

Tim Warren, at the Bath Deserves Better meeting last week, you asked me ‘what do you have against integration?’ and I’d like to be very clear and state for the record that neither myself, nor Save Bath Library, has *anything* against integrating council services.

In fact, as Council Officer Ian Savigar, who is heading up the library move knows full well, it was Save Bath Library’s Caroline Ambrose who first had the idea to investigate integrating the One Stop Shop into the Podium. On March 9th it was our campaign who mapped this out for Savigar in a coffee shop.

If we can bring groups into the library that didn’t visit previously, **great**, though I question whether a buildings mash-up costing millions of pounds is the best way to achieve this. However, integration should certainly be ONE of the alternatives under consultation *provided that*:

- a) Proper research has been conducted that this will benefit both library users and One Stop Shop visitors;
- b) Integration will not result in a diminished library service;
- c) The disabled or vulnerable will not be excluded from either the library or the One Stop Shop;

We now know that Lewis House should have been ruled out as a site for integrated services on March 29th when Council’s own contracted independent surveyor raised significant concerns about the site’s accessibility for disabled visitors. Quick reminder: *Almost half a million* people visit Bath Central Library each year. 41,000 + visitors a month.

Well over one thousand people daily.

For Council to consider raising footfall by that amount to a building that has been deemed confusing and exclusive to the vulnerable and disabled, to a multi-story building with limited entrances and exits, at a time when councils across the UK are facing scrutiny over safety decisions, is not best practice.

Which begs the question: Why haven’t you removed Lewis House from the table of options?

Councils across the UK are facing cuts.

Some councils choose to diminish libraries.

We, your residents, challenge you to think bigger and bolder about integration. If we’re going to do it why don’t we really go for it? What greater statement of “residents first” ambition than to have the great civic Guildhall Buildings become the mother of all One Stop Shops, from births to marriages to deaths.

The Guildhall was home to Bath library for 70 years.

You *claim* to have investigated it as a site for integrated library and council services, so where is the analysis and costing in the library report pack? And why didn’t Ernst & Young provide details on the financial summaries page for the Guildhall?

Don’t pay lip service to integration. Your residents deserve better.