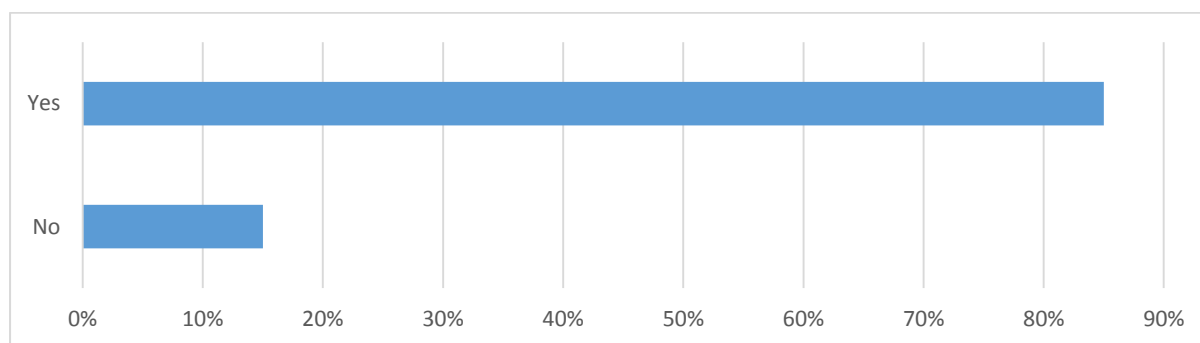


## **Central Library Consultation Report**

From 14 August to 16 September 2018, Nottingham City Council undertook a consultation on the future of Central Library. The options presented to the public were to use the opportunity of redeveloping the Broadmarsh area to create a new Central Library in the area, or to leave the Central Library in its current location in Angel Row.

These are the results of the consultation where 1,595 people have responded.

### **Should Nottingham City Council take the opportunity of redeveloping the Broadmarsh Area to create a new city centre library for Nottingham?**



The overwhelming response to the survey, online and in leaflet form, has been in favour of Central Library being located in the Broadmarsh area, with 85% of respondents in favour.

### **What would you want a new library to be like? Tell us your ideas.**

There are key themes around what people want from a new library. Bright, light, airy, modern, open and accessible are used to describe the space, along with an impressive entrance to entice people in. People wish to see a library befitting our status as a UNESCO City of Literature, which they do not believe Angel Row is.

Support for a high quality children's library is evident throughout the consultation. Respondents have asked for a boldly coloured, interactive, vibrant, comfortable space, where children can explore books and with plenty of space for events, storytimes and workshops. One theme has been that the children's section be away from the adults section, maybe even walled off, so children have the opportunity to be noisy and excited about their area without disrupting other library users.

There is support for existing facilities, provided they are upgraded, such as:

- More, and more comfortable, seating
- Regularly serviced and updated PCs
- Charging points for laptops
- Accessibility for older and disabled people
- Meeting and study rooms
- Study areas, preferably away from bookshelves for peace and quiet
- Exhibition spaces
- Local history collections
- Printers and photocopiers
- Improved WiFi and WiFi printing
- Café facilities, and space to eat, drink and relax
- Music, film and TV access.

New ideas have been suggested, including:

- Graphic novels and comic books, with Page 45 offering to help stock and replenish this section
- An outdoor space, potentially even a roof garden
- Academic titles and referencing, including space to work
- Heavier promotion of Robin Hood and the Caves
- Teenager and Young Adult provision separate from the children's section
- Nooks and crannies to hide in with a book
- More accessible opening hours to appeal to working people.

LeftLion, Page 45 and Five Leaves Bookshop have all responded positively and are keen, as City of Literature partners, to be involved in making the library a success.

Sensitivity to disabilities are a running theme, with requests to make the library accessible and safe for disabled people, people with learning disabilities, autism, dementia friendly, a space for older people to take a seat or read the paper and to relax in.

Finally, there is wide support for the current librarians to staff the library, provided they are easily identifiable and eager to help. One respondent suggested a dedicated Children's Librarian if the council wishes to meet its pledge of making this the country's best children's library.

### **Do you think there are benefits to creating a new city centre library?**

Results here are similarly positive and follow certain themes. Predominantly, respondents see the opportunity to improve literacy and encourage reading in the city by creating a bespoke Central Library rather than "shoehorning" one to fit. Respondents feel a new library would benefit poorer families who are unable to buy books for themselves and complement the community and neighbourhood libraries, which respondents highlight as valuable throughout the consultation.

