

Objection Pack: Proposed Sale of the Camps Bay Library Property

The City's approach to the proposed sale of the Camps Bay Library site shows a lack of caution and foresight. Decisions of this magnitude require a careful, risk-aware process, particularly where the social and community consequences are uncertain or potentially irreversible. South African law, through the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), recognises this in the precautionary principle, which calls for a cautious approach in the face of uncertainty. By pushing ahead with the disposal of a valued community asset without first conducting comprehensive studies, planning processes, or meaningful community engagement, the City is acting prematurely and without due regard for the wellbeing of residents. A responsible approach would be to first resolve uncertainties around traffic, safety, and neighbourhood impacts before considering any sale — ensuring that the long-term public interest is prioritised over short-term financial gain.

How to Use This Pack

The following letters set out different grounds for objecting to the proposed disposal of the Camps Bay Library site. We encourage each individual, family, organisation, school, sports club, or civic group to use some of these points to submit in their own name — it is important to adapt and combine them to reflect their own views, and also to avoid the objections being counted as a single objection, which can happen when they are copied verbatim. There are many online tools to assist with a rewrite.

The aim is to ensure the City hears not one voice but many, each raising consistent but distinct concerns:

- Proper Process & Sequencing
- Traffic & Safety
- Tourism vs. Community Balance
- Trust & Governance
- Contrary to the City's Five Core Values
- First Do No Harm

Please submit comments by email to: Peter.McRaeSamuel@capetown.gov.za or via the City's Have Your Say portal before the closing date. If you feel comfortable doing so, cc in the Friends of The Camps Bay Library at cbaylibraryfriends@gmail.com so that an independent record can be kept.

Proper Process and Sequencing Letter

The City Manager
City of Cape Town

Re: Objection to the Proposed Sale of the Camps Bay Library Property

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to object to the proposed sale of the Camps Bay Library property. My objection rests not only on the specific negative impacts of the proposal but also on the fundamental flaw in the sequencing of the initiative.

1. The Process is Reversed

The disposal of a key public asset such as a library should never be the starting point of planning. Selling land is the last and most irreversible step — one that should only be considered after:

- Comprehensive community engagement about the future of cultural, educational, and sporting facilities in Camps Bay.
- A thorough traffic impact assessment, given the existing pressures from schools, preschools, sports clubs, and tourism.
- A holistic precinct plan that integrates land use, mobility, heritage, and community needs.

To begin with the sale is to put the cart before the horse. It forces the community into a reactive position rather than creating the opportunity for collaborative planning.

2. Premature Disposal Risks Irreversible Harm

Once public land is sold, it cannot be reclaimed. Premature disposal risks locking the City and community into outcomes that cannot be adjusted when negative spillover effects become clear. By contrast, a proper planning process may well conclude that relocating the library is possible — but such a conclusion must emerge from transparent, evidence-based, and participatory processes, not precede them.

3. Inconsistency with Policy and Law

The City's own Municipal Planning By-Law, Municipal Systems Act, and Spatial Development Framework require meaningful public participation and forward-looking spatial planning. The MFMA also emphasises that land may not be sold if needed for municipal service delivery. Jumping immediately to disposal violates the spirit — and arguably the letter — of these frameworks.

4. The Right Order of Steps

The correct sequence is clear:

1. Begin with community engagement to understand needs and priorities.
2. Undertake a traffic and mobility study to quantify impacts.
3. Develop a precinct plan to balance community, cultural, educational, and tourism demands.
4. Only once consensus is built, consider whether asset disposal is necessary and beneficial.

This sale reverses that sequence entirely, undermining trust and good governance.

Conclusion

The disposal of the Camps Bay Library property is being approached backwards. The sale should be the last step in a careful, consultative process — not the first. I urge the City to withdraw the proposal, return to proper process, and only revisit the question of disposal once a precinct plan and full community engagement process have been completed.

