



Library Local Programme, 2016–2019: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

➤ Consultation

Q. What is this all about?

A. The Council's Library Local Vision is that, in future, Library Locals will be modern and attractive spaces which meet standards afforded by the best public library buildings in London, with in-built ability to adapt to future service needs. We're aiming to offer a 21st Century library service in accessible places which are welcoming and support communities to come together. This consultation is about the impact of that Vision on three library locals and proposals to move two of them, taking advantage of two of the regeneration schemes happening in the borough. By moving the library locals into new buildings alongside other services and working with community and partner organisations we will be able to deliver a more efficient and modern library service.

Q. How can I have a say in what happens next?

A. We are consulting through a mixture of drop in sessions, focus groups, online and printed surveys, along with on street surveys, stakeholder & protected group meetings, and ward forums. Please see the library consultation website for details www.walthamforest.gov.uk/libraryconsultation

Q. When is the consultation taking place?

A. The consultation formally started on 12 September 2016 and has now been extended to 31 January 2017.

Q. Then what happens?

A. An independent consultation company will analyse the results of the consultation and write a full consultation report. We will listen carefully to what residents tell us and the results from both consultation questionnaires will be analysed and a full report and Equalities Impact Assessment produced.

The consultation results and Equality Impact Assessment will be considered alongside all the other evidence and information. A full report will be presented to scrutiny in March 2017 and following this the Council's Cabinet will make the final decision on the matters arising.

These documents will be published on our website www.walthamforest.gov.uk approximately 2 weeks before the Cabinet meeting.

➤ **The Library Local Programme**

Q. What is the Library Local Programme?

A. The Library Local Programme is the name of the development programme to improve three of the four smaller libraries in the Borough. These are Higham Hill, Lea Bridge and Wood Street.

Q. Can you explain the regeneration projects?

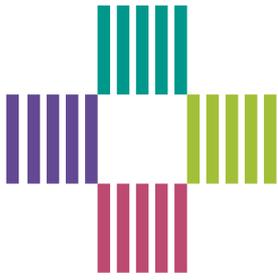
A. There are two regeneration projects involved in these proposals.

Priory Court redevelopment is the proposed location that would replace Higham Hill Library. The proposal is to use the redevelopment of the Priory Court Community Centre as part of a larger regeneration of the Priory Court Estate, to provide a mix of retail, residential premises and library in a remodelled community hub. The library would move from its current location into the new centre. It is anticipated that the development would be completed in 2019-20. The proposed location is less than half a mile from the current location.

The project is subject to planning approval and there will be consultation for the proposed Community Hub which will start from April 2017. This will build on the People Shaping Places Community engagement and we will be forming a Steering Group to give feedback on any proposed plans and designs.

Marlowe Road redevelopment is the proposed location that would replace Wood Street Library. The Council is involved in the Marlowe Road development and has an option on a number of the units to use them for a library, which will give at least the same floor space as is currently used by the library service. The regeneration of Marlowe Road will see the demolition of the existing estate (not including Northwood Tower) and the development of 436 new homes; of these 150 social rented 18 shared ownership units and 268 private homes. The development will include commercial units, a new plaza and the proposed new library. It will be delivered in 3 main phases starting on site in January 2017 and is anticipated to complete in 2022. It is estimated that if the library is moved the new one would open in 2019-20. The proposed location is just over half a mile from the current library.

There are no current plans to relocate Lea Bridge Library but the Vision includes refurbishment of this library. The building is Grade II Listed by Historic England and has a covenant on it that restricts its use to a public library. It is also in a prominent location on Lea Bridge Road near the junction with Markhouse Road/Church Road. It is planned that the library will be remodelled and refurbished to modernise it and give it the house style and branding of the other Library Locals and Library Plus branches.



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Q. You have said that the regeneration projects will not be completed until at least 2019-20. Does that mean that if the Council goes ahead with these plans, Higham Hill and Wood Street won't have a library between now and then?

A. No, the proposal is to keep the current libraries open until the new premises are built and ready to be moved into. We will be developing a phasing plan to achieve this and will ensure that the local communities are not without key community services throughout the duration of the new development.

➤ **The future of the library and information service**

Q. Is the Council planning to reduce its current library service?

A. No. We are committed to delivering the best possible library and information service we can, within available resources. We plan to keep eight libraries across the borough and to develop them to fit the needs of the 21st century to ensure they are as "fit for purpose" as possible in serving the library, information and learning needs of people who live, work or study in the borough. We are committed to still providing 8 libraries.

