

# **Carnegie Community Trust Board**

## **Preferred Option for the future use of Carnegie Herne Hill Library as a Community Hub and Community Enterprise Library**

### **1. Background**

1.1 The Carnegie Library Project Group was established to develop proposals for the future use of the Carnegie Library building in Herne Hill that reflected Lambeth Council's decision in 2012 to declare the building as a future "Community Hub". The brief for the Project Group was that the building would be owned and operated by the community; that architectural consultants should identify options for future use, and that the Project Group would consult the community on options.

1.2 The Project Group defined its task as:

*"to protect and enhance the historical and architectural fabric of the Carnegie Library and its setting; to facilitate the continued operation of a Lambeth Council library; to bring vacant or under-used space in the building into appropriate new uses; create new entrepreneurial opportunities; and, primarily, to promote the use of the building for wider public access and community uses, particularly for activities that complement the literary and cultural ethos originally envisaged in Andrew Carnegie's endowment. The project is intended also to contribute to and promote the social infrastructure of the locality within which it is situated."*

1.3 The Project Group obtained a Conservation Statement in March 2014. It also commissioned an Architect's Options Appraisal in June 2013 to develop options for enhancement of the building aligned with the uses which would best meet the social and cultural needs of the community whilst retaining the Carnegie Heritage and the priorities of the London Borough of Lambeth. The Architect's Options Appraisal was completed by August 2014. The Project Group then conducted an open community consultation for six weeks on the architect's options, recognising that these were not exhaustive, and actively seeking the views of community groups, library users and the local community. The results were evaluated by an independent consultant and their report was published. Having accomplished this remit the Project Group concluded its work. However, pending the establishment of a representative charitable trust to take the project on to implementation, work was passed on an interim basis to a Shadow Trust Board so that momentum could be maintained. On 9 October 2015 the Shadow Trust adopted the new constitution of Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The CIO was registered by the Charity Commission on 16 October 2015. The charity's full name is The Carnegie Herne Hill Community Trust CIO and its working name is Carnegie Community Trust CIO.

1.4 The Shadow Trust has sought advice from the Carnegie UK Trust; the body responsible in the UK for maintaining the world-wide heritage of Andrew Carnegie.

1.5 The Conservation Statement, the Brief for the architectural consultants, the architect's Options Appraisal and the independent consultant's report on the public consultation on the Options are all available on the Carnegie Community Trust website [www.carnegiehernehill.org.uk](http://www.carnegiehernehill.org.uk)

1.6 The Carnegie Community Trust has submitted a formal application to Lambeth Council for transfer of the building to the Trust under the Lambeth Council Asset Transfer Strategy.

1.7 A formal Business Plan to support the Asset Transfer Application and the Heritage Lottery Application will be complete in December 2015

1.8 Carnegie Community Trust has met with the Heritage Lottery representative for London and has agreed the development of a Heritage Plan which is now under development

1.9 In October 2015 Lambeth Council reported on its consultation "Culture 2020" and made new proposals which are not compatible with the Preferred Option described here. The report to the Council's Cabinet on the way forward has been amended to ensure that the Carnegie Community Trust is consulted about the use of the building and to enable mutually compatible arrangements to be achieved.

## **2. The Carnegie Community Trust response to the Community Consultation**

2.1 The Carnegie Community Trust Board has considered the views received during its community consultation on the Architect's Options for the building and agreed what it now considers to be the "Preferred Option", being the most deliverable, financially viable and sustainable way forward. This Preferred Option will also be the basis for a further Brief for architects who will be appointed to develop detailed architectural proposals suitable as a basis for funding applications, particularly to the Heritage Lottery Fund who have indicated that this would be an appropriate application.

### **2.2 Community Enterprise Library**

The Preferred Option of the Carnegie Community Trust is to develop the Community Hub primarily as a Community Enterprise Library.

During the periods of consultation it has become increasingly clear to the Carnegie Community Trust that the future of funded public libraries across the UK is under review and transformation. Supported by local authorities, the Arts Council, the Carnegie UK Trust and the British Library, the concept of Enterprise Libraries has been developing quickly, in parallel with our deliberations. The concept of an Enterprise Library moves the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Public Library into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, responding at an accessible, local community level to massive transformations in leisure, learning, social engagement, work and the transfer of information and knowledge. Enterprise Libraries have embraced technology, and recognise that individuals learn from many sources for plural purposes. The concept encourages intergenerational sharing, innovation, self-help, ambition and income generation.

