



Cllr Lib Peck  
Leader of Lambeth Borough Council  
Olive Morris House  
18 Brixton Hill  
London  
SW2 1RD

6 May 2016

Dear Councillor Peck

**Lambeth's Document: 'Update on the Carnegie'**

I am writing to you, as Chair of the Herne Hill Society, on behalf of our Committee, our members and many residents in Herne Hill with regard to issues arising from the above document circulated by Lambeth Council's Communications and Strategy team. Whatever any resident or organisation may think of Lambeth's recent actions and the decisions relating to the future of the Carnegie Library, this document raises a number of issues of serious concern that I have been asked to draw to your attention.

*Proposed siting of a gym in the basement of the Carnegie building*

The document clearly refers to the 'currently unused basement'. This is misleading as, in addition to male, female and disabled toilets, the basement currently houses Lambeth's 'Home Visit Service' that provides books for people who are housebound, mainly the elderly. Sadly, however, the Service has not been allowed access to this facility since the building was closed on 31 March.

A further consideration must be the need to excavate at least part of the basement to provide sufficient headroom for a gym. Much of the basement is too low to allow a person of average height to stand upright. Obviously the ceiling height required will depend on the activities proposed to be carried out in the gym. However, part if not all of the present floor will need to be excavated to a depth of up to three metres. This raises the question of whether the necessary structural surveys have been carried out to ensure that the building can withstand such an excavation or what would be the cost of providing necessary reinforcement of the structure. The document makes no mention of this. Indeed, the reader may well make the assumption that any necessary modifications to the building can be carried out with no impact on the structure's integrity. This seems unlikely.

*Carnegie re-opening date*

The document states that the GLL 'will submit a planning application in the coming months', i.e. not in the immediate future. Taking into account the time that Lambeth itself will require to reach a decision on any such application, as well as the need to obtain listed building consent, it seems unlikely that the document's claim that the 'Carnegie will re-open in early 2017' is realistic. In addition, the comments in the previous paragraph suggest that the timescale set out in the document is optimistic and that it will take much longer before we see the Carnegie open again for business.

The Herne Hill Society

PO Box 27845, London SE24 9AX [www.hernehillsociety.org.uk](http://www.hernehillsociety.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1094346

### *Presence of Library Staff*

The document states the 'dedicated Lambeth library staff will be on site regularly'. This is misleading as many people confuse 'regular' with 'frequent'. It is the frequency at which library staff will attend that is the important issue – once a week, once a month or even once a year meets the 'regularity' criterion but would be unacceptable. To be of any value, how often library staff will be in attendance requires clarification.

There is also the much-raised issue of young people under the age of 16 children using the library without the presence of qualified library staff. Should it be assumed that unaccompanied children will not be allowed into the library space unless library staff are there to ensure their safety?

### *Memorials Stored in the Carnegie Basement*

We have raised this point a number of times, but have never had an answer and it would appear to have been ignored throughout the time that the future of the Library was under consideration.

In the Carnegie basement are 'stored' 25 stone and metal memorials. They have come, in the main, from local churches. In November 2009, representatives of the Herne Hill Society and Lambeth Archives visited the basement to photograph and record each of the memorials. Those commemorating individuals and events date from the 1880s to the 1930s. In addition there are five war memorials recording servicemen killed in action in the Boer War and in both World Wars. These memorials represent an important historical and personal record. As such they deserve our attention and respect. Their storage in the Carnegie basement is very much less than ideal and they should be better housed to ensure their preservation and survival for future generations. But there must be serious concern that, should the proposed building work go ahead as planned, they will be destroyed and lost for ever. It is essential that a project be set up immediately to ensure that the memorials are removed to a safe place and, ideally, made accessible to the public.

Finally, many people are looking forward to visiting the public exhibition and wish to know when and where it will be held. The expectation is that the plans for the library area will include details of the proposed layout of the building interior, with further information about the uses Lambeth envisage the community space to be put.

I hope that I have been able to put across the seriousness of our concerns and look forward to receiving your early response telling us how Lambeth plans to address these points.

Yours sincerely



Colin Wight  
Chair  
The Herne Hill Society