

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Relocation of Wokingham Library to the Carnival Phase 2 Development

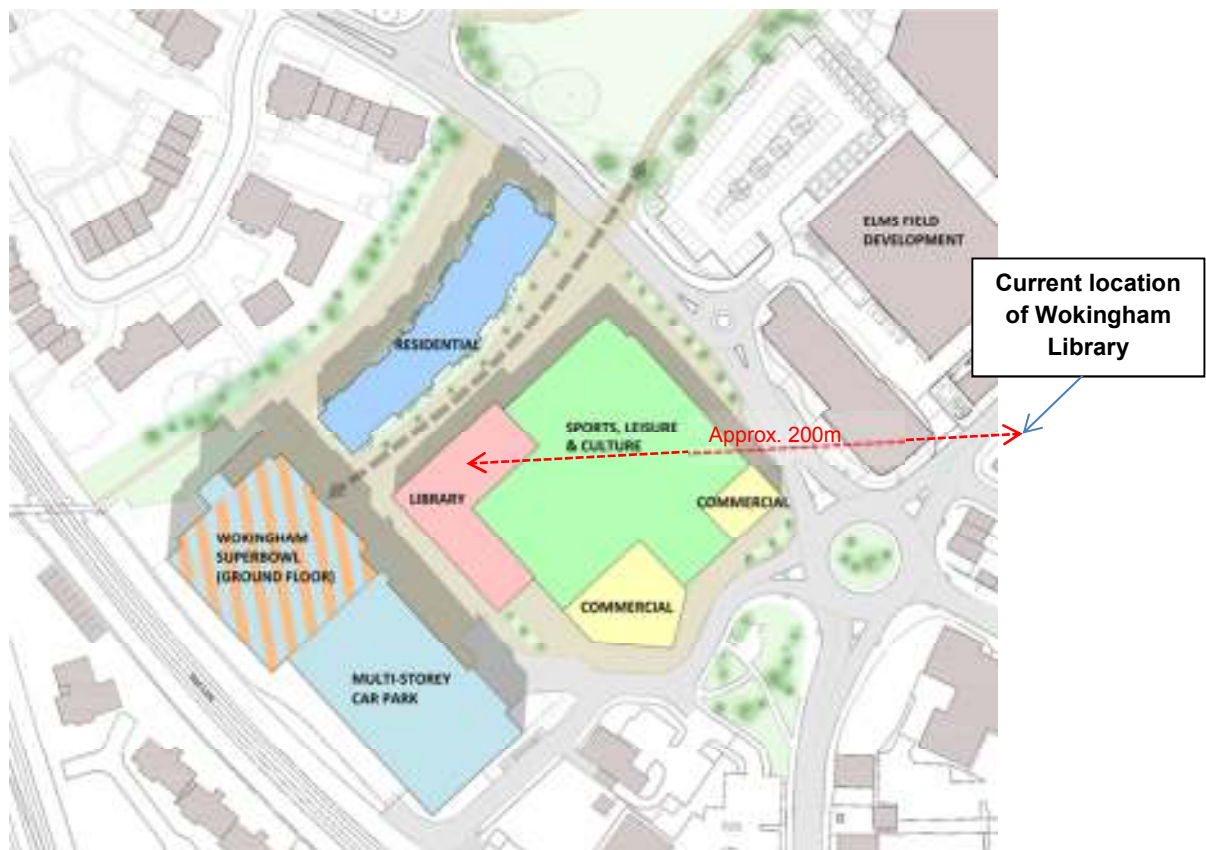
Name: Mark Redfearn

Role: Service Manager: Libraries & Community Services

Department: Environment

What is the decision, policy or change?

To relocate the Wokingham Library Service from its current location in a two storey building on Denmark Street to a single ground floor location within the Carnival Phase 2 development on Wellington Road when it opens in 2021. The map below shows the proposed location for the new library building.



What outcome are you looking to achieve?

To provide an improved location from which to deliver library services within Wokingham in line with the Council's agreed policy as detailed in the Wokingham Borough Council Library Offer.