Traffic & Safety Letter

Re: Objection to the Proposed Sale of the Camps Bay Library Property

I write to register my strongest opposition to the proposed sale of the Camps Bay Library property. The proposal is deeply flawed and, if approved, will have catastrophic consequences for learners, parents, residents, and the wider community.

1. Traffic and Safety Impacts

The area surrounding the library already suffers severe traffic pressure, particularly because of the nearby school and shopping centre which will surely be expanded if the land is sold. Traffic volumes and inadequate parking regularly create unsafe conditions for learners moving to and from the school. The library itself is used daily by these learners as a vital educational and community resource. If it is moved, children who can currently cross a road on a school crossing will have to walk a long distance along a road that is extremely dangerous for pedestrians, to access the library – a resource they have currently have direct and safe access to.

In addition, the proposed move will eliminate essential public parking, which in turn will force more cars into neighbouring residential streets. This will worsen congestion and dramatically increase the risks to child pedestrians who already navigate unsafe conditions daily.

2. Removal of Community Parking

The proposed disposal and relocation of the library also removes parking that currently serves the park, local sports clubs, and preschools. These facilities depend on short-term, high-frequency drop-offs and collections throughout the day. Parents and caregivers will be forced to park further away, which could be manageable in a safer environment — but in Camps Bay under current circumstances, it is not.

3. Pedestrian Infrastructure Deficiencies

The pedestrian infrastructure in Camps Bay is not designed to absorb additional pressure. Many sidewalks are absent, landscaped over, or blocked by parked cars, making them unusable. For families with young children, or people with mobility challenges, the environment is already precarious. Adding traffic while simultaneously removing parking will compound these dangers, leaving learners and vulnerable pedestrians at heightened risk, and without recourse to walk or cycle from their homes.

4. Conflict with Public Policy and Law

This proposal runs directly counter to the City's legal obligations:

- **Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA, 2003):** Section 14 requires that municipal land may only be sold if it is not needed for basic service delivery. The Camps Bay Library is not only a basic community service but also a critical educational and cultural resource, used daily by learners and residents.
 - **Municipal Asset Transfer Regulations (2008):** Disposal must serve the public interest and be transparent. This sale clearly undermines the public interest by reducing safety, access, and service provision.
 - **Municipal Systems Act (2000):** Requires meaningful public participation. The current process has failed to consider the cumulative impacts on learners, parents, sports clubs, preschools, and vulnerable residents.
 - **City of Cape Town Spatial Development Framework (SDF):** The SDF emphasises protecting public facilities and enhancing accessibility. This disposal contradicts these goals by removing public parking and degrading a key community hub.
 - **Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) and Climate Strategies:** While the City promotes walking, cycling, and public transport, these policies cannot be applied in isolation from the realities of Camps Bay's steep topography and fragmented pedestrian network. To force such a shift without safe infrastructure is negligent.
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5. Cumulative Impact

The combined effect of (i) removing public parking, (ii) increasing traffic volumes, and (iii) placing these burdens in an already over-stressed area that accommodates four schools, several sports clubs, a park, and the library will be catastrophic. The decision will actively endanger children, worsen congestion, and undermine the very principles of equitable, safe, and accessible urban planning that the City has committed itself to uphold.

Conclusion

For all of the above reasons, I strongly object to the proposed sale and urge the City to **withdraw this plan immediately**. The disposal of the Camps Bay Library property is not only short-sighted but also inconsistent with the City's legal duties under the MFMA, the Systems Act, the Asset Transfer Regulations, and its own planning policies. Camps Bay needs solutions that enhance community assets and public safety — not decisions that degrade them.

Tourism vs. Community Balance Letter

Re: Objection to the Proposed Sale of the Camps Bay Library Property and Public Parking

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to register my strong opposition to the proposed disposal of the Camps Bay Library site and adjoining public parking. This transaction amounts to an exchange of land that is actively used and valued by the local community for land that will serve primarily the tourist economy. Such a trade-off undermines the balance of the neighbourhood and erodes the lived experience of Camps Bay's residents.

1. Community Land for Tourist Land

The library, its associated parking, and surrounding public land are not redundant assets. They are essential community resources that support learners, families, and residents in their everyday lives. Replacing these with private development geared toward tourists benefits only short-term visitors and commercial operators. In effect, the City is trading away land for public good in favour of land that will generate private gain for the tourism sector.

2. Tourism Saturation in Camps Bay

Camps Bay is already dominated by tourism-related businesses. Restaurants, hotels, guest houses, and Airbnbs occupy much of the beachfront, business district, and even residential streets. The pressures of short-term letting have displaced long-term residents and hollowed out neighbourhood cohesion. Selling off yet more public land — particularly parking and a library — will only accelerate this imbalance, further marginalising those who live here year-round.

3. Impact on Residents

The removal of public parking will directly disadvantage residents. The library parking is primarily used by families accessing the library, local schools, or quickly going to the shops (this is the only shopping area serving the neighbourhood). In contrast, new private developments on this land will serve tourists, who already enjoy disproportionate access to the neighbourhood's spaces and amenities. This is not equitable urban management — it is the privileging of visitors over citizens.

4. Contradiction of Policy

The City's Spatial Development Framework and District Plans commit to supporting balanced, inclusive neighbourhoods where public facilities and spaces are retained for

community use. Disposing of a library and public parking for private tourist-oriented use runs directly against these stated goals. It also conflicts with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA, 2003), which permits disposal only if the land is not required for basic municipal services. A library and its associated public access functions are clearly fundamental services.

5. Erosion of Community Identity

Each decision to dispose of public land in favour of tourism contributes to the slow erasure of Camps Bay as a place where people live, raise families, and build community. The over-prioritisation of tourism dollars at the expense of everyday life undermines resilience, belonging, and sustainability. If this trend continues, Camps Bay risks becoming a hollowed-out resort rather than a living neighbourhood.

Conclusion

The proposed sale is more than a transfer of land — it is a transfer of value and identity, away from residents and towards short-term tourist use. I urge the City to withdraw this proposal and to engage instead with a holistic community-driven plan that strengthens Camps Bay as both a residential neighbourhood and a place that can welcome visitors without sacrificing public assets.

Trust & Governance

Re: Objection to the Proposed Sale of the Camps Bay Library Property

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to place on record my firm objection to the proposed sale of the Camps Bay Library property. Beyond the specific problems with traffic, safety, and loss of public assets, this proposal represents a short-sighted financial gain at the cost of long-term community trust and cohesion.

1. Short-Term Gain vs. Long-Term Loss

The sale may provide the City with a once-off financial injection, but what is lost is irreplaceable: a well-used public facility, associated parking, and the trust of a community that sees its assets being stripped away. When municipalities choose to liquidate public land for immediate revenue, they undermine the very foundation of sustainable governance, which is built on long-term public benefit and stewardship of shared assets.

2. A Pattern of Disregard for Camps Bay

This proposal does not arise in isolation. The Camps Bay community already feels disregarded and overburdened by a series of recent actions and failures by the City:

- The approval of the new hotel development, despite strong community concerns.
- The ongoing sewage outfall issue, which directly undermines environmental quality, health, and tourism itself.
- The imposition of a new "cleaning surcharge" fee on the rates bill, further taxing residents without genuine engagement or clarity on value delivered.

Each of these actions has chipped away at public trust. The proposed disposal of the library land risks becoming yet another example of the City prioritising revenue and outside interests over the needs and voices of its residents.

3. Erosion of Trust in Governance

Good governance requires not only compliance with law but also legitimacy in the eyes of the people. By repeatedly ignoring the lived experience and concerns of Camps Bay residents, the City is eroding the social contract that underpins effective service delivery. Trust, once lost, is not easily regained. The reputational damage of pushing through yet another unpopular, community-damaging decision will far outweigh the temporary financial benefit.