Q. Does the Council have to provide a library and information service?

A. The Council is required under the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for everyone who wants to use it. In addition to fulfilling this statutory obligation, we made a commitment in 2011 as part of our strategy that all residents live within 1.5 mile of a Library Local and within 2 miles of a Library Plus. We are committed to keeping this service standard and the proposed relocations maintain that commitment.

Q. Will libraries still have the same number of books?

A. We will be reviewing our stock purchase systems to ensure we are getting the right books in sufficient quantities to satisfy demand. This applies to both print and e-books. Alongside this, as part of the programme of relocation, the service will manage the current stock and remove those that they are no longer issuing. We use sophisticated stock management software to inform our decisions on stock and if it is considered that the stock may issue in another library, they will be relocated before any decision is taken to discard.



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Q. Will PCs still be available in libraries?

A. Yes. When the Library Locals reopen, there will still be public PCs that can be booked for personal use. The Library Locals will also be designed to reflect changing use of ICT. This means facilities towards use of customers own devices, Wi-Fi connectivity, use of tablets rather than fixed location PCs and hard-wire connected Internet connectivity and supporting new hardware and software developments that promote personal learning and communication. The flexibility built into the building layouts and fit-out will allow ICT hardware to be changed as patterns of use change and adapt.

➤ **Reasons for relocation**

Q. What are the main reasons for proposing to relocate?

A. As well as relocating libraries to modern, more flexible buildings and increasing usage as a result of the more prominent and accessible locations, there are other reasons for the proposed relocations.

Relocating two of the Library Locals releases the current sites for potential housing. One of the Council's key strategies is to develop affordable housing in the borough and the sale of the land for redevelopment supports this through Capital Receipts.

Q. How are these relocations or refurbishments going to be paid for?

A. We propose that the money raised from the sale of the sites at Higham Hill and Wood Street in the future will be reinvested in the service to relocate and remodel the libraries. The whole programme is meant to be self-financing as the Council does not have any other money allocated for this purpose.

Q. Wouldn't it be better and cheaper to leave the libraries where they are?

A. No it wouldn't. In different ways, Higham Hill and Wood Street libraries are no longer "fit for purpose."

Higham Hill Library is a small, inflexible space in a poor state of repair. Staying put would not enable the site to be sold, realising a capital receipt and using this for the development of a new library. The building would still need refurbishment and repair which the Council has no

allocated budget for. If it is not relocated the community will not benefit from a more flexible accessible space that we believe will enhance the service.

Wood Street is too large for the current level of use, and needs significant expenditure to bring it up to a good standard. It is located on the edge of the main retail area along Wood Street. Staying put would not enable the site to be sold, a capital receipt realised and the site redeveloped for potential housing. The building would still need refurbishment and repair which the Council has no allocated budget for.

Q. What kind of developments would be put on the library sites?

A. Potential new housing built on the library sites would be sympathetic to the locality, and meet local requirements but any proposals for the vacated sites will be assessed by the Planning Service to ensure they fitted in with both the law and the locality.

➤ **Communities served**

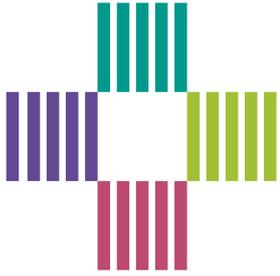
Q. Have protected groups identified by the equalities act been considered?

A. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and forms part of the Cabinet Report and specific meetings will be held with key stakeholders and protected groups.

Q. Children and young people (0 – 18 years) make up 25% of the population. How are you going to ensure that their needs are met?

A. That is really important. Children make up around 50% of library use and this is staying relatively constant, while adult use is declining because of the alternative ways in which people can get reading materials. Even though parents do not use libraries themselves, they consider it important that their children do and take them to the library on a regular basis. Many library activities and specialist library professional focus is on children and young people.

Our proposal is that any layouts for the relocated libraries reflect this focus by giving more space to children and young people to ensure that the take-up by babies, toddlers, school-age children and older students is adequately met.



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➤ **Staff issues**

Q. What do staff think about these proposals?

A. We have briefed staff on what is proposed so they understand what we are trying to achieve. Naturally, staff have concerns about what the moves will mean for them and our customers.

Staff have asked if there will be any changes to their working hours arising from these proposals and they have been advised that this is not planned.

Staff have also asked if the proposals will lead to any changes in their working pattern and been advised that this is not expected to happen but any proposed changes would be discussed with them should they arise.

Staff also recognise that further use of ICT including self-service technology lets users do more of their routine tasks themselves enabling staff to focus on the literacy, numeracy, reading, ICT, learning and information needs of customers.