

Mrs Diana Blackwell
Planning Officer, Southborough Society
Southborough
Tunbridge Wells
Kent

Mr Michael Hill, OBE
Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
Kent County Council
Room G.60, Sessions House
Maidstone, Kent
ME14 1XQ

Mr James Pearson
Head of Service Libraries Registration and Archives
Kent County Council
Kent History and Library Centre
James Whatman Way
Maidstone, Kent
ME14 1LQ

23rd of January, 2019

Dear Mr Hill and Mr Pearson,

I am writing to you as the Planning Officer of the Southborough Society with regards to Southborough Library and its proposed new location within the Hub scheme.

At the Society's Committee Meeting on 27th November, the Society agreed that it will not support or oppose the revised Hub application. However, the Committee were unanimous in their decision that it is very important that the library should remain on its current site rather than become part of the new Hub development.

We feel it is very necessary to preserve our purpose built, Civic Trust Award (1962) winning space as it serves the community perfectly well, indeed more so than the proposed new library which will not include a designated separate children's library and which will have to share space with other services which will potentially be disruptive to its visitors. Its current neglected state is due to underinvestment by KCC in recent years but this could easily be rectified.

By keeping the library site where it is, we will be able to free up much needed room in the Hub for a community cafe and/or dedicated space to exhibit the large collection of objects, artefacts, maps, photographs owned by the Southborough Society. A museum space to share and display our collection has been a long term ambition of the Society.

The existing library too has the potential to be developed into heritage centre for our collection, again would preserve the building and the surrounding green space if it the Library.

Southborough desperately needs this green and leafy punctuation point at one of our busiest

intersections. The trees have Tree Protection Orders and make our town more attractive and contribute to cleaning the air on one of Kent's most polluted roads.

Southborough Library is not a problem that needs to be fixed; it has some of the highest borrowing numbers for a library of its size in Kent. It has been largely consistent in its use (visitor numbers and borrowing) by the community over the last ten years – this is despite a significant reduction in the libraries budget in recent years.

We believe this proposal would have widespread support. At the public meeting held in the town in December many people expressed their appreciation of our existing library and their desire for it to remain in its current situation. I hope you will give our proposal serious consideration and look forward to hearing your response in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs D Blackwell