

Bright ideas

Walworth Library and Southwark Heritage Centre Consultation Phase 1 Report

April - June 2019

Bright ideas 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 phase 1; Bright ideas - being documented in this report, phase 2 which will align with the concept design RIBA stage 2 and phase 3 will share the detailed design.

2. The Bright Ideas engagement process

In April 2019 Southwark Council began an engagement process to increase knowledge of the new Library and Heritage Centre being developed on the Walworth Road and receive the communities initial input. The purpose of the Bright ideas consultation phase was to understand what people think should be provided in the new facility and the kinds of topics they were curious about that could be the basis of displays or exhibits. This information will form part of the design brief and be provided to the design team who will develop the scheme. The following table notes the activities used to communicate the process and to gather information.

Activity	Location	Circulation	No. respondents
Project and consultation introduction and web link for further info	Elephant Magazine https://www.elephantandcastle.org.uk/keep-in-touch/	9000 homes/ online	N/A
Webpage update outlining consultation	www.southwark.gov.uk/WL&SHC		
Southwark e-comms consultation promotion			
Southwark Presents Culture e-newsletter consultation promotion April, May and June		4,671	
Culture Sector newsletter May		1,376	
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 (2)	Southwark Council	23	14; 11
External invited stakeholder work shop	Camberwell Library	60 invited	14
Bright ideas boards and forms in libraries and leisure centres	All libraries and leisure centres		96
Local library drop in/ outreach sessions	Brandon, East St, Camberwell, John Harvard: May-June 2019	10 hrs	84
Crampton School assembly presentation	Crampton Primary School	Full assembly	32
Children's holiday session	John Harvard		6
Online consultation questionnaire	15 April – 10 June 2019 https://consultations.southwark.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/walworth-library-and-southwark-heritage-centre/		83
Total			340

3. 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 14 representatives. The session initially introduced the project and outlined the vision with a chance to clarify and test the group's opinions on libraries, how this new space might best address the barriers to accessing its broad range of activities and how it might best spark curiosity in the history of Southwark.

To start the session we introduced the four types of activity initially identified at the internal stakeholders workshop and furthered the discussion to understand the groups expectations and uses for the new centre.

<p>SELF-DIRECTED LEISURE AND LEARNING Borrowing, quiet study, working, reading with family, using own device or library IT or WIFI, local information Finding out information on job listings and getting online Language learning</p>	<p>SUPPORTED READING AND LEARNING Story-telling, events, information gathering Training and CPD activity Developing language skills Entrepreneurial skills</p>
<p>SOCIAL EVENTS Community events, talks, performance, film, Social activities to create connections between different groups Networking Councillor's surgeries</p>	<p>LEARNING AND EXPLORING SOUTHWARK'S HISTORY Exhibitions, displays, researching history, school visits Activities which surprise and exceed an individuals expectation An experience which introduces you to the borough's heritage assets Regularly changing displays</p>

Understanding the uses led into the key discussion questions:

- What would success look like?
- What should be prioritised given the finite resources and capacity, and space, of the new centre?
- What other kinds of space do the group feel succeed as public spaces.

The following is a summary of the group's feedback and points made in the subsequent discussion:

- The centre must be welcoming in its design and in its management – it should feel relaxing, comfortable and encourage people to feel 'at home';

- Staff should be active in their welcome and there would need to be adequate staffing levels to respond to the approaches from visitors and partners;
- The centre should maintain its reputation and integrity in design, maintenance, accessibility and in the integrity of its programme – it will be judged on its choices and mustn't just start well;
- There should be community input in the book selection and programme – and strands of support for community co-created and co-curated events;
- Seasonal activity which recognised the needs of the immediate local communities would be welcome e.g. the students resident in the accommodation opposite could be engaged in activity pertaining to mental health during exam periods;
- The group emphasised the importance of audience research to really understand the needs and interests of the local communities – it shouldn't just be a case of 'build it and they will come';
- The group also emphasised the importance of launching the space in a way that indicates that this is a different kind of space and that the excitement of the launch must be maintained.

There was discussion about the ways in which the new site could act as a 'front room' or 'front window' for the borough's heritage assets at John Harvard library and the stores of the collection. It was suggested that it might be worth considering the Walworth Town Hall as more of a community events space with the library acting as the hub for a heritage specialism. It was outlined to the group the importance of understanding that this would be a community library – not a specialist heritage library – however connections could be made within the space with the collection permeating the library spaces.

It was agreed that the high street frontage was a huge asset for the site and that the external design or incorporation of public art would be an important consideration in the site's ability to encourage new visitors.

The following spaces were recommended as exemplars of welcoming, dynamic spaces – places where "you are not judged for being there":

- The Horniman Museum
- South London Gallery
- South Bank Centre
- Turbine Hall, Tate Modern
- Barbican
- Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre
- The Lighthouse Theatre
- Living Room, Deptford

There was an important discussion about the site itself. One participant made a particularly impassioned point about her fears that the new space was 'simply a retail space and not a civic space'. They were disappointed that a larger space had not been identified and supported.

A conversation ensued in which it was emphasised that whilst the participant's concerns were reasonable about the scale of the space, that the high street offered a more accessible, more familiar space through

which to attract those for whom the 19th century civic spaces of the past might have appeared intimidating. Another participant emphasised that in her borough libraries were being closed down and the commitment to investing in the library and heritage centre was to be welcomed.

Another participant emphasised in their experience what could be achieved with a small amount of square footage. Their temporary exhibition had just won a major award, despite the relatively small nature of the exhibition space.

There were some concerns about the nature of the four-lane highway of the Walworth Road and recommendations that the public sphere in front of the new site be considered in its development. Again the external space would be an important consideration in the design of the new site. There are plans in development to redesign the Walworth Road and the facility and users should be considered as part of this works to ensure compatibility.

Overall, the group touched on similar areas as the internal stakeholders workshop, but with a greater emphasis on the need to prioritise and tailor activities to the capacity and resources of the space.

4. Bright ideas boards in libraries and leisure centres

The bright ideas boards and forms were displayed at all Southwark Libraries and leisure centres over 6 weeks from the end of April until early June. Visitors were encouraged to contribute to the consultation and ten hours of drop in sessions were held in 4 libraries in the Walworth Road area to discuss the project and answer any questions.

The following questions were asked to get a snapshot about what people would like to see in the new facility, their relationship with Southwark and the kinds of topics they were interested in for possible exhibition topics. Trends in the responses received are summarised below. One hundred and eighty written responses and /or conversations were documented

What do you love about libraries and museums?

The highest number of responses showed people's appreciation for the knowledge and information that they can access for learning and education purposes. People also enjoy the quiet, peaceful and calm nature of these spaces, that they are free and open to all and that they encourage community spirit across all demographics. It is important that there is an interesting variety of books alongside reading, research, study and work space. The activities and learning for everyone but specifically for children is significant for libraries. History and culture are key reasons people visit libraries and museums. Other comments made were that libraries and museums are important positive places for helping us understand who we are.

What are you curious about in Southwark?

A high number of responses noted history or local history with specific areas of interest including; famous people past and present, the history of parks and open spaces, ethnographic history and how local businesses have changed over time. Southwark's diversity and multiculturalism is another significant area of interest as is more current information about local facilities and activities. People are keen to meet and mingle and be part of Southwark's communities.

What is your Southwark story? (a selection of responses)

- I have lived here since 1989 when my daughter was 1, have been a library homework helper, my grandfather was in Dulwich hospital in 1917 with trench foot (then a military hosp.)
- I'm originally from Sierra Leone
- Came to Peckham from n2 loved the vibrant culture and different
- Learned 3 languages while I was coming to Southwark library
- Just a 15 year old trying to traverse through life

Bright ideas board!

For our new Walworth Library and Southwark Heritage centre

Southwark Council is going to open a new library and heritage centre on the Walworth Road. We want to encourage lots of new people to this unique place and we need to hear your bright ideas for what could be done and how you would like to use the space. Find out more and complete the full consultation at www.southwark.gov.uk/WL&SHC

What do you love about libraries and museums?	What are you curious about in Southwark?
What is your Southwark story?	If you could wish upon a star.....what would you wish for in the new library and heritage centre?

We want to use some of the most interesting and fun stories for future publicity for this project. We will not publish names or personal details, but by completing this section you are granting permission for use.

@lb_southwark facebook.com/southwarkcouncil

 Southwark Council
southwark.gov.uk

- Charles Dickens was from Southwark and was a friend of my great great grandfather - my children love his stories
- I'm American and I married British, we decided to start our family in Southwark as the best of both worlds, we were both Olympic volunteers when we met in 2012 (opening ceremony performers)
- I've been living in Southwark for 20 years I love it here! It's like home!
- Don't think I have one! I work here and like exploring the area.

If you could wish upon a star..... what would you wish for in the new library and heritage centre?

- Programming and events as don't really use library for books. Poetry and spoken word nights
- Teen space for 14-18 age group as under catered for
- Community hub with classical chamber music performance to give children exposure to instruments
- Puppets, workshop spaces for interactive, crafty, make and take projects
- Squishy colourful kids chairs
- Language and cultural exchanges/facilitating conversations to combat loneliness or just encourage interaction
- Lots of space to sit and read. Long opening hours. A café. Good wifi. Local event to discover new things.
- I would like more music course, theatre, how much and in reading spaces in Spanish. More activities for children.
- Large windows, light spaces, safe places
- More computers, more educational books big study area
- A play area, a jungle area, a rocket ship, a creative session where I can make different coloured robots which I can wear
- Lending library for tools and equipment
- A very special place for the homeless people
- A place that really represents the local people cultural, history, racial backgrounds
- Videos and probably lounge screen to the history of Southwark, more cultural activities

5. Bright ideas online consultation

The online questionnaire asked more detailed questions and some statistical information, the responses are summarised below. The questionnaire was open from April till 10 June 2019 and 83 responses were received.

What do you love about libraries and museums?

Libraries

The most common answer was books: the ability to browse a good topic range and selection of books and discover new information. The actual holding of books and being surrounded by them was seen as an integral part of libraries.

Also receiving a high level of responses was that Libraries need to be free, welcoming and accessible. They should be peaceful and calm places with space to think, learn and read while recognising the different needs for different uses and users.

They are very important centres of learning and knowledge, study and research and also facilitate bringing the community together. Activities and events are important for creating a greater range of opportunities for different interest or age groups to gather. .

Providing local information is a key role for libraries.

Helpful, knowledgeable staff are important.

A few other interesting notes were; libraries give us power, charge our imaginations, introduce children to reading and allow us to explore new topics, thoughts and ideas.

Museums

Most people loved the learning and information available in museums including interactive learning.

The history and past including both Southwark's place in London and our local history were expressed and comments reflected an interest about wanting to know how the past has shaped the present, and the future. The history of people was also specifically mentioned.

Access to view (and touch) artefacts, objects and paintings through exhibits was important and many people loved the ability to be inspired or enjoy a more recreational relationship with museums.

Events and activities were important alongside being free and open to all.

Individual comments included remembering and preserving the past, accessing culture, the freedom to learn and making sure such places are relevant.

"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture are like a tree without roots."
Marcus Garvey

Use three words to describe what is important for the new centre

The most popular words used were 'books' and 'accessible' followed by the idea of space for all and history.

Good staffing, a quiet place, events and activities, community building were also popular.

Informative, educational, free, study and open were commonly noted.

What would stop you going to the new facility?

More people responded 'no' and that they couldn't wait than anything else. Of those issues stated the biggest barrier was if the library and heritage centre was too noisy or if there were inconvenient opening

hours ie office hours. An unwelcoming space, high costs, hard to get to, too busy or a limited collection were also noted. Comments about not meeting the whole communities needs, uninspiring exhibits, dull programming or a lack of variety would also mean people didn't come to the centre.

Respondents were asked How often do you go to a library?

Daily	4
weekly	28
monthly	32
less often	12
never	2
Not answered	5

Why do you go to a library? Drop down list; Borrow a book, use a computer, independent study, read, leisure, a group activity, meet friends, other

Borrow a book	58
Use a computer	16
Independent study	32
Read	36
Leisure	21
A group activity	16
Meet friends	10
Other	22
Not answered	6

'Other' answers include; photocopying, resources learning database, what's on information, toddler activities, coffee, peace and cultural events.

To be in the calming atmosphere of a library – even if I don't need to borrow a book on that particular day I like to feel the calming atmosphere of being in a library, being near books, seeing what books are on offer.

Our respondents were asked How often do you go to a museum?

daily	2
weekly	14
monthly	48
less often	17
never	0
Not answered	2

Why do you go to a museum?

enjoy looking at exhibits	73
research	28
listening to talks	43
going on a guided tour	17
meet friends	34
leisure,	48
Other	9
Not answered	3

'Other' answers include; when I visit new places, to learn and discover new things, activities with kids, late events and to see special exhibits.

What are you curious about in Southwark?

Southwark's history of the place, our culture and its people was the most common area of curiosity. This included our ancient history, Southwark's place within London and the hidden secrets of Southwark. People are interested in important events and local people as well as the ordinary and unsung heroes. How

Southwark has changed over time physically and the way of life was a common topic along with how we preserve heritage while embracing change. Again the interest in the relationship between past and present featured along with wanting to know about our contemporary culture and understanding how we are influencing the future.

Some more specific areas of interest included multicultural Southwark, architecture, industry, recent history of housing and social issues and religion and politics in Southwark.

The history of the borough as it was and is, the people who live there and have lived there, the events that affected the area, what streets, buildings and people looked like in earlier days, the role of the river and the docks, the factories in the area and the people who worked in them, the health of Southwark inhabitants.... etc etc

My Southwark Story: a selection of responses

I have lived in Southwark all my life. I grew up at the end of East Lane market in the late 1960's and 1970's. Trained as a civil engineer I have worked and travelled in other places globally - but lived in Southwark. I now live in East Dulwich. My dad (who's dad had a stall in East Lane during the 1930's) had a great interest in local history that's rubbed off on me. Great grandparents worked in the leather and jam making industries of Bermondsey.