Specifically this includes:

- Enabling the library to adapt to meet the growing population and changing behaviours of our residents.
- Improved access to other Wokingham Borough Council services in line with Customer Services vision
- Strong partnership working to ensure flexibility of delivery and access to library services
- An environment within libraries that is welcoming and enjoyable
- A building that is flexible and adaptable to changing demands for their use
- Providing access to other types of services including other council services, health services and local community and voluntary services
- Providing space for locally focused events and activities that develop a sense of community
- Actively identifying events and services that support the broader Council vision
- Responding to natural opportunities to deliver a greater range of Council services within libraries.
- Continuing to identify ways to directly support Wokingham Borough Council's vision for the borough
- Improving the usage of library services so that they remain a valuable method of supporting and promoting other Council services

It is inherent in all of these ambitions that we would like to see the usage of our libraries grow, both in terms of physical visits to libraries and the number of active library members.

How does it hope to achieve this?

The proposed new site for the library services provides the following opportunities to realise the ambitions of the Library Offer:

- Approx. 150m² more of usable space
- A single large space that supports the flexible configuration of services
- Co-location with other leisure and cultural activities
- Improved café facilities
- Enhanced toilet facilities on the same floor
- A bright open appearance with lots of natural light
- Greatly improved parking with over 500 public spaces adjacent to the new facility
- More efficient site management, including shared plant facilities
- An improved synergy with the rest of the redeveloped town centre
- Opportunities for longer opening times, including more opening at weekends

All of these improvements can be delivered whilst still retaining the core elements of the library service that residents value; including:

- Books remain the primary stock type
- Dedicated children's area
- Study space
- Free computer and Wi-Fi access
- Support to local groups
- Meeting Space
- Self-Service
- Full calendar of library events
- Summer & winter reading challenges

Who benefits from this and how (and who does not benefit and how)?

The relocation of the Wokingham Library Service to the Carnival Phase 2 development should benefit residents from all across the borough. Evidence below shows that:

- people travel from all over the borough to make use of the library in Wokingham Town
- the age breakdown of library users suggests that they are also likely to use other leisure and cultural services in the area
- those that travel by car to use the library will have significantly improved parking near the library
- library users with mobility issues will benefit from all the current library services* being available on one level, ground floor location (* lending library, study areas, café, toilets, meeting space, etc.)
- Public transport users (train & bus) will have easy and close access to the new library building

What analysis has been undertaken and what evidence has been considered?

The Library Service consistently monitors the use of its libraries to understand trends in how they are used by residents. The following is a summary of the key pieces of analysis for Wokingham Library.

Declining Visits: Visits to the Wokingham Library have reduced slightly over the past three years from 146,448 in 2013/14 to 142,900 visits during 2015/16. Overall, visits to libraries across the borough have been steadily increasing in recent years.

Book Issues: Last year (2016/17) there were 196,326 items issued in Wokingham Library, the previous year (2015/16) there were 208,000 items issued.

Library Users: The tables below show the breakdown of age for people who have borrowed an item last year from Wokingham Library and how this compares with the demographics of the borough as a whole:

Wokingham Borough Population		Wokingham Library Users			
		Where Date of Birth data is available		Where Date of Birth data is not available*	
Age	%	Age	%	Borrower category	%
0-17	22.97	0-17	36.5%	Child	0.6%
18 - 24	6.98	18 - 24	2.4%	Teenager	0.0%
25 - 29	5.23	25 - 29	1.7%	Adult	9.2%
30 - 44	21.86	30 - 44	17.2%	Pensioner	2.7%
45 - 59	21.45	45 - 59	12.1%	<i>Total</i>	12.5%
60 - 64	6.11	60 - 64	3.4%		
65+	15.41	65+	14.3%		
		<i>Total</i>	87.5%		

*There is some historic data for library users that was collected before we routinely asked for date of birth details. Within this data, we are only able to know whether the user was a child, teenager, adult or pensioner at the time they joined the library service. This makes up about 12.5% of our data.

The table below shows the broad age breakdown of Wokingham Library users during 2016 by the volume of items that they borrowed. The data also shows the proportion of items issued in Wokingham Library to those users who identify as having a disability.

Items borrowed at Wokingham Library by borrower Category	
Borrower Category	%
Child	33.64%
Teenage	2.99%
Adult	35.38%
Pensioner	27.40%
Identifying as having a disability	0.59%

The disability data is made up of:

- 57.41% Adults with a visual impairment
- 0.29% teenagers (with either a visual impairment or an SEN)
- 42.3% other disabilities which haven't specifically been identified.

This group collectively accounts for circa a thousand item loans last year.

Distanced Travelled to Wokingham Library: The table below shows how far different users of Wokingham Library travel to make use of its services.

	0 - 1 miles	1 - 2 miles	2 - 3 miles	3 - 5 miles	5+ miles
Wokingham	35.98%	29.53%	13.22%	15.94%	5.33%

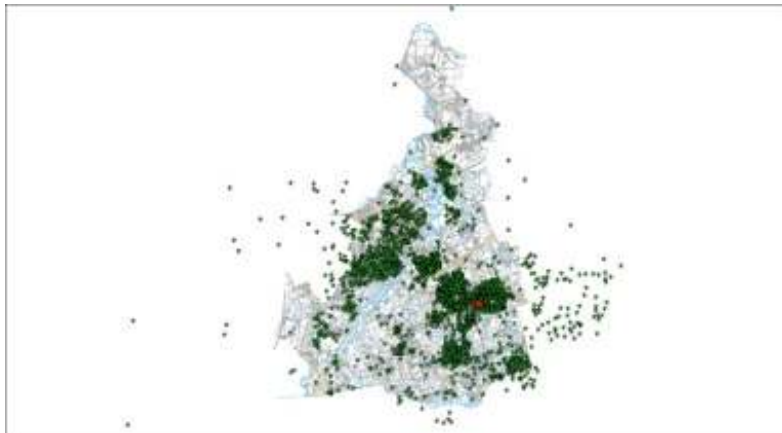
Source: Library Offer Consultation 2016

The historic data below was collected as part of the 2012 Library Survey and shows how library users travel to Wokingham Library:

How Customers Travel to Wokingham Library	%
Car	50%
Walk	45.80%
Bike	1.60%
Public Transport	5.20%

Source: Library User Consultation 2012

Wokingham Library Users: The map below shows where in the borough (and beyond) people live who make use of Wokingham Library.



Source: Library Usage Data 2016

Location of the New Carnival Phase 2 Site: The proposed site for the new Carnival Phase 2 development that will include the new library building is very close to the existing library building, and is in fact clearly visible from the current location. The current draft plans for the new development propose that the entrance to the new library will be just over 200m from the ground floor entrance of the existing library.



Existing Wokingham Library Site: The current location for the Wokingham Library Service has the following challenges:

- It is located across two floors
- Running costs and staffing costs are not as efficient as they could be
- Access to the main lending library is via a steep hill
- There is no level drop-off point for users with mobility issues
- The toilets are on a different floor to the lending library
- Opening times of the café are not commensurate with the library opening times
- The lending library and other space have limited adaptability.
- The range of activities is limited to the amount of free space in the library

Protected Characteristics Analysis

The Equality Act (2010) lists the specific protected characteristics that should be considered when assessing the impact of a proposal. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The library service holds information and stock items that relate to each of these protected characteristics. In particular, the library service in Wokingham has a large range of age specific materials and services, including a dedicated Children's Library, teenage writing groups, and reminiscence services.

In addition to services and stock items, the library service also actively promotes initiatives and activities that support these characteristics. This includes hosting Black History Month and LGBT month events, ongoing events to support parenting and other childcare

experiences, and a promotion of authors by their sex, sexual orientation, faith and heritage. All of the services and items that are available within the current library building will be available in the new library building.

In addition to the services and items available within the new library building, the issue of physical accessibility has been carefully considered. The new proposed new building for the library will offer access to all of the current Wokingham library services on one ground floor location that is level with the surrounding area, with a dedicated drop-off point. This is a vast improvement on the current location where the library services are split across two floors, toilet facilities are only available on the ground floor, access to the lending library on the second floor is via a steep hill and there is no drop-off point with level access to the library.

There is also increased parking available in a new purpose built multistory car park directly adjacent to the new library building.

The new library building is just over 200m from the existing Wokingham Library building and will be clearly visible from the redeveloped Elms Field area of the town centre. The new building is also closer to Wokingham Train Station and a similar distance away from local town centre bus stops.

Have you consulted any individuals or groups and what did this determine? If not, why has this decision been made?

Library Offer Consultation: In 2016, the Council consulted extensively on the proposed new Library Offer for the borough. This included a questionnaire and a series of drop-in sessions, public meetings and consideration by the Council’s Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee.