The Carnegie UK Trust has worked with community-led groups in Colchester, Neath-Port Talbot, Gateshead and Northampton where four very different Enterprise Libraries have developed. Each has in common a need to contribute to the economic wellbeing of the community, supporting education, training and employment, enabling people to fulfil their potential, helping people to maximise their income, and supporting enterprise. In each case the concept of library and the traditional uses of the buildings is widely expanded.

The Carnegie Library in Herne Hill is one of the great Carnegie Libraries built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with the Carnegie Endowment for educating local communities. Supported by the Carnegie UK Trust, it may now be helpful to describe a new vision for the Carnegie library and the building as a Community Hub and Community Enterprise Library.

The Community Enterprise Library would offer provision closely responding to Project Group's original vision for the building, the feedback from the Community Consultation and the priorities of Lambeth Council set out in its Community Hubs policy, including:

- An Enterprise Area, expanding the current letting of desk spaces, for use by a range of local self-employed people and small businesses who will pay a rental fee; supporting local entrepreneurs, reducing unemployment and isolation, encouraging joint and shared work activity, supporting first time self-employed, and encouraging transfer of knowledge and ideas
- An innovative, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library Service offering books and journals, also ebooks, use of social media for learning, on-line collaboration tools, and how to stay safe on- line
- A safe, calm environment for homework and study by young people, to strengthen achievements and prepare for work, aligned with the Library and the Enterprise Area
- Space for wide, innovative learning opportunities including University of the Third Age, generating rental income
- Rental space for Training Events, particularly encouraging preparation for work for school leavers and for the unemployed
- Use of the Gallery in the building to host exhibitions, including Heritage Events
- Creating a performance space to offer access locally to music, dance and theatre, particularly encouraging and sponsoring local talent
- Initiatives that bridge generations and share skills across generations, including work in partnership with South London Cares; support for young carers
- A café for use by the users of the Enterprise Area, the groups and events, and the local community in which generations can meet and share
- A Youth Club either as a hosted service, or a service managed by the Trust, in order to encourage social activity, group learning and positive relationships among local young people
- Work in conjunction with the Friends of Ruskin Park, which is immediately adjacent, to encourage outdoor activity, access to the garden and horticulture

- Community services will link with local charities, local GPs, multi-faith churches, schools, the local employment centre at Loughborough Junction, and voluntary projects

### **3. Social and Design Principles of the Preferred Option**

3.1 A number of principles about the future use and redevelopment of the building can be determined from the Architects Options Appraisal, the community consultation and subsequent considerations. It is proposed that these principles now underpin the development of the Community Enterprise Library as social principles and design principles.

#### **3.2 Social Principles**

- The Carnegie Community Trust, in applying to take ownership of the building as a Community Enterprise Library, should provide space for others to use for community purposes in line with Community Hub objectives
- The building should be open for the maximum achievable hours
- The spaces in the building should be as flexible as possible and capable of being used in as many ways by different users
- The Carnegie Community Trust must secure sufficient income from uses , including renting out space for local businesses, in order to maintain and operate the building
- Any construction interventions should be as limited as possible and preferably be easily reversible should it prove financially possible in the future to regain that space for community use
- The building should complement existing uses in the local area and not provide competition for them.

The design principles and priorities would inform both the immediate future use of the building and the enhancement of the building in ways that respect its architectural and heritage importance.

#### **3.3 Design Principles**

- All building interventions must respect the architectural integrity of the building (the Conservation Statement that the Project Group commissioned sets out the benchmarks and parameters for this)
- Space must be reserved for exclusive library use
- The main hall should be adapted with seating, staging and sound systems, as a multi-purpose performance area
- The committee room should be fitted out as a multi-use meeting room
- The wall between the gallery and the children's library should be adapted so that both can be used as one space if need be,
- The kitchen should be considered for adaptation as a more "commercial" kitchen with access to the garden
- The librarian's room should be divided to provide office space/meeting space
- The basement should be excavated to provide new space for improved toilet facilities , storage, and other uses such as a soundproofed theatre/studio suitable for musical performances and cinema showings

- The existing toilets be removed and the space used for youth facilities
- The existing library space on the basement North Wing (Ferndene Road side) should become rentable space
- The wall from the basement to the garden be opened up with windows and doors, and part of the level of the adjoining garden lowered if necessary
- The rear exterior wall overlooking the garden should be considered for a modern elevated extension to provide lifts, access to the basement and the garden, and seating spaces at ground floor level linked to the kitchen
- A conservatory should be built on the north side of the garden, fitted with facilities,
- The grounds surrounding the building at the front, and the north and south sides should be landscaped and provided with access and seating
- The building should be accessible to those with mobility issues and friendly to those with sight and hearing impairments
- The building must achieve maximum energy efficiency and the possibilities for solar energy production be investigated
- All alterations to the fabric of the building must be in sympathy with existing materials and construction in line with the Conservation Statement
- There should be high-standard soundproofing where necessary
- The potential of the site occupied by the garages that exit to Haredale Road should be investigated as a possible residential site in order to generate further revenue income to the Trust.

## **Appendix**

### **Carnegie Community Trust Board Considerations in arriving at the Preferred Option**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This appendix sets out the main issues identified in the Options Report and responses provided in the community consultation.

The Brief given by the Carnegie Project Group to the architectural consultants stated:

“The Project Group proposes that in an ideal mix of uses the library will remain central, and has agreed the uses that have been identified as comprising the best mix. It is considered that the library should remain central to the operation of the building and the additional other uses should complement and strengthen the cultural character it has created. However, it is recognised that for the project to be viable, fundable and sustainable, significant commercial income-generating uses will be needed and these should as far as is practicable also reflect the cultural character of the site. There will need to be maximum flexibility in the use of spaces.”

#### **2. Library Provision**

2.1 When the Brief was agreed it was believed that Lambeth Council would continue to provide a library in the building and the council would become a tenant of the new Trust and occupy a space to be agreed. This assumption no longer held when Lambeth made known proposals with regard to the borough-wide library service which included no longer providing a library at Carnegie. The Council conducted a consultation on its proposals for the future of Lambeth Parks and Libraries “Culture 2020”, including an invitation to community groups to bid into an Endowment Fund to operate community-led libraries across the borough.

2.2 The Project Group’s community consultation on the architect’s options confirmed substantial support for retaining the library as it currently is.

2.3 All the options on which the public was consulted indicated core space for the library at the front of the building. The Carnegie Trust Board considers that it is fundamental that provision be made to accommodate a library in the building. It adheres to its earlier view that space must be exclusively allocated for this so that that stock and documentation can be secured, and that library users can also access other parts of the building allocated for general community uses.

#### **3. Residential uses**

3.1 Almost 85% of respondents opposed the option to convert the North Wing for residential use (matching the existing residential uses in the South Wing). Residential use would require significant physical alterations to the structure of the building that would be expensive to reverse, and more people living on-site could impact negatively on a number of popular community activities elsewhere in the building. Accordingly, this use is now ruled out.

## **4. Nursery Uses**

4.1 Although Herne Hill is not considered a priority area in Lambeth for further nursery provision about 39% of respondents expressed support for a nursery in the basement area. While this is a significant number there remain significant obstacles to providing this facility. The nursery would almost certainly have to be a private enterprise business. Such a provision would have stringent requirements, including complete security from the rest of the building and exclusive use of the garden during the day. Bearing in mind that the objective of the entire Carnegie project is to retain the building in as wide public use as possible, it is considered that the support for a nursery is not sufficient to override the objections.

## **5. Health and Fitness/Gym Uses**

5.1 There was support for this use from approximately 20% of respondents. Herne Hill has gym provision at Brockwell Lido, Milkwood Road, Flaxman Road and in local schools. A gym would be a private enterprise business offering competition to existing local businesses, and for which further market testing would be needed. Structural alterations would be needed to meet the specialised requirements of a gym (headroom, heating, showers etc). In view of the strong interest in community provision, performance and enterprise and our commitment to flexible spaces, we do not consider that a gym could be fitted in to the building in its current form. It is intended that flexible space should be available to provide health and fitness opportunities for which there is an unmet demand. Moreover a gym could only be installed in the basement if funding were available.

## **6. Employment**

6.1 On the initiative of the Project Group over a year ago the Council rented out vacant space in the North Wing (the first floor former lecture theatre and the ground floor room) to generate revenue income. It accepted the Project Group's advice not to rent to a single commercial user but to a tenant who would encourage individual entrepreneurs who live locally. The tenant, London Arts, has rented out stylish work desks to 24 individuals who are now developing their businesses in a supportive and secure environment. The Carnegie Community Trust Board, with London Arts, sees value in building on this demonstrated success, to create an enterprise friendly building where people start their own businesses sharing ideas and knowledge. This is the proposed Enterprise Library within the Community Hub

6.2 The consultation recognised that income-generating uses were necessary. There is no consensus on those parts of the building best suited for renting out for employment purposes but none of the areas indicated in the options attracted strong objection. The Carnegie Community Trust Board proposes that in addition to the two large rooms currently dedicated to enterprise users, there should be flexible space on the ground floor which could be used for enterprise during most days, but could also be used for performances, events and large meetings.

