



Library could move to save it from closure

Community divided over proposal

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West Hampstead Library could move into a controversial proposed eight-storey housing development to prevent it from closing, it has been suggested.

Several members of the community have backed the idea of the library moving from its current home in West End Lane further down the road to the site of Travis Perkins building merchants, where a developer plans to build 200 homes.

The idea was put forward at a bustling public meeting on Tuesday, where residents and councillors discussed the £800,000 worth of cuts that Camden Council is making to the libraries service.

It was mooted as an alternative cost-saving measure to the closure of the library, which this financial

year will cost the council £216,759 to run.

Alan Templeton, treasurer of the Friends of West Hampstead Library, said: "Everybody realises that the split-level arrangement in the current library is an expensive way of running a library, and the opportunity to get the whole thing onto one floor is quite a good idea. "The danger is that the council will try to squeeze the existing floor area. We have to be careful about how we show our support."

But the notion divided the audience at the West Hampstead Area Action Group meeting at Hampstead Synagogue, many of whom are fiercely opposed to the proposal to tear down the so-called "Travis Perkins" building at 156 West End Lane.

The building is currently in the process of being sold to developer A2 Dominion by Camden Council.



■ Fiona Dean, assistant director of culture and customer services, and cabinet member Cllr Abdul Hai at the meeting on cuts to libraries

Ian Ferrie, who leads the Save West Hampstead campaign against the proposals, said a potential move was "fraught with serious issues". He said: "If the library is to be moved as part of any proposed private development, this would result in the bizarre situation of a public library being situated on private land and subject to the terms and conditions of an unaccountable private entity."

It is unclear if any savings would be made by the library's potential move. In a statement, Camden Council said it considers all suggestions that will help it keep

libraries open.

A2 Dominion said it currently has no plans to include a library in the new development.

More than 1,000 people signed a petition to save the library from closure, one of many options put forward in a public consultation on how to make savings.

Residents are encouraged by the council to come up with ways to make the cuts. Cllr Phil Rosenberg, who is leading the Save West Hampstead Library campaign, suggested on Tuesday that libraries could host cocktail-making sessions at "library lates" events.

Nature trail wins award

Volunteers who have worked tirelessly to clean up a leafy nature trail have been recognised for their efforts with a prestigious award.

The Parkland Walk has been given Green Flag status, an honour awarded to the country's tidest green spaces.

It is all thanks to the work of the Friends of the Parkland Walk, who organise regular clean-ups of the woodland trail which stretches from Highgate to Finsbury Park.

In March, volunteers cleared four truckloads of rubbish from the walkway.

Simon Olley, chairman of the Friends of The Parkland Walk, said: "We are delighted that the Parkland Walk has received Green Flag status and particularly that the judging panel has recognised the Friends as an important asset, highlighting our efforts to promote the walk and commending the commitment of our organisation, members and their volunteering activities."

Queen's Wood in Muswell Hill was also given the prestigious status by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy.

The latest awards propel Haringey into third place in London for the number of high-quality parks.

There are 20 green spaces in the borough which now have Green Flag status.

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