

Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee**20th December 2019****Public Questions to the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio Holder****1. From Susan Movahedi**

Where will all the various organisations that currently use the public hall be able to hold their meetings etc?

2. From Jennifer Smith

Given that the new proposed town hall site needs £400,000 worth of work, where will the library be housed while this work is being undertaken? As it is my understanding that from the survey of work carried out which produced that figure there is no way a business of any kind could just move straight in without any work being done.

3. From Lucy Williams

Can you confirm that the proposed development of the site does not conflict with the terms that the land was originally gifted over 100 years ago by Albermarle Cator?

4. From Sue Blackburne

Please could the Council confirm that any consultation will include the possibility of not moving the library from its current location on the basis that the current premises are more suitable and preferred by local residents, and that it will not simply be a narrow consultation on the Public Halls refurbishment proposals/housing proposals?

5. From Natalie Moss

I am a regular user of the children's sport classes at Beckenham public halls. The proposed library move to this site will significantly damage public spaces, particularly for sport. What will happen to all the classes, in particular the sports classes which need large spaces, currently taking place there?

6. From Graham Clayden MD FRCP FRCPCH

How was it possible that the committee concluded that there was no negative impact on children when the child population (2011 census) in the wards close (or safe access) to existing site greatly exceeds that of Copers Cope ward? Isn't crossing three major roads from station more dangerous than one?"

7. From Nick Metcalf

What community groups currently use the space that would be redeveloped at Beckenham Public Halls?

8. From Catherine Hildebrand

The Beckenham library site and adjacent green space has over 20 mature trees of a variety of species. I understand the plans for the new site involve some green space. How many of the existing trees do you hope to retain through the period of construction?

9. From John Mansi

Having spent £70,000 of resident's money, on consultants to progress the proposals, can you publish a full copy of their report. Please confirm that this contract was awarded in full compliance with applicable Council Procurement Rules?

10. From Louisa Cook

Please can you share your plans for the new location and share your impact assessment you have made on taking this building out of action for the current community groups and activities which regularly use it?

11. From Garnet Frost

The Council has agreed to consider a report concerning these proposals, which is being compiled by The Beckenham Society. Eventually, this may consist of several chapters, but the most urgent and comprehensive submissions received to date refer to spatial measurements. Is the Committee willing to hear an outline of this objective yet compelling evidence?

12. From Hulya Mustafa

As well as proposals to demolish the library and build flats, can the remit for any work by consultants also consider

(a) how to further enhance the library and other services in the current site, given it is a cultural and leisure 'hub' of which the Council should be proud of, and which it could value and improve and

(b) other sources of income for the refurb of the public halls which would be of lower impact than demolishing the library, as the Council seems to be unable to identify any (although it is noted, they have managed to find £300k to refurb Bromley Library.) And if not, why not?

13. From Julia Vanoli MCIPD

Why was there a lack of public consultation on the decision to demolish our existing Library site and replace with flats in the lead up to the planning proposal for this site?

14. From Eve Bolton

Will the flats be an ugly modern design or after spending billions making Beckenham "more villagey" will you continue the theme and stick to traditional architecture that will complement the building opposite and the houses across the road?

15. From Gwenda Taylor

Why has the Churchfield Rd relocation of the Recycling centre to the 1 hectare site below its current position not been considered as a suitable alternative to permanently removing a considered community service? The relocation would free a 1.1 hectare site for housing development in an already residential area.

16. From Mrs Caroline Duguid

Given that the library is already the 3rd most popular in the borough, has any research has been carried out as to what impact investment in its current site might have?

17. From Colette Laws-Chapman

Can you please let us know why you would consider closing the Beckenham library, Beckenham Spa/Clock House when it is such a vital community hub in this area?

18. From Konkona Kundu

Why is a different location not being considered for example the corner one storied building diagonally opposite to the Odeon near the war memorial instead of the library which is the part of our community?

19. From Dr Elizabeth Arno

You suggest that Biggin Hill and Orpington libraries are being used more frequently now that they have moved to town-centre locations. Both these libraries, however, have been moved into buildings where there are other leisure facilities, notably swimming pools (the Walnuts in Orpington and the Biggin Hill Memorial Library and Pool), which is a very similar set-up to that of the current Beckenham Library and Spa complex (the 3rd most popular library in the borough as it is).

Please could you provide full statistics for the use of all your libraries? Isn't it more likely that these libraries have become more popular as parts of larger leisure offerings, which just happen to be in town-centre locations?

20. From Nigel Foley

What facilities will be lost in transferring the library to Beckenham Public Hall, both in terms of current library facilities and current uses of the Public Hall?

21. From Stuart Froment

The Equality Impact Assessment of October 2019 states, at the top of page 4, that the current Beckenham Library Building is tired and in need of repair and redecoration. Has the Council evaluated the cost of this work? If not, why not? If so, how much is it? Does the Council agree that all the services that could be provided at Beckenham Public Halls could just as easily be provided at the existing library?

22. From Chris Old

The Council makes reference for the urgent need to provide new housing in the borough, and uses this argument as a principal reason for demolishing the library and selling the site.

Two years ago, researchers at Jones Lang Lasalle carried out a report into building homes on council-owned sites used as surface car parks in suburban London, often old WW2 bomb sites. They identified 45 such sites in the borough of Bromley alone.

See this article in Homes and Property 17th September 2019: <https://www.homesandproperty.co.uk/property-news/world-car-free-day-2019-80000-homes-could-be-built-on-london-car-parking-spaces-within-a-mile-of-a-133491.html> ; and this one, in The Evening Standard, 2nd November 2017: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/building-flats-on-london-car-parks-could-solve-housing-crisis-report-suggests-a3674256.html>

Has the Council conducted feasibility studies on all of these assets with regard to providing housing, following the publication of this research?

23. From Philip King

Please can you provide the covenants detailing the land that the Library occupies, the details of the conservation area that was gifted to the public and why and when you changed this to remove these covenants?

24. From Susan Movahedi

Where will local residents without access to the internet be able to go to use computers for research and day to day needs - especially those who are perhaps unemployed or even homeless?

25. From Jennifer Smith

What will happen to the library staff during this transition? Many of whom are locals themselves and should be commended that while being out on strike are having to endure this additional stress.

26. From Lucy Williams

I have seen bats flying around the building in the summer and believe they are hibernating in the library building. Are the Council aware of bats at the building and have Natural England been consulted about this?

27. From Sue Blackburne

Has any thought been given to including a library in the proposed housing development project e.g. by having a dedicated library on the ground floor of the housing and if not, why has that not been considered?

28. From Natalie Moss

Are there any plans to create new publicly available spaces/sports facilities for sports and other classes to replace those to be lost at Beckenham public halls if the library moves there, or will Beckenham now lose these facilities?

29. From Nick Metcalf

Have you considered replacing Beckenham Library with a new building with a library and community rooms on the ground floor and flats on the floors above?

30. From Catherine Hildebrand

The Library and Beckenham Spa car parks between them always have spaces available as they are used for short-stay parking. Given the car park nearest the Public Halls site is predominantly used by commuters, has there been any research into availability and waiting time for parking spaces at different days and times?

31. From John Mansi

I understand that you have allocated a further £300,000 for further hire of consultants. Can you please issue the parameters that will be laid on any future consultants and confirm that this will be subject to all procurement rules which apply?

32. From Louisa Cook

What decision making route has the Council used to make this decision? And why has there been so little consultation?

33. From Hulya Mustafa

The proposals cite a potential 5-storey development of 46 flats and 33 parking spaces. This gives a very finely balanced financial case of c £2m to refurbish the public halls. However, a 5-storey block is unlikely to get planning permission in a conservation area, and councillors have already recognised that 46 flats is a maximum and will likely be less. In addition the proposal includes 33 parking spaces, which given the acknowledged well-served location, is unnecessary and unenvironmental, so this should also be reduced. A reduction in number of flats or parking, will inevitably impact the amount any developer will give for the land, impacting the financial case.

In the Council's current view, at what point -

- (a) will the value of the land (as determined by the anticipated planning value) cease to be viable, and indeed become an overall financial cost to the Council? and
- (b) will the number of housing units possible make it unattractive, given the complexity of the project and significant loss of amenity involved?

34. From Julia Vanoli MCIPD

How many elected local councillors are in favour of this proposal and what have they done to find out what their constituents think, in light of a petition with 5000 signatures being submitted since the planning proposals were made public.

35. From Mrs Caroline Duguid

With an investment portfolio worth £350 million in 2019 and an additional £90 million investment in commercial property, could some of this money be used for housing on Bromley's existing brownfield sites instead of selling off more public assets and fundamentally altering the character and function of an existing conservation area?

(The library is currently very well placed as part of a hub consisting of the Spa, the Library, Venue 28, Beckenham Baptist church and the Clock House parade of shops as well as being a 5 minute walk from Beckenham High Street.)

36. From Colette Laws-Chapman

The area has been slowly regenerating - with thanks to Love my Hound, 500 degree pizza and Three Hounds Beer company joining the Spa combined with the library as the core/real attractions - the library is so accessible at the moment - families combine it with a trip to the spa as they can park and it's close by - moving it would be both ridiculous - and damaging to access by all the people at this end of Beckenham plus further increase traffic in an already congested area of Beckenham.

37. From Konkona Kundu

What other ideas were considered before deciding on destroying the library?

38. From Dr Elizabeth Arno

Why is Beckenham Library, a fine and elegant example of late art deco architecture, not considered worthy of conservation by the London Borough of Bromley, particularly as part of the Elm Road Conservation Area?

39. From Nigel Foley

Given that the area is within the Elm Road Conservation area, what constraints will be applied to any development e.g. in terms of height and appearance?

40. From Stuart Froment

The feasibility study states that there would be partial remodelling of the park landscape adjacent to the existing library, but with no net loss of open space, and that loss of trees requires mitigation. Given that the proposed flats are to occupy parkland between the current library and Beckenham Road, how is the net area of parkland to be protected? The document does not show any private amenity space surrounding the proposed flats. Does the Council undertake not to allow any of the parkland to be used as private amenity space for the flats at any time in the future? How will the existing trees be protected, being in the Elm Road Conservation Area, and, if any are removed, will they be replaced with the same number and size? Will memorial trees be preserved?