

# Friends of



## BULLETIN

May 2016

[www.friendsofcarnegielibrary.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcarnegielibrary.org.uk)

### Lambeth's Latest Spin

Herne Hill Ward residents are likely to have received a leaflet from Lambeth recently headed "Update on the Carnegie." It is available at [www.lambeth.gov.uk/lambeth-libraries-faq](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/lambeth-libraries-faq) where Lambeth has also published a basic floor plan for the re-opened building. While attempting to reassure, **these documents are deliberately misleading.**

#### **Will the building be re-opened as a library?**

Lambeth is continuing to move forward with plans to re-open the building with a gym and a so-called 'neighbourhood library'. The Friends' position remains that without full-time librarians, this will not be a library. The statement 'dedicated Lambeth library staff will be on site regularly' lacks clarity. Lambeth's plans **do not provide any library staff** except for visits from a single librarian at undisclosed intervals.

The floor plan shows three rooms on the ground floor as 'neighbourhood library and flexible community space'. It is not clear what is meant by 'flexible community space', presumably rooms for rent or hire. The term 'neighbourhood library' is defined in the Culture 2020 Report that was approved by the Council last year, as "a small selection of books including a children's book offer". We are concerned that no bookshelves or computer desks are shown and the library will not be the primary use of the building. In fact, **no space is set aside for use as a library.**



Two Neighbourhood Libraries, in Streatham Vale and Tulse Hill, already exist. The photograph shows the Tulse Hill one.

The figures for book stock and loans in Carnegie Library, and at the Neighbourhood Libraries at the end of March 2016, were:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Books</b>	<b>Loans for the year to 31st March 2016</b>
Streatham Vale Tea Room	1,164	528
Tulse Hill Old Scout Hut	863	103
Carnegie Library	19,795	67,261

Ruskin Readers adult literacy clubs, Carnegie Library Chess Club and the various reading groups for adults and children operated as an integral part of the library and took place in the public areas of the library simultaneously with other uses of those areas. There was never any risk of them being charged for accommodation. The literacy club students, Chess Club members (who are mostly children) and many of the reading group members could not pay anyway. **The initial floor plans and previous comments indicate that the groups would have to pay hire fees, which they should not have to pay and cannot afford. It would be the end of these groups.**

### **Excavation works to put gym in the basement**

Lambeth is pressing ahead with plans for a gym without market research. Unlike earlier plans, Lambeth now states firmly that this gym will be located in the 'unused basement'. The basement is not unused – because of the hill, it only exists under a small part of the building, and those rooms are already used for library services such as home delivery. Huge expenditure will be required to excavate the undercroft of a Grade II listed building.

### **When will the building re-open?**

There are contrasts between Lambeth's confident assertion that the building will reopen in early 2017 and their vaguer statement that GLL are still developing their plans and will make a planning application sometime "in the coming months". This proposal is for major works (in which Historic England is likely to have an interest) and it is hard to see how they will be completed by early 2017.

### **Closure and money**

Lambeth admits that they closed the library without clear plans in place because of a shortage of money. However, they are planning to spend millions on converting the building and subsidising the running costs of the gym for the first two years. Please see our website for further details. Additionally, they are currently paying tens of thousands for security guards at both the Carnegie and Minet libraries, which is probably costing more than keeping them open.

The Friends' position is to see the existing library re-opened and run, as before, by professional librarians alongside harmonious and popular activities to bring in extra revenue. To this end we support the proposed fully costed Community and Staff Mutual plan, which was rejected by Lambeth.

### **Asset Transfer**

The Carnegie Community Trust is a small group of individuals who do not represent the community and who are in favour of removing the professionally run public lending library. The Friends and library users have set up the alternative Carnegie Library Association, a membership based, democratically accountable charity.

### **Sale of the building**

Contrary to what the leaflet says, Lambeth did propose sale of the building in 1999 and 2010. Given the enormous cost of the proposed investment in the gym, many believe the only way the finances of the current proposal can be expected to come out to Lambeth's advantage is if the building is sold in future.

## **The Campaign**

Lambeth presented their current round of library closures as a plan to close five libraries, including Carnegie Library, and retain five Town Centre Libraries, including two which are operating at capacity. Even this brief description should make it apparent that the users of all the libraries and their staff need to work together. We do this through an informal umbrella organisation: Defend the Ten. For further information about the campaign see <http://defendthe10-lambeth.org.uk/>

## Things you can do

**Please join the Friends**, if you haven't already. Every home locally should have received a membership form recently. Details of how to join are also on our website.

**Write to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)** to express your concern that Lambeth is not and will not be fulfilling its statutory requirement 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for all persons'. DCMS has said it will investigate; every letter or email counts. Head of Libraries: [simon.richardson@culture.gov.uk](mailto:simon.richardson@culture.gov.uk) or Minister responsible for libraries: Ed Vaizey, [vaizeye@parliament.uk](mailto:vaizeye@parliament.uk) (postal address: DCMS, 4th Floor, 100 Parliament Street, London SW1A 2BQ)

**Write to Helen Hayes MP** (if you are a Dulwich and West Norwood constituent). She is being of some help but this so far falls short of her promise during her election campaign to "fight tooth and nail" for our library. **Please write encouraging her to keep her promise and emphasise that a professionally run library for all ages is what is needed.** [helen.hayes.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.hayes.mp@parliament.uk)

**Write to GLL, the company which is lined up to run the gym.** Although their website states that they are 'here for the good of the communities we operate in', they have a poor industrial relations record. They use zero hours contracts and pay less than the London Living Wage to some of their staff. [mark.sesnan@gll.org](mailto:mark.sesnan@gll.org) or at Middlegate House, The Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, London SE18 6SX.

**Finally, write to Lambeth Council to set out your concerns and to express your support of the Carnegie Library Association in its bid for the asset transfer of the building.** (Olive Morris House, 18 Brixton Hill, London, SW2 1RD) Leader: Lib Peck [LPeck@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:LPeck@lambeth.gov.uk) ; Cabinet member responsible for libraries: Jack Hopkins [JHopkins@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:JHopkins@lambeth.gov.uk) .

**Fuller information about matters touched on in this bulletin** accompanies the copy of it on the Friends' website.

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