The Council received 1,112 responses to the consultation questionnaire. Of these, 344 were completed online, with the remainder submitted in hard copy format. 97.8% of respondents are a member of the Council’s Library Service.

Specifically, the Library Offer consultation provided the following results:

Focus the delivery of library services in the geographical areas where they are most useful, including delivering them in different buildings with other services, such as community centres, sports centres and schools.

133 (12.6%)	Strongly agree	191 (18.1%)	Disagree
372 (35.2%)	Agree	73 (6.9%)	Strongly disagree
289 (27.3%)	Neither agree nor disagree		

Our libraries should be welcoming and enjoyable places that enable access to borough council and other local services and provide space for local events

484 (44.4%)	Strongly agree	27 (2.5%)	Disagree
426 (39.0%)	Agree	18 (1.6%)	Strongly disagree
136 (12.5%)	Neither agree nor disagree		

Our library service should adapt to meet the growing population and changing behaviour of our residents:

403 (37.1%)	Strongly agree	32 (2.9%)	Disagree
501 (46.1%)	Agree	12 (1.1%)	Strongly disagree
138 (12.7%)	Neither agree nor disagree		

Relocation Engagement Feedback: Following the approval in principle by the Executive Committee of the relocation of Wokingham Library, the plans for the new location were publicised and feedback was invited. During May 2017 two drop-in sessions were held at the library and the plans were publicised via traditional and electronic media. The responses can be summarised as follows:

Approx. 15 people attended the first event (8th May 2017)
Approx. 40 people attended the second event (30th May 2017)

During the drop-in sessions, a lot of the comments centred on why the Council was considering relocating the library when it was already in a purpose built building? Some of these questions and comments included statements about existing plans for the current library site to be sold for residential purposes.

There were a number of comments about the extra distance that older residents would have to travel to the new library site and whether this would discourage these people from using it. Some of these comments also included statements that older residents would not like using the new multi-storey car park next to the new library site, and questioned how the new library site would connect with the rest of the town centre.

During the discussions there were a lot of questions about how the new library would operate and what services would be available. Issues around maintaining current services, including the quiet study areas, and the link with the café were the most common points raised.

Residents asked specific questions of the size of the new library site and how this compared to the existing library. There were also some questions about how the design for the new library space and whether the library staff would be involved in this.

Finally, there were a number of questions about what would happen to the 'waterbabies' statue outside the current entrance to the library.

Other Comments:

There were very few comments sent directly to either the Town Centre Regeneration or Community Engagement email addresses (approx. 20 in total). There were also a number of direct comments made to library staff, a formal response from the Wokingham Society and a small number of individual responses. These comments generally echoed many of the issues detailed above.

The relocation of Wokingham Library within the Carnival Phase 2 development was broadly supported by those attending the Wokingham Town Regeneration Stakeholder briefing in May.

What is the impact of this evidence and consultation on the proposed decision, policy or change? (E.g. stopped, amended, justified or continued)

Justified.

The evidence presented above shows that the relocation of the library service in Wokingham will provide a clear opportunity to realise the ambitions of the Council's Library Offer.

The Library Offer has been developed with a significant amount of input from local residents and there is strong support for the further improvement and enhancement of library services in the borough.

Any other information, evidence considered or comments?

Business Case: A corresponding Business Case for the proposed relocation has also been produced. This includes commercially sensitive details of the costs associated with the relocation and the potential uses for the existing library site.

Below is a summary of the Business Case without the commercially sensitive details:

The capital costs of building the new library space are factored into the existing Medium Term Financial Plan allocation for the Carnival Phase 2 scheme and would come at no cost to the Library service.

If the space within the development is used by the library service it is assumed that no rental income will be accrued as the building will be owned by Wokingham Borough Council and a Council service will operate from it.

As the building will be new build, with a life span of circa 30 years and built to the latest energy efficiency standards, we would expect some reduction in running and maintenance costs than the existing Denmark Street facility, although costs such as business rates will be similar.

The relocation of the library to the Carnival site would release the existing library site for an alternative use and/or redevelopment.

The following options have been identified:

- Reuse the existing building
- Redevelopment by WBC (knock down and rebuild)
- Sell site to private developer

Appraisals of the development value that could be generate from the existing site show that this value would be higher than the costs of the building the new facility, and thus would deliver a positive return to the Council overall.