

London Borough of Bromley

Beckenham Library Feasibility Study

Business Case



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Introduction

This document considers the business case for the relocation of Beckenham library to Beckenham Public Hall. It considers all aspects of the proposal and its impact on residents, library and Public Hall users, local facilities and businesses and the Beckenham area in general. It includes summaries of the designs, the public engagement and also considers how the new facility would operate.

Description of proposal

Bromley Council has invested considerably in its library service over the past few years, including new libraries in prominent High Street locations at Orpington and Penge and a major upgrade to Bromley Central library. The Council is committed to continuing to provide 14 libraries across the borough. Since 2017, the library service has been operated on the council's behalf by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL).

Bisset Adams was commissioned to lead a team to explore the feasibility of a proposal to relocate the current Beckenham library into the Grade II listed Beckenham Public Hall in Beckenham town centre.

The rationale for this proposal is to modernise and extend the library service in Beckenham, with provision for community and events space. The proposal would also bring an

opportunity to refurbish and support the sustainability of Beckenham Public Hall, an historic building, to enable it to realise its full potential as a community asset for Beckenham. Like most local authorities, Bromley has faced acute financial challenges over the last few years, and this has led to a significant maintenance backlog for the Public Hall.

The move is also an opportunity to reuse the library site to provide much-needed local housing both to alleviate the number of families housed in short-term accommodation in the borough and to provide affordable homes, as well as to raise a significant receipt for the site from a housing developer.

The remit of the feasibility study is to look at the proposal in its entirety, that is the best option for the library as well as the combined benefits for local housing and the necessary refurbishment works of the Public Hall.

Objectives of proposal

The proposal for the relocation of Beckenham library to Beckenham Public Hall, and the subsequent redevelopment of the existing library site for residential use was put forward by the Council in late 2019.

The objectives of the proposal were threefold:

- to modernise the library within a refurbished Public Hall building, providing separate space for events, activities and functions and in a better town centre location;
- to achieve a site for some much-needed new housing in the area, with 50% of the development designated affordable;
- to undertake essential maintenance and upgrade of the Grade II listed Public Hall building as part of the overall budget.

The current position

If Beckenham library were to move to the Public Hall, some residents for whom their nearest library is currently Shortlands would find themselves closer to the new Beckenham library, whilst some for whom the existing Beckenham library is their nearest currently might be nearer to Penge. We have therefore examined data for all three libraries.

Current usership of local libraries

The existing Beckenham library is open for 43.5 hours a week spread across five days. From data provided to us by GLL, there were 126,567 visits to Beckenham library in 2018-19, a total of 224,500 stock issues and 16,760 bookings of public computers. This means that there were 1.77 issues per visit at Beckenham, considerably more than the average of 1.03 for Bromley libraries as a whole¹ and far more than the outer London average of 0.59². The 49,519 items of stock in the library were also well used with an average of 4.5 issues per item, close to the Bromley average but again much higher than the outer London average of 2.73.

¹ CIPFA public library statistics 2018-19 <https://www.cipfastats.net/>

² This figure excludes the London Borough of Hillingdon, which did not provide data

Beckenham library compared well to both Penge and Shortlands libraries in terms of visits. Penge Library is also open for 43.5 hours a week and Shortlands for 27.5 hours. Penge library had 85,003 visits in 2018/19 and Shortlands 19,216. This meant that on average about 58 people visited Beckenham library during each hour that it was open compared to 39 at Penge and only 14 at Shortlands. The number of issues per visit at Penge was lower than at Beckenham (1.46) but the number of public computer bookings per visit was higher (0.25 compared to 0.13). The opposite applied when compared to Shortlands library where issues per visit were 1.85 and the ratio of computer bookings to visits was 0.05. This is consistent with a more general pattern that we have observed elsewhere where higher levels of deprivation equate to higher levels of computer usage but lower levels of borrowing.

In the Public Library User Survey for children conducted in 2017, Beckenham library scored an average of 8.6 out of 10 when rated by users visiting during the period of the survey. This was slightly below the borough average of 8.9. In the equivalent survey for adults conducted in 2015, 93% of respondents rated the library as good or very good; the borough average was 94%. 78% of adult respondents rated the attractiveness of the interior of Beckenham library as good or very good, almost the lowest score of any library in the borough and well below the average score of 85%.

From these statistics we can conclude that the existing Beckenham library is performing well in terms of attracting visitors and stock issues. Penge library had fewer visits than Beckenham, but this may be explained by the short distance between the two libraries encroaching on what would be the natural catchment area of Penge library. Shortlands library has very few visits for a library in an outer London setting – if the busiest library in each outer London borough is excluded, the average number of visits per library branch was 80,790 in 2018/19³.

It should be noted that the current library has no toilet facilities for the public. This could present a major disadvantage for customers wishing to study in the library for long periods. Nationally, there has been a growth in the use of libraries as a place of study, especially by pupils and students in metropolitan environments.

Demography of the area

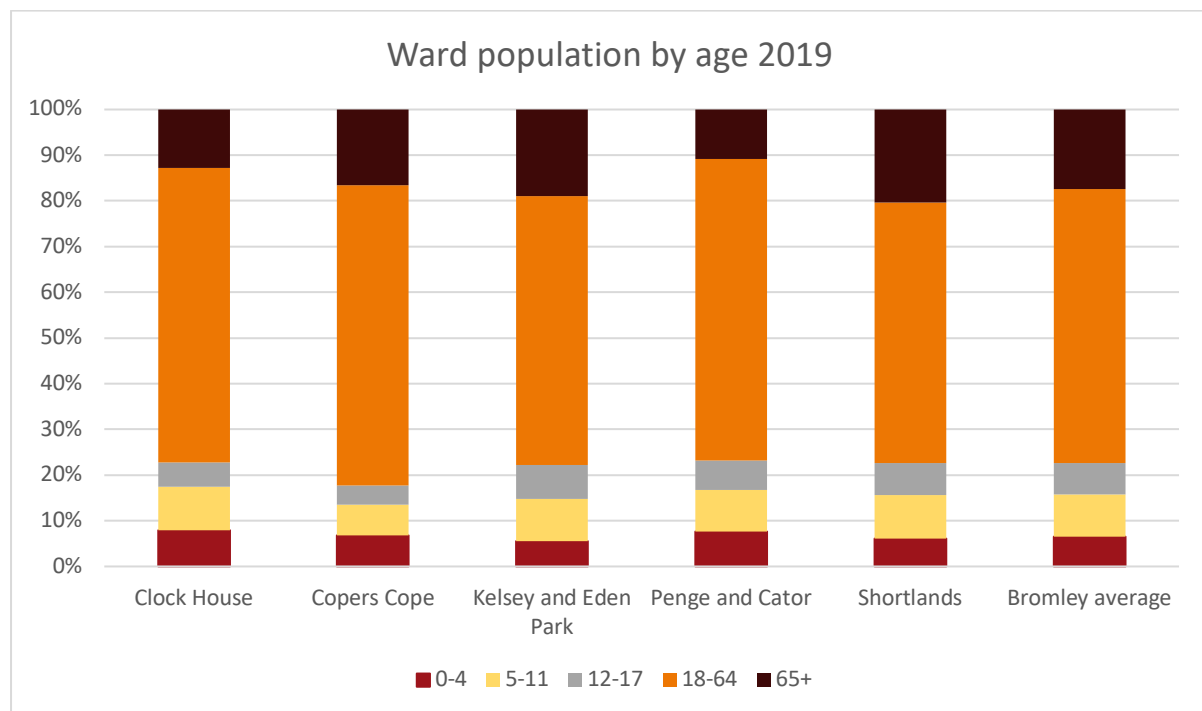
In order to understand the current and potential market for Beckenham library in terms of the customer base, we must examine the demographics of the area. To do this we have used statistics at ward level available from the Office of National Statistics. This can then be compared to data that we have about library users. Wards are small enough to identify variations in the population at a local level but not so small as to be subject to large change if one of the variables changes slightly.

The current Beckenham library is located in Clock House ward but is very close to the boundaries of Penge & Cator, Copers Cope and Eden Park & Kelsey wards. Beckenham Public Hall is located in Copers Cope ward but is also close to Clock House, Penge & Cator,

³ CIPFA public library statistics 2018-19

Kelsey & Eden Park and Shortlands wards. Beckenham Public Hall is also 1.4km from parts of Shortlands ward as the crow flies. For this reason, we have focussed on these five wards. As we will discuss later, the current Beckenham library is close to Penge library, being only 1.7km distant.

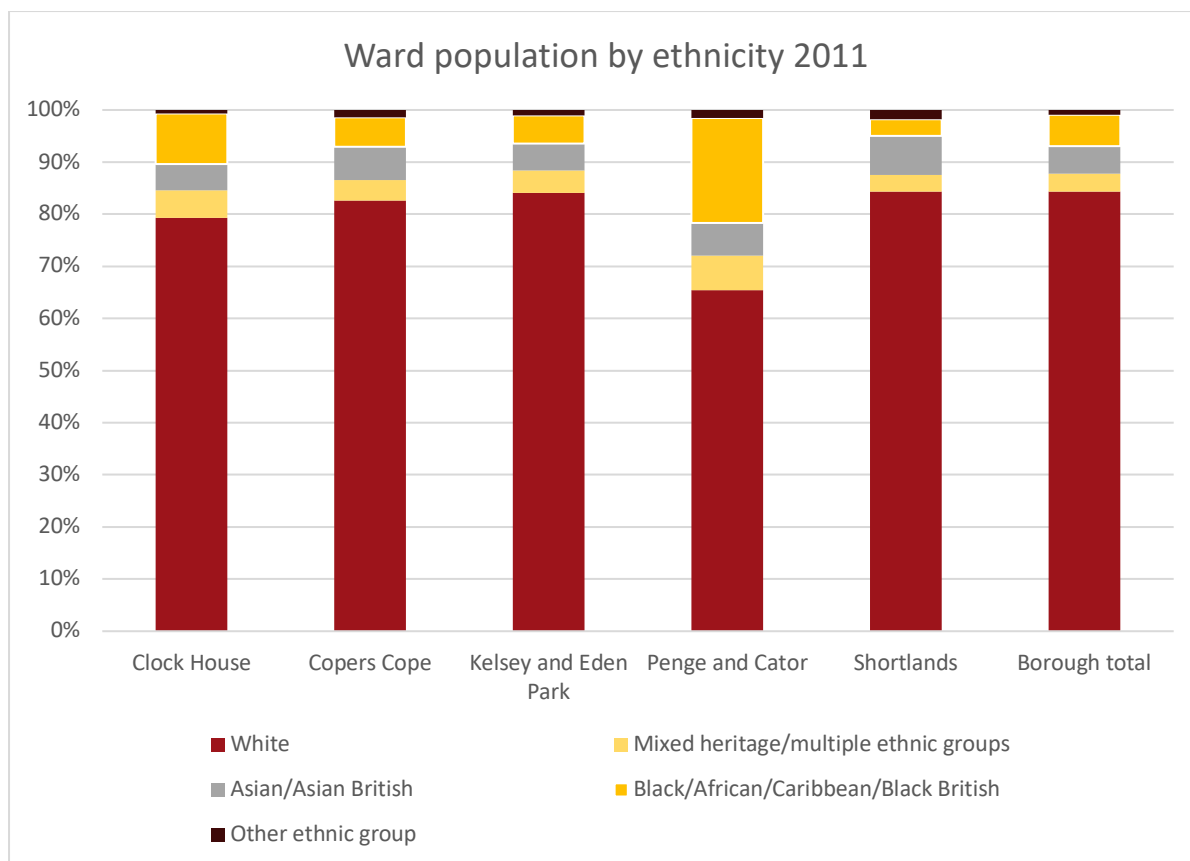
In 2019, there were estimated to be almost 70,000 people living in the four wards closest to Beckenham library; of these 15,000 were aged below 18 and 10,000 were 65 or over. Shortlands ward had a further 10,000 residents. Clock House, Copers Cope and Penge & Cator wards all had a significantly higher proportion of residents aged between 18 and 64 compared to the borough average⁴. Copers Cope ward has a low number of people aged under 18. Shortlands and Kelsey & Eden Park have a higher number of people aged 65+. This is shown in the graph below.



The balance between males and females is similar across each ward, with around 48% male. This is similar to the borough and UK averages.

Around 15% of the borough’s population were from a black or ethnic minority background at the time of the 2011 census, the most recent figures available at ward level. This was composed of 6% from a black background, 5% from an Asian background, 3.5% from a mixed heritage background and 1% from all other black and ethnic minority backgrounds. Of the wards considered the most ethnically diverse ward was Penge & Cator followed by Clock House while Kelsey & Eden Park and Shortlands were the least diverse. The most diverse ward was Penge & Cator and to a lesser extent Clock House. There were higher proportions of people from Asian backgrounds in Shortlands and Penge & Cator wards. This is shown in the graph below.

⁴ Source: Office of National Statistics estimates of usual population by electoral ward



Deprivation

The most comprehensive and widely adopted overall measure of deprivation is the Department for Communities and Local Government’s Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)⁵. This was most recently updated in 2019. The IMD is calculated for each Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which is a geographical area for which demographic statistics are available; several LSOAs comprise each ward in Bromley. Each LSOA is given a rank to indicate how deprived it is in comparison to the other LSOAs in England, so that the LSOA with rank 1 is the most deprived in the country. The ranks are then arranged into deciles (the most deprived 10% is the first decile).

