

March 14, 2016

Dear Mr Thompson,

I offer some factual points on the proposed library changes.

From a practical viewpoint:

What commercial company is likely to be interested in taking on a Grade II listed building. Has any company expressed an interest. The number of empty shops/charity shops/pound shops in Darlington town centre indicate a lack of appeal for investment. In October 2013, Debenhams was reported as saying it had no plans to move into Darlington.

If the building stands empty it will have to be maintained with minimum heating and the cost of security

Does the council plan to / have any expectation of demolishing the building

What is being lost at the Dolphin Centre, or it is dramatically under-used

From the viewpoint of a library service:

The survey forms states the significant reduction in public space available at the Dolphin Centre

I understand there will be staff redundancies and have heard the figure of 60% quoted. Even with a smaller area, fewer staff equates to fewer working hours equates to a diminished service

It is therefore inevitable the library service will be less than it is in Crown Street

What is the effect of chlorine on books

What will happen to the Borough Collection of pictures, not very visible even now

What will happen to the books and local history material stored in the basement

How will the work carried out in the basement be accommodated

Will the minimised service be big enough to be part of a wider borrowing service by which readers can request books not held in Darlington

One proposed/potential/possible method of accessing the local history material by appointment and with only one trained member of staff is, frankly, ludicrous. The current service (in a recently refurbished room) is one of the jewels in your crown. Material has been collected, donated and maintained over a long period; informed and helpful staff assist in making access to information easy. The result is a great deal of pleasure, continuing learning for individuals and organisations and increasing local knowledge and publications. The resource has taken decades to build and still continues

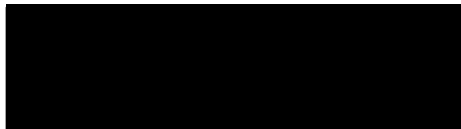
Does the current council really want to be the one which squanders and abandons the historic legacy of a public library given to the town by a prominent family whose name still stands high

This is a public library, ie it belongs to the public and the local authority has a duty of care which will not be achieved by the current proposal

DBC closed the town's museum in Tubwell Row in 1998 and the collection was cut down. It decided that any art, objects, photos or documents relating to Darlington were to be kept by the council. Where are those items. Some was given to other museums: eg the Dorman museum has 2,500 geological specimens given from the Tubwell Row Museum. The closure of Darlington Arts Centre in 2012 cost several organisations a venue and a noticeable loss to the town is that of the Spring Thing folk event which gave pleasure and brought business to the town. DBC has a lamentable record in maintaining the town's family silver.

Facilities once lost are not necessarily ever restored. Please do not abandon Crown Street library – still an exciting piece of vernacular architecture – rather consider adding to its use.

To close **Cockerton** library would be a significant loss to its schools and community, and would effectively disenfranchise the residents of Branksome. I am confident others will discuss the moral and ethical viewpoints of losing the hard-won gift of reading in this growing part of town.



CC: Coun Bill Dixon

Coun Heather Scott