Respondents also felt a new Central Library would:

- Increase library usage
- Offer the opportunity to promote our UNESCO City of Literature status and literary history, inspiring a new generation
- Send the signal that Nottingham values libraries
- Give the Broadmarsh area some additional vibrancy
- Increase Nottingham's status regionally and nationally by keeping up with other cities by redeveloping its Central Library
- Shape public spaces and the city centre with more than just shops.

Other responses of note suggested that Broadmarsh is well served by public transport and more accessible than Angel Row, and that adding Central Library alongside the other redevelopments in the area would help make Broadmarsh the new centre of Nottingham. One respondent suggested they had not seen the benefit in selling the Angel Row site but having seen these plans, sees the benefit where they did not before.

### **What do you think would be crucial to help make a new library successful?**

The loud and clear message from this question is that the people of Nottingham want to be involved in the design and formation of a new Central Library. Respondents have asked for focus groups: children and young adults, older people and a diverse section of the city's population to be involved in coming up with ideas for Central Library. Respondents would

also value having a say on the final proposals. Ongoing messages about the progress of the design of the library, its new facilities and proposals through effective marketing has also been requested.

To promote and support the idea of a children's library, along with the previous suggestion of a Children's Librarian, events with children's books characters, celebrating children's favourite books and promoting new books have been proposed. City of Literature partners are keen to help with this.

Keeping the "same, experienced, reliable staff" is a recurring theme from respondents, as is keeping facilities like employment support and CV writing, as well as specific spaces for different age groups, such as children, teenagers, adults, older people and interest groups.

Other suggestions include:

- Updating online services, and better digital integration (e.g. text reminders for nearly due library books)
- Good accessibility
- Comfy areas to sit and relax in with books
- Ongoing refreshment of stock, and more than just books (poetry, graphic novels, art, guest speakers, authors in residence)
- Quiet areas
- Archive facilities
- Lockers for shopping to allow people more time to linger
- Space and appropriate tech facilities for freelance workers to work in
- Buy in from relevant third sector organisations
- Local event information and maps for visitors coming to Nottingham from the train station.

One divisive topic was the subject of additional council services in the new Central Library. Some were in favour of having other services present, but others suggested the presence of the contact centre made them uncomfortable, was disruptive or had made the current Central Library worse. Opinion is more in favour of no additional services than in including them in the new Central Library.

## **Issues and concerns**

Opinion is divided, albeit in favour of Broadmarsh, on the location of the library, Some feel that Angel Row is a perfectly central location for a Central Library and Broadmarsh is too far away. However, some respondents having looked at the proposals feel that Broadmarsh is a central location that is already well served by public transport.

There are concerns about how customers from the north of the city will access the library which will need reviewing. One respondent clearly saw the benefit of locating the library near Nottingham Contemporary, Hockley and the new Nottingham College City Hub, which is a point the council did not make last time and should in the future.

Some are concerned that the proposals suggest that the library will actually be placed in into Broadmarsh as opposed to the new Car Park and Bus Station building. This was a fairly common misconception among those who raised concerns, so work will have to be done to correct this.

While many believe Birmingham Central Library to be a fantastic example to follow, a number of respondents have highlighted that the overspend on the library has resulted in reduced opening hours and urge the council to show caution and care in this regard.

Finally, some feel the current Central Library is perfectly located and fit for purpose.

## **Inspiration from elsewhere**

Some respondents have suggested other libraries and facilities from around the world that Nottingham City Council should look to for inspiration. These are:

- Beeston Library, Nottingham, UK
- West Bridgford Library, Nottingham UK
- Bromley House Library, Nottingham, UK
- Queen's Medical Centre Children's Ward, Nottingham, UK
- Birmingham Central Library, UK
- Manchester Central Library, UK
- Liverpool Library, UK
- Millennium Galleries, Sheffield, UK
- The Hive, Worcester, UK
- Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, UK
- Newcastle City Library, UK
- Halifax Central Library, Nova Scotia, Canada
- Vancouver Public Library, Canada
- Brooklyn Art Library, New York, USA
- Brentwood Children's Library, Nashville, Tennessee, USA
- Seattle Central Library, USA
- Biblioteca de Espana, Medellin, Colombia
- Library at Orchard Centre, Singapore
- Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan