

## Manor House

Manor House is a Grade II\* listed Georgian building overlooking Manor House Gardens. Originally built in 1772, it was acquired by Lewisham Metropolitan Council in 1901 and converted into a library. It was re-furnished in 2008/2009, with structural repairs undertaken, lifts installed, redecoration throughout, new shelves and layout, self-service installed and new book stock. Rooms on the first and second floors were restored and brought into public use.

Manor House is within walking distance of Lewisham town centre and is close to local bus stops. The adjacent gardens and café attract families after school and at weekends who also use the library. There are links with local schools and nurseries, meaning children in the local community have the opportunity to engage with reading and library activities. The building also houses a children's centre in the lower ground floor.

The area boasts a number of resident-led community groups who campaign on local issues as well as mustering a significant amount of active voluntary support. These range from open artist studio events, community clean-ups, park improvements, a local time bank and managing a community centre from a previously empty shop in the nearby Leegate Shopping Centre. The area has an active Local Assembly which allows local residents, businesses, community groups and elected councillors to work together to improve the neighbourhood.

When the idea of changing the library provision at Manor House to the community library model was first suggested, it was greeted with mixed reactions from residents. Some feared a reduction in the quality of their library service, but others felt that the Manor House has not been used to its full potential. The prospect of the building being managed by another organisation could offer the possibility of a new lease of life for the Manor House.

A sub-group was set up by the Local Assembly to explore what this might look like in practice, with the priorities of continuing to host library services in conjunction with the council and increasing usage by local community groups, underpinned by the generation of sufficient income to sustain the building. Some early ideas that emerged from this group (more are coming in regularly) include:

- More weddings with a licence for drinks and a full reception service
- Fund-raising events
- Prom nights for local schools
- Nursery/crèche/after school club
- Wellness centre
- Pottery School
- Location for filming
- Residential use of top floor/holiday let
- Office space
- Corporate events
- Catering facilities: pop-up restaurants/kitchen/cookery school

It is not anticipated that interested organisations need offer any or all of these (indeed some may not be feasible due to the constraints of the listed building status and planning consents). This information is provided to demonstrate how ambitious local stakeholders are for Manor House Library and keen to work with organisations that are actively considering making a submission for the lease. Local residents do, of course, value the library and the part it plays in furthering knowledge and learning for local residents. They will want to see a range of uses in the building that furthers this work as well as those that bring much needed income to support the future of this beautiful building.

More information about the local area and the range of local stakeholders can be found at <http://leegreen.london>. Further details about the bidding process for Manor House Library is available at <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/libraries/Pages/Community-Libraries-2015.aspx>