Relative newcomer although my grandfather is from neighbouring Lambeth. Love the diversity in the population and in the landscape. The evolving neighbourhoods as the area regenerates is fascinating to observe and be a part of.

I grew up in a council flat on Peckham Road & as a child in the 1960s I would use both the old Camberwell & old Peckham libraries. I loved to borrow books. Reading was my passion & education. This interest led me to becoming an author (historian) & I have had over 20 history books published since 1991, some of them about Southwark. I always feel a sense of pride when I see my books available for loan in Southwark Libraries!

I bought a place in the borough in 2011 (having previously lived in Brixton and also North of the river for many years). It's a fascinating borough - and with so many different areas each with their own character. I did know the area when I worked in the Blackfrairs Road in the early 1970s - it's changed for better and for worse in recent times: too many hotels, too many chain shops, not enough public housing, too many high buildings.

I attended Dulwich College for a number of years; I also worked (voluntarily) as an ESOL teacher at the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers, particularly with other volunteers from the Action Reconciliation Service for Peace organisation (further details available if requested).

I've lived in Southwark for 15 years and have loved seeing it grow and develop. My family stay here because we embrace the natural and quite organic diversity in the borough. We would love to see that continue to develop into a safe and pleasant space that retains its personality.

5 years ago I decided to move from Italy, my home country, to London. It has been a case that I ended up in Southwark, near Rotherhithe. Very soon I started to be fascinated by the history of the area: the docklands, the trading of goods coming from all across the globe, the German blitz, the tunnels under the Thames, the parks, the redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs, the people living "on the other side"... Such rich history made me feel instantly connected to this amazing part of London, and today I feel that Southwark is my home.

Moved to Southwark in 1990 intending to stay for only a few years, but I liked it so much that I'm still here and proud to call it home.

Wishing upon a star; a selection of comments

A vibrant, bustling community centre where space is used to bring people together in the shared pursuit of knowledge, skills, friendship and empathetic equality.

A place that's so much more than a library and museum - talks, discussions, workshops, community-led projects and more.

A continuation of the positive reflection of Southwark's culturally diverse community & its history.

It would serve all of Southwark's residents, whatever their background. That it would work with schools, police and NHS mental health services to reduce knife crime in Southwark. It would also become more widely known, nationally and internationally, as a centre of research into the borough of Southwark.

I am a musician, classical pianist. I would love to have a space where I could freely practice with a beautiful grand piano.

I wish we had information, signs, activities, books, etc in the most spoken languages in the borough (including BSL and Braille) that could show the borough's cultural, linguist and ethnic diversity

Funding. Local interest. Architectural materials that weather well.

A support area for homeless people.

Sufficient space for the Cuming collection. I am concerned that we may only see a small part of the collection. I assume there will be up-to-date IT equipment so that archives will be accessible online in the library.

A range of events for young people (16-25) as well as family events. A place where residents from different backgrounds can enjoy getting to know one another and come together. A hub for finding out ways to engage in the local area.

A variety of black authors that represent a wide and non restricted scope of black writing and expression.

Special facilities and programming for teenagers and older people.

One of the rooms be named after the late local historian Stephen Humphries. Stephen lived in E& Castle and was a great inspiration to many.

Anything else you would like to mention?

I think it needs to be a space for all ages, a space for different languages and cultures. Libraries for me are one of the places that are at the heart of a community. This community in E&C is rich in its diversity, its stories and its ambitions and ideas. The library should reflect that and be a space to grow minds and ideas.

Make it a place that people want to spend time in. Mix of educational and leisure space.

Make it happen soon!!!!

Engagement Summary

The respondents told us:

- The wide range of uses and activities people would like to see in the facility
- How the space should feel and operate
- Barriers to its use
- That connecting with other heritage resources, local activities, facilities and services would improve the offer.

The most important things to respondents are

- The opportunity to access knowledge and information for learning and education
- That the centre is free, open to all and at the heart of the community
- A place where people can come together yet also have space for different uses and activities
- Books, a great selection to support learning and to be inspired
- Peace and quiet – well managed
- Learning about history and engaging with artefacts and their stories.

There are a broad range of topics that people are interested in finding out more about. People are curious about Southwark's history and its influence on shaping the borough and its people today. The areas of our diversity, architecture, famous people and weird and quirky history all intrigue us.

Some people shared fascinating stories of their connection to Southwark from those whose families have been here for generations to our new arrivals from other parts of London and the world. Southwark is enjoyed for its vibrancy and diversity the different characters of its villages and highstreets. People are proud to live here and call it home.

We have a big place in our hearts and minds for libraries and museums and the role they play in communities. We are excited by the opportunities this new facility brings to Southwark and Walworth.

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