger space

A. Hiring of spaces, more members, members being involved in running the centre. The building is being designed for low cost operation with robust finishes, energy efficiency and simplicity for repairs. Need to think about how we still maintain the level of knowing each other when it is a bigger space as that is currently a key feature of the centre.

Q9. How will activities be managed to avoid loud noise from one room disturbing another?

A. FBM recently built the Salvation Army Hall where the brass band practices next to a community space. Need to include acoustics in the design and make sure activities can comfortably run next to each other. Also need to manage through programming but recognise that is not always possible.

Q10. Ventilation is very important and safety and ease of movement for vulnerable people. Design for movement, hearing and visual disabilities. Emergency facilities need to be spot on and take into account the increased health issues with older people.

A. We will be addressing all vulnerabilities and disabilities through the design and have experience in doing so through projects shown today. An access consultant will review designs during the process.

Q11. The beginning of the centre was the Southwark Pensioners Action Group standing up for older peoples right and this needs to continue in the new centre.

A. Flexible rooms will be able to be used for many different activities and sized gatherings.

Q12. We need to be able to access the centre via transport and get to other activities.

A. We will be working with Housing Dept. to find parking solutions for the new centre.

Questions from the design team for members to the User Forum.

1. What is the most important thing or space for you in the new SPC?

General discussion

Light and well ventilated meeting rooms with toilets close by. Meeting rooms and a community kitchen. Being able to access it all easily. Storage for art and craft. IT training room. Yoga and dancing. Cosy and intimate spaces to chat. Refreshments and being social. A living room with memorabilia contributions from members.

Individual responses

Mobility entrance into building/easy access/ Good fire exit	11
Lots of light	7
Cosy /quiet places where people can meet and chat	6
More loos/accessible/ High toilets for disability	5
Ventilation	4
Meeting room large enough for yoga/dancing/keep fit	4
Lots of storage	4
Meeting room	3
Lift	3
Helpful, organised, well informed staff - Cathy who helps with social landlords	3

Flexibility for future	3
Space for disabilities to move around/safe access	3
Cheerful colours	2
More space for doing hobbies like knitting	2
people	2
Community kitchen	1
Light art room/craft	1
Rest area if feeling unwell	1
A living room that members could furnish with memorabilia	1
Help with mobile phones and tech	1
Knowing about free events and resources	1
Clean comfortable chairs that you can hang a bag or stick on the back	2
More noticeboards	1
Learning	1
Warm in winter	1
Zero carbon	1
Vision and mission – the natural go to hub for Southwark pensioners	1
Modular /movable storage	1
Plan for another pandemic	1
Access for all over 50's for toilets	1

2. What do you not want in the new SPC?

General discussion

No unisex toilets. Small/ low toilets. Outside noise. Not lots of posters in window so you can't see reception – better info management.

Individual responses

Loud music/noise from another room or activity	5
Steep stairs/too many	4
Sound systems with feedback/white noise	2
Non functioning lifts	2
Slippery floors	2
small /low toilets	2
Pay toilets	1
Steep charges for activities or membership	1
glare	1
Dark rooms	1
Poor ventilation	1
Awkward layout	1
Tight spaces	1
People staring in the windows from outside	1
Overcrowding	1
No unisex toilets	1

3. How long do you usually spend at SPC when you visit?

Up to an hour	2-4 hours	Over 5 hours
3	22	

4. What additional services or activities would you like to access at the SPC?

General discussion

Hearing loops. Surgery on DIY and reliable safe traders. Gift table for sale. Floristry. Wellbeing treatments. Health visits. Alternative health.

Individual responses

Advice on money management and savings, legal, housing (cost of living support)	5
Mobile phone and tech advice, AI	4
Exercise like Pilates	4
Film club	3
Pottery class	2
Small cafe	2
Help on DIY and trusted workmen	2
Alternative healing – drop ins and sharing	2
Dancing	2
Gift table to buy/sell	1
Community kitchen so members can bake cakes for the living room	1
Free wills	1
Information on free activities in the area and other groups/organisations eg U3A	1
Knitting class	1
Book club	1
More toilets	1
Fundraising events	1

Language, Reading and writing class	1
Mobility scooter parking	1
Charity events eg cancer	1
Outdoor sports	1
Police confidential sessions	1
Intergenerational - develop living stories	1
Smaller meeting rooms	1
History Club	1
Podiatry	1
Poetry group	1
NHS and health providers	1
Leisure centre	1
Large room for 100 people	1
Hearing and partially sighted aids	1
Floristry activities	1
Lunch	1
counselling	1

5. What would your best visit to SPC include? EG Types of activities, learning, socialising, cup of tea, health or wellbeing treatment?

Learning, socialising, cup of tea, health or wellbeing treatment/café x6

Food/Exercise/Dancing

Learning/wellbeing treatment x2

Sign language or any other language

Healthy eating/exercise advice and opportunities – free or moderately priced

Art class/light lunch/chat

Chair based exercise/film club/bingo/more meetings to keep up to date

Coffee mornings/conversation/company

Health and wellbeing/SPAG/advice sessions – chairs with backs for bags and sticks

Learning/socialising/exercise/chiroprody/ kitchen facilities

Wellbeing treatments – massage/ tech support/money advice/counselling/signposting

Computer, online, digital training/Meetings

Activities

Health/wellbeing treatment

Café

Exercising/dancing/food/socialising

Feel good Friday

6. What are 3 words to describe how the new Centre should feel?

General discussion

Fun/clean/airy/organised/efficient/welcoming/inclusive/warm/versatile/respectful/journey
ing/accompanying/accessible/friendly

Individual responses

Welcoming	20
Friendship/Friendly	6
safe	6
warm	4
Accessible	3

Inclusive	3
Informative	2
Relaxing/comfortable	2
Respectful	2
fun	2
versatile	2
sincere	1
Lots of activities	1
cosy	1
Journeying-accompanying	1
Organised	1
Efficient	1
Joyful	1
Helpful	1
clean	1
airy	1
educational	1
Creating unity	1

7. What is another public place that you like to visit and why?

Out of London/Country villages – new to see x3

Museums – education x2

Brixton House/HLLC Spark Rd x2

Crowded with history - Southwark Cathedral

Camberwell Library – open until 8pm, TV news, good toilets

Farms – social interaction

Leisure Centre – gym, pool, Pilates – problem as need to be online to book

Places that widen our horizons

Cinemas, theatres, lectures

Dulwich Library – answer questions and give information. Community, films, TV

Walworth library and Heritage Centre

Camberwell Leisure Centre

Art galleries and Museums

Camberwell Green in good weather

Parks – outdoor cafes for clinically vulnerable

Russell Sq/Kew Gardens – greenery and benches no druggies

Coffee shops

Library

Salvation Army by Denmark Hill station

8. If money were no object what would you wish for in the new SPC?

Free showers	5
Lunch club/food and drink	4
Hairdresser	3
A large garden	3
Our own transport	2
Exercise classes at my level	2

Handy man services/ security cleared	1
Hydrotherapy	1
A swimming pool	1
Affordable for pensioners	1
escalators	1
Disabled access	1
Wages for volunteers	1
Full kitchen facilities	1
Hearing and site loss aids	1
Nice toilets	1
A social hub where older people can meet and initiate their own activities – low charge	1
Health facilities	1
Café /socialise	1

Summary

Out of the positive discussion and capturing thoughts individually there are some common themes coming through for the design of the new centre:

Accessibility: this is a key issue and was the highest ranking ‘most important thing’ for the user forum. It was mentioned in a number of questions from the group and in responses from members to the design team questions. People want the basement to be accessible especially in fires and emergency situations. Lifts are needed and stairs should be generous and not steep. Movement to (transport), getting in and around the centre needs to be easy for all and specifically for those with mobility needs – note the increased issues for the user group. Accessible, spacious toilets are also a priority.

Natural light and well lit: specifically discussed in relation to the basement but also to help with visual impairments and the need for contrast in surface treatments etc. This was the second ranking ‘most important thing’

Ventilation: this was mentioned in relation to the basement and also recent experiences through the pandemic against the increased health issues and vulnerabilities of users. There is also a desire for the space to be light and airy to help members sense of well being.

Noise transfer: loud music or noise impacting on other activities and impacting on those with hearing impairments. This was the highest thing that people didn't want in the new centre.

Flexibility: The range of additional service and activities people have shows the level of flexibility required throughout the centre and in the design of the rooms and spaces. Including larger spaces of exercise and dancing.

Adjacencies: when asked about your best visit to SPC the most common combination with 11 of 23 people wanting to combine an activity or health or wellbeing treatment with food and drink.

Describing the new centre: the top 3 words were welcoming (20), Friendship or friendly (6) and safe (6). This was echoed with comments made about cosy and quiet places for people to meet and chat.

Other public places: trips out of town for new things to see, libraries, museums and art galleries and places that widen horizons along with parks and green spaces were the favourites.