The IMD only gives an indication of deprivation, so that a high degree of deprivation does not necessarily mean a lack of wealth in that area. It follows an established methodological framework in broadly defining deprivation to encompass a wide range of an individual’s living conditions. People may be considered to be living in *poverty* if they lack the financial resources to meet their needs, whereas people can be regarded as *deprived* if they lack any kind of resources, not just income. The IMD takes into account seven factors – income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education and skills, crime, barriers to housing and living environment.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-indices-of-deprivation>

Amongst local authorities in England, Bromley was the 223rd most deprived area out of 327 when ranked by average IMD scores, where 1st is the most deprived. Of the wards local to Beckenham, only Penge & Cator exhibited significant deprivation, with the majority of the ward within the 50% most deprived within England.

There were small pockets of deprivation in Clock House, Copers Cope and Kelsey & Eden Park wards. These were located, respectively, close to the existing library; near to Stumps Hill Lane; and south of Eden Park. Of these, the most deprived was in Copers Cope and was in the 30% most deprived areas in England. Overall, though, all the wards considered had a low average level of deprivation, particularly Shortlands ward which was in the 10% least deprived in England.

Where library users live

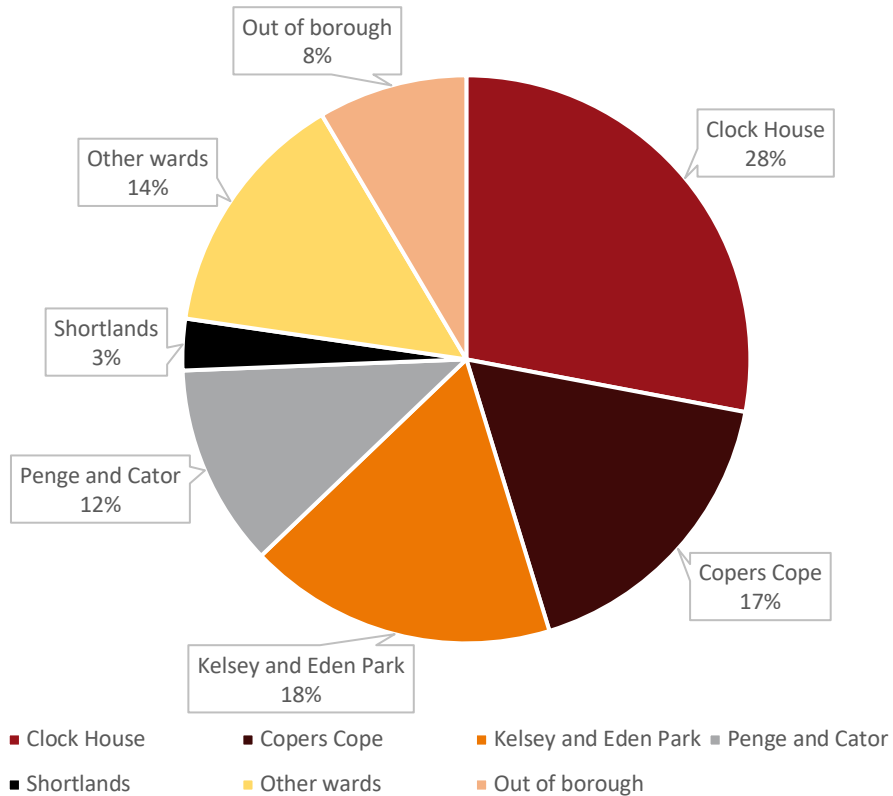
In order to determine where customers of Beckenham library and also Penge and Shortlands libraries actually live, analysis has been carried out on three sets of data which have been provided by the London Borough of Bromley and GLL.

The first of these is an analysis by postcode of the registered users of Beckenham and Shortlands libraries carried out using data from the library management system in 2019. This includes data on all registered users of the libraries and was used to determine the extent to which users would be affected by a relocation of Beckenham library to the Public Hall.

The second and third of these are the results of the Public Library User Surveys (PLUS) for both children and adults. These also provide postcodes of the respondents and are useful in conjunction with the analysis of membership. This is because not everyone who uses a library is a member of that library; they may be registered at another branch or not be registered at all. Around 90% of visitors to the libraries during the period of the survey responded which means that we are able to draw conclusions with some accuracy.

The analysis of postcodes showed that 7,385 people were registered as members of Beckenham library. Using their postcodes, it is possible to determine the wards that they live in. This is shown in the pie chart below.