## **7. Cafe**

7.1 There is extensive support for a café/bar but opinion is divided as to whether it should be in the basement or on the ground floor. In the absence of market research the Carnegie Community Trust Board considers that the café should be initially developed in the existing kitchen, and should continue to be accessible to all users and physically to the garden. As the café will be for the many and varied users of the Community Hub, dedicated seating space may be subsidiary to good quality affordable provision. A new café might be located in the basement with enhanced access to the garden if funding applications succeed. Further research is needed.

## **8. Basement**

8.1 Part of the basement on the North Wing (Ferndene Road) is in use for offices, toilets and services. The slope of the land means that usable space in the rest diminishes northwards as headroom reduces. The Project Group considered that this should be excavated to create more usable and possibly income-generating space. It would mean that there would have to be windows and doors inserted in the wall facing the rear garden. There was some opposition to the proposal to excavate the basement but it is now considered that this is probably essential in order to make a viable long term Business Plan. Accordingly, the Trust Board considers that the basement should be excavated if funding can be secured and uses reconfigured to locate the existing toilets into the centre of the building together with other services.

8.2 If funding for enhancement is secured there will be a considerable amount of usable space in the basement and the Trust Board is not prescriptive about the uses. The internal space is unsuitable for offices as there is no requirement for natural light, but it could also accommodate activities that may require darkness, such as a cinema or music venue, studio, gym and /or youth club.

8.3 41% of respondents were in favour of workspaces being confined to the basement and 32% preferring it as the location for a café. These choices will have to be remitted to the next stage of project development, dependent on securing funding.

## **9. Community Spaces**

9.1 The aim of the project is to maximise public use of the building over as many hours and days of the week as is feasible and reasonable. The main hall must be capable of multi-purpose use such as performances, social events and large meetings. Additional rooms such as the gallery and meeting rooms will be also available for community uses. There is demand from members of the public who do not use the existing facilities to have access to new activities in the building.

## **10. Building alterations**

10.1 As pointed out by the architects and in the 2003 Condition Survey by Playle & Partners, because the building was designed as a single purpose library, with several rooms as well as entrances and exits all opening off the central space, issues arise concerning circulation around the building when the central room is in use for specific events.

10.2 There is a need to improve access to the building for those with mobility issues and so consideration must be given to a ramp at the front entrance (carefully designed to match the existing architecture) and improved lift access to all floors.

10.3 The potential for improving facilities for those with hearing issues should be investigated.

10.4 Apart from the limitations attached to a listed building the configuration of the roofs and the recent government decision to reduce the electricity tariffs make problematic the use of the existing roofs for energy generation. However, this should still be investigated. The improved energy efficiency of the building is a required consideration for the next stage.

10.5 The use of the garages site for an income-generating use should be investigated.

## **11. The Gardens**

11.1 The rear garden, to which the existing residential occupiers of the flats in the South Wing (Haredale Road) also have right of access, is greatly valued. It should be improved and the potential of a new shelter for inclement weather be investigated. The Carnegie Community Trust would like to explore partnerships with local community gardening groups.

11.2 The gardens at the front and sides are unused and in poor condition. They could add significantly to the appearance of the building. The Trust proposes that further ideas be sought, such as a Sensory Garden (with many types of aroma-generating plants) suitable for the visually impaired, and vegetable growing, or gardens to be cultivated by children.

## **12. New Ideas**

12.1 The consultation exercise, in addition to securing comments on the options devised by the architectural consultants, brought forward a number of new ideas and suggestions that respondents felt should also be taken into consideration. These have been taken into consideration in the preferred option and include:

- Performance spaces for dramatic, musical and cultural/educational performances
- Lecture theatre
- Recording studio
- Dedicated space for the use of local young people
- Drinks and socialising space
- Cinema
- Training suite for educational and computer skills development
- Homework club space
- Sitting out space
- Better use of the garden
- Dedicated space for community meetings.

Carnegie Community Trust Board November 2015.