4. A Call for Responsible Stewardship

Camps Bay is not asking for favours — only for fair and responsible stewardship of the public assets that belong to its residents. Selling off the library land for short-term revenue is inconsistent with this duty. What is needed instead is a collaborative process where the community is meaningfully engaged in shaping a holistic vision for the future of local cultural, educational, and recreational facilities.

Conclusion

The City may view this sale as a financial boon, but to residents it is a further betrayal — another sign that the City values short-term revenue over long-term community wellbeing. I urge the City to withdraw this proposal and to engage with Camps Bay in a manner that restores, rather than destroys, public trust.

Contrary to the City's Five Core Values

Objection to the Proposed Sale of the Camps Bay Library Property

To Whom It May Concern,

I write to strongly object to the proposed sale of the Camps Bay Library site, and to highlight how the City's handling of this process has gone against its own stated **five core values: Trust, Integrity, Service Excellence, Accountability, and Accessibility**.

1. **Trust**

Trust requires transparency and openness. Yet the public participation process was not properly announced. No notices were displayed at the library itself — the very site under threat. The first communication many residents saw was a Facebook post by the local councillor, more than a week after the participation process had already opened. This is not how trust is built; it is how communities are blindsided.

2. **Integrity**

Integrity means acting honestly and consistently. Instead, it is clear that internal plans and options for this land have already been considered by the City, but these documents have not been made public. Asking residents to comment on a process while withholding critical information is misleading and fundamentally dishonest.

3. **Service Excellence**

A City committed to service excellence would ensure that residents have every opportunity to understand and engage with a proposal that directly affects them. Instead, the public has been left scrambling to catch up with a process that appears designed to minimise participation rather than encourage it.

4. **Accountability**

True accountability requires decision-makers to answer to the people they serve. Here, the sequencing of the process — beginning with disposal rather than engagement, studies, or a precinct plan — makes accountability impossible. By the time questions are asked, the asset may already be gone. This is a deliberate evasion of responsibility.

5. **Accessibility**

Accessibility is not just about physical access, but also about access to information and decision-making. The City has failed on this count by not making critical documents public, by failing to place notices where the affected community could see them, and by relying on limited digital communication channels rather than direct, inclusive outreach.

In short, the City is acting in bad faith. A process that violates every one of its own core values cannot be seen as legitimate. The disposal of the Camps Bay Library land is being pursued in a way that undermines transparency, shuts out meaningful engagement, and privileges internal agendas over community needs.

For these reasons, I urge the City to withdraw this proposal immediately and to restart the process in a manner that genuinely upholds the values it claims to champion.

First do no harm - summation

Re: Objection to the Proposed Sale of the Camps Bay Library Property

I write to register my strongest objection to the proposed sale of the Camps Bay Library site. This proposal represents a clear violation of the precautionary principle, which is enshrined in South African law through the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) and requires decision-makers to act cautiously and avoid irreversible harm, particularly when uncertainty exists regarding social, environmental, or community impacts.

Camps Bay Library is not failing or underutilised. It is one of the most successful, well-visited, and highly functioning libraries in the City of Cape Town, serving learners, families, and residents on a daily basis. It provides vital educational, cultural, and social services that cannot be replicated or easily replaced. To interfere with such a thriving public institution without compelling justification or a comprehensive plan is reckless.

The City appears motivated primarily by short-term financial gain under pressure from developers. Yet the precautionary principle reminds us that when an asset is delivering demonstrable public benefit, interfering with it without a fully considered, evidence-based, and consultative process risks irreversible harm. In simple terms: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Selling a library that is working perfectly well is a direct contravention of this principle.

The potential consequences are severe: loss of public trust, diminished community infrastructure, and a disruption to an educational and cultural resource that is central to daily life in Camps Bay. No financial windfall can compensate for these losses.

I therefore urge the City to withdraw this proposal immediately, and to act in accordance with the precautionary principle by protecting and strengthening a public asset that is already successfully serving the community.