



**Cllr Arshad Afsar, Cllr Syed Hussain, Cllr Conor Wileman**

County Councillor for Burton Trent

Staffordshire County Council

8<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**Re: Opposition to the proposed relocation of the Burton Library and the transformation of the market and market hall.**

To Staffordshire County Council Cabinet:

This is to state that we, the undersigned county councillors representing Burton Town, Trent and Tower division, express our opposition to the proposed relocation of Burton Library into the Burton Market Hall and request that the Cabinet do not proceed with the current Burton library move proposal. We request that Staffordshire County Council Cabinet resolves to retain Burton Library in its current location.

**Cllr Arshad Afsar**

County Councillor  
Burton Town Division

**Labour Party**

**Cllr Syed Hussain**

County Councillor  
Deputy Leader of the  
Opposition  
Burton Trent Division

**Labour party**

**Cllr Conor Wileman**

County Councillor  
Burton Tower Division

**Conservative Party**

Burton's library is an obvious focal point for investment and development. It has enjoyed a long spell as the most-visited library in the county, although in recent years it has slipped slightly from the top spot. This is evidence of the need to modernise it and make it a true 21<sup>st</sup> century library, introducing touchscreen tables, 3D printing and other innovations. If this were done in its current beautiful riverside location it could become the jewel in Staffordshire's crown and the envy of every other county in England.

Streamlining the library and making it a ground floor only service, would also allow the county council to cut its overheads by moving staff members from other Burton locations ie Waterloo Street and the Grange Street, on to the upper floor.

Lichfield's library on Market Street is rightly heralded as a great example of a modern library. Its popularity is also helped by the addition of a café, which it did not have before it moved. Burton already has a popular café which allows people to sit outside and enjoy the views across the Washlands. This is one reason why Burton's library is loved so much by local people. Families with children also use the nearby play areas during their visits.

Retaining the library within the Riverside area, which will be the focus of regeneration and investment in future years (the so-called Project D of the Town Deal Fund) would make it fit ideally with other leisure uses for surrounding land that are currently under discussion. The library could also be reached easily from Stapenhill on foot and cycle if the planned bridge (another Town Deal Fund projects) passes its business case and gets the green light. This bridge is planned to go straight to the library site in Burton.

The Registration Office within the library, and the library itself, benefit from pay and display parking directly outside. If this were retained it would continue to make life easier for local people and town visitors. The suggestion that these facilities move to the current market hall would cause hardship for parents registering babies, residents registering deaths, young families, the elderly and those with mobility issues wanting to use the library due to lack of nearby parking.

The riverside setting currently provides a beautiful backdrop for wedding pictures. Staffordshire County Council's own website describes it like this: *"The Registration Office is set in an excellent location situated next to the river with access to gardens for wonderful photo opportunities."*

Those who live and work in Burton consider the current library to be firmly positioned in the town centre. Whether you turn left out of the library front doors to make the short walk down the High Street or turn right to walk through the memorial gardens, you are among local shops and other facilities immediately. Therefore, there is no argument to say that moving the library a short distance to the market hall will increase town centre footfall and boost the local economy.

Exploiting the leisure potential of Burton's riverside is an essential part of any regeneration plan - and work is already underway to improve walkways across the Washlands. Retaining the library in its current building, modernising it and adding additional office space for county council staff makes financial sense for the authority.

Plans to move it to the market hall could easily come unstuck if the market hall floor has to be disturbed to allow deeper foundations to be dug to support the extension to the mezzanine floor to accommodate the Registration Office, admin offices and meeting rooms. Beneath the floor is a Scheduled Monument, the crypt of the former Burton Abbey and there is a risk that works could become far more expensive and complicated once construction works start. Why take this financial risk when it is so much simpler to modernise the library in its purpose-built 1970s building?