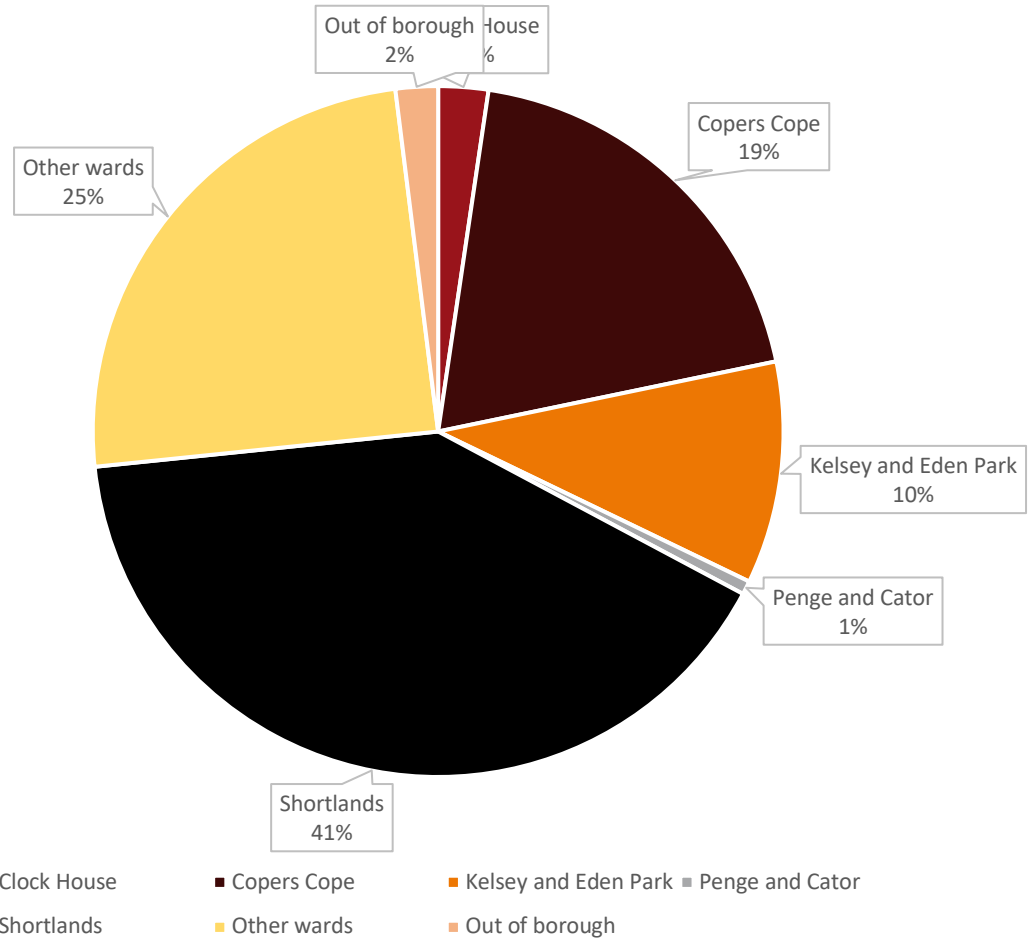
Beckenham Library: proportion of members by ward of residence 2017



It will be seen that almost three quarters of members of Beckenham library live in the four wards closest to the library. 3% of library members lived in Shortlands ward. 8% lived out of the borough, which may be an indicator of the importance of Beckenham as a place to work or to study.

A similar breakdown for Shortlands library, which had 1,412 registered members, is shown in the pie chart below.

Shortlands Library: proportion of members by ward of residence 2017



A large proportion of the members of Shortlands library lived in Shortlands ward, with almost one fifth in Copers Cope and one tenth in Kelsey and Eden Park.

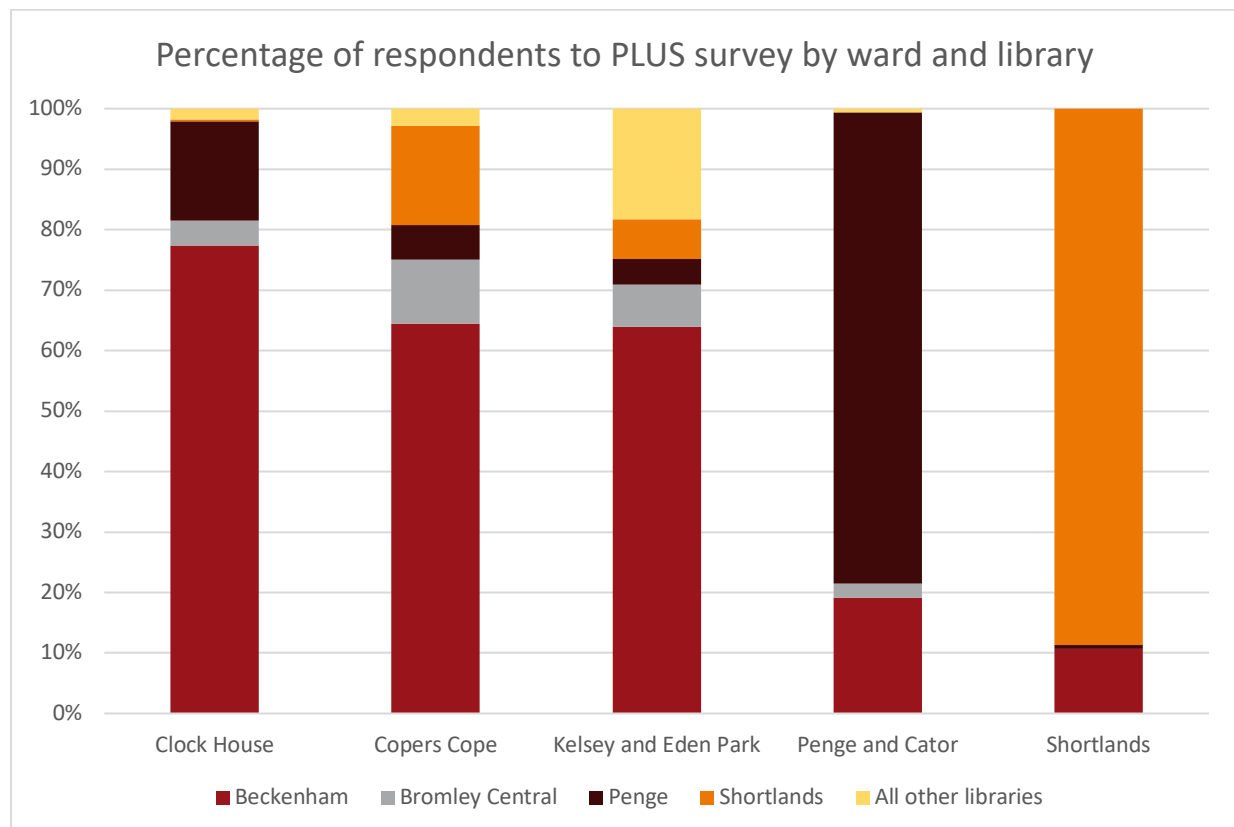
The postcode analysis gives us useful data for two libraries but the PLUS survey gives us data for the entire borough. In the two surveys combined, 763 people giving a postcode responded from Beckenham library, 460 from Penge and 212 from Shortlands. This enables us to calculate the proportion of library users from each ward during the period of the survey. This is shown in the table below.

Ward	Beckenham library	Penge library	Shortlands library
Clock House	34.6%	12.2%	0.5%
Copers Cope	17.6%	2.6%	16.0%
Kelsey and Eden Park	20.2%	2.2%	7.6%
Penge and Cator	8.5%	57.6%	0.0%
Shortlands	2.0%	0.2%	59.0%
All other wards	8.0%	13.9%	15.1%
Out of borough	9.2%	11.3%	1.9%

This pattern broadly reflects the membership data although there is a larger proportion of respondents from the PLUS surveys using Beckenham library and living in Clock House ward. This is due to a significantly higher number of respondents in the children’s survey living in this ward, suggesting that for children at least distance to the library from home is particularly important.

It is also of note that the majority of respondents at both Penge and Shortlands libraries lived in the ward in which the library is located.

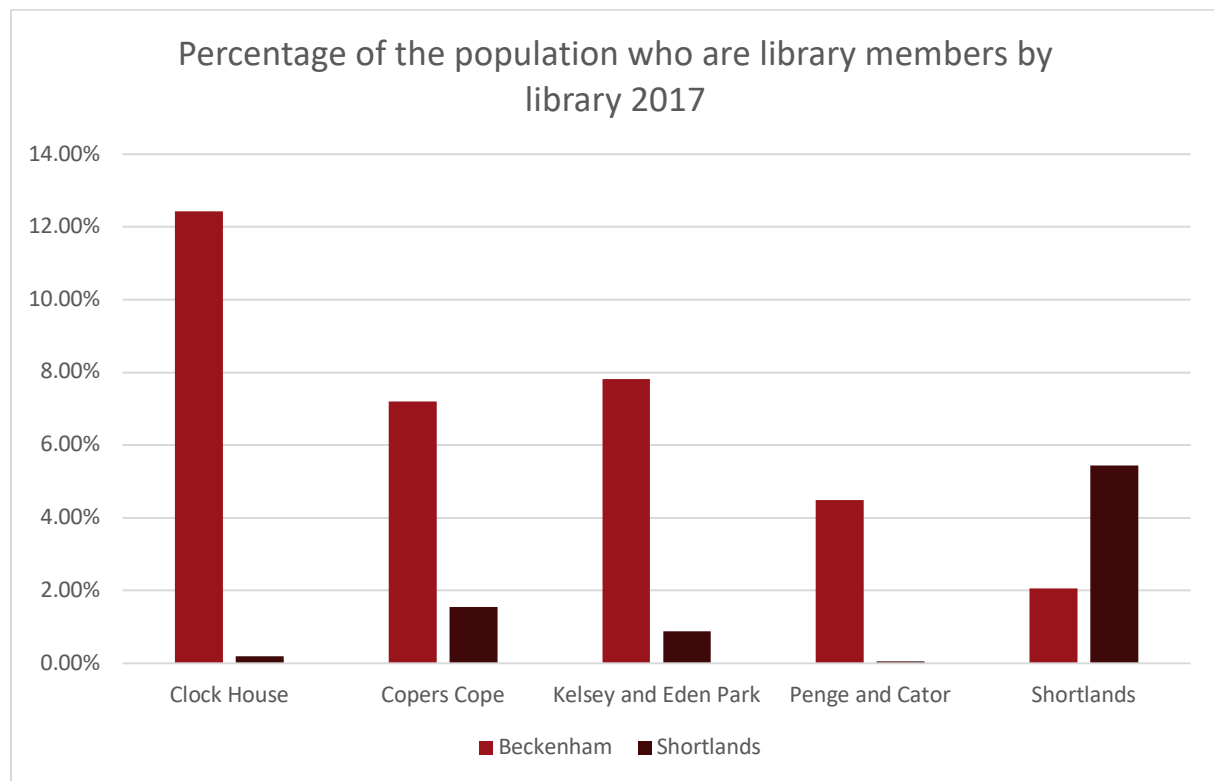
These figures also enable us to calculate the proportions of people living in each ward using each library within the borough. This is useful because it enables us to determine how local the demand is to each library. The results are shown in the graph below.



This shows that from the results of the PLUS survey a large majority of residents in Clock House, Copers Cope and Kelsey and Eden Park wards used Beckenham library and an overwhelming proportion of residents in Penge & Cator and Shortlands ward used their local library. Around 10% of Shortlands residents used Beckenham library. Only in Kelsey & Eden Park ward was there a significant use of another library where 17% of respondents used West Wickham. An interesting feature is that the proportion of respondents using Bromley Central library is relatively small; it is often the case that the central library of an urban library authority attracts significant numbers of users from all parts of the authority.

Having established that the great majority of residents in Clock House, Copers Cope and Kelsey & Eden Park wards use Beckenham library and that, using the data from the postcode analysis and the 2019 ONS population estimates, it is also possible to assess the proportion

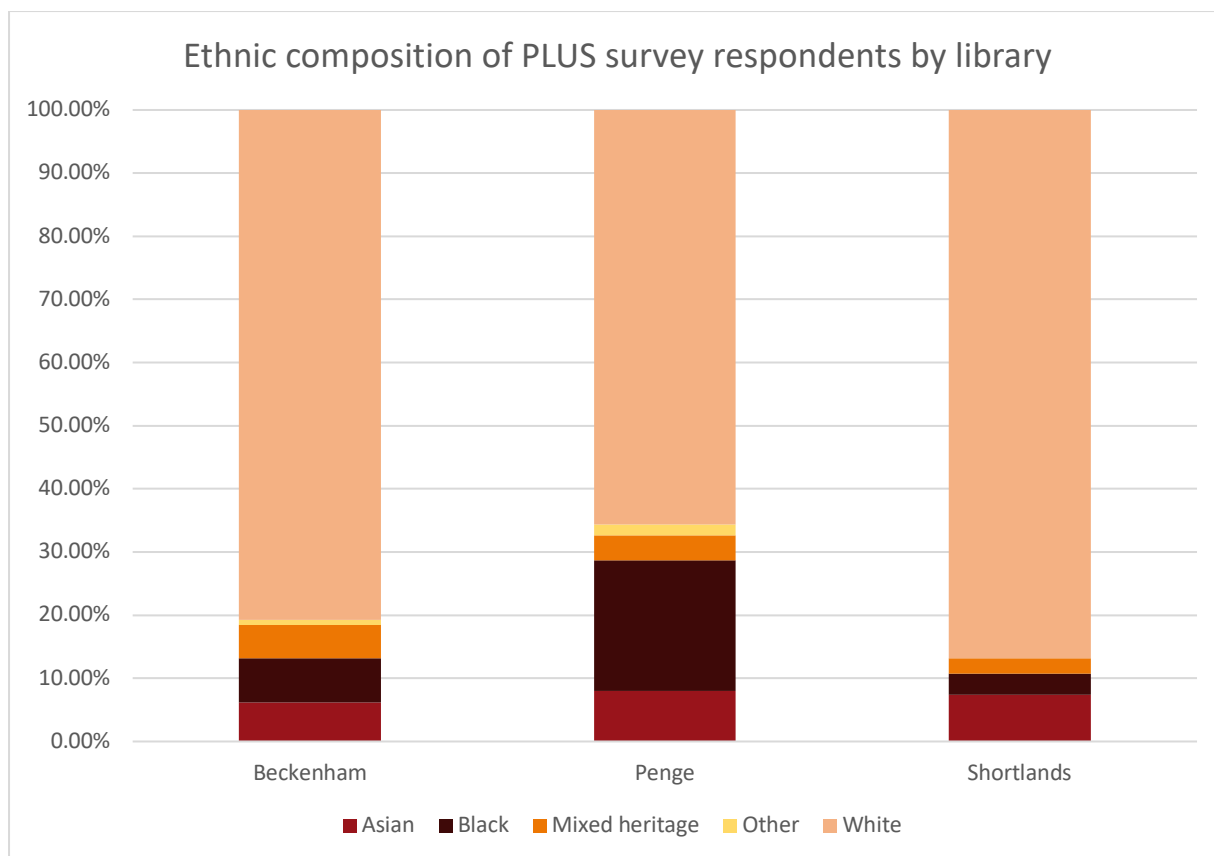
of the population from the relevant wards using Beckenham and Shortlands libraries. The results are shown in the graph below.



This shows that the uptake of library usage was considerably lower in Shortlands and Copers Cope than in Clock House. Parts of Kelsey and Eden Park are nearer West Wickham library and this is reflected in the data. It should be noted that this graph does not include usage of Penge library for which we do not have data.

We have seen from the PLUS survey that almost all of people living in Shortlands ward used either Shortlands or Beckenham libraries, and this taken with the library uptake figures above implies that only around 7% of residents in Shortlands ward are likely to use any Bromley library compared with over 12% of residents in Clock House. This does also imply that there is scope to improve library uptake in the Shortlands area.

PLUS respondents were also asked their ethnicity. The numbers in the surveys are too small to make any breakdown by ward significant but the breakdown of respondents by library is shown in the graph below.



Between 15% and 17% of respondents at the different libraries did not state their ethnicity so this means that the results cannot be relied upon too strongly as we cannot be sure that those who did not respond were representative of all who took part in the survey. However, on the basis of the data that we have, this appears to suggest that the membership of all three libraries roughly reflect the ethnic composition of the areas that they serve.

Beckenham Public Hall

Beckenham Public Hall is located on Bromley Road in the centre of Beckenham. It was constructed in 1883 in the Arts and Craft style and is Grade II listed. At present there are two halls and a meeting room available for hire for regular and one-off events. The majority of the building including the areas available for public hire is leased to MyTime Active at no charge which manages the events and bookings. Part of the ground floor of the building is leased to a private men-only social club (the Club) which has been located in the building since it first opened and is separately managed.

The building is in need of considerable expenditure on maintenance. In 2014, this was estimated that this was £525,000 which included an element of future maintenance. A new and more extensive survey in 2020 identified necessary expenditure estimated at about £904,000 which also includes an element of future maintenance. In the cost plan produced as part of this project, this allowance was increased to approximately £1.1 million to include estimated professional fees and a 10% contingency allowance.

Until the current outbreak of Coronavirus and the national lockdown, there were 23 regular activities booked each week by 18 organisations totalling 52 hours a week. The activities

ranged from meetings of societies to dance and martial arts, and two churches held services there. Activities took place in regular slots across every day of the week, the earliest starting at 9.30am and the latest finishing at midnight.

In 2019, there were six one-off events booked in the building – two weddings, two birthday parties, a memorial and a photographic society event. These totalled 47 booked hours for the year.

The impact of moving Beckenham Library to the Public Hall

Library locations

The nearest Bromley libraries to Beckenham are Penge, Bromley Central, Shortlands and West Wickham. The distances between these libraries by road in kilometres (calculated by Google maps) are shown in the table below.

	Current Beckenham library	Beckenham Public Hall	Bromley Central Library	Penge Library	Shortlands Library	West Wickham Library
Current Beckenham library	-	1.2	4.9	1.7	3.0	4.5
Beckenham Public Hall	1.2	-	4.0	2.6	1.9	4.3
Bromley Central Library	4.9	4.0	-	6.6	2.6	4.3
Penge Library	1.7	2.6	6.6	-	4.6	5.8
Shortlands Library	3.0	1.9	2.6	4.6	-	3.5

Until 2008, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published standards for public library authorities which included a standard on the maximum distance that residents should live from their nearest library. For outer London, to meet the standard 99% of households were expected to be within 1.6km (1 mile) of a library. These standards were discontinued in 2010 but are still a useful guide.

Since the current Beckenham library and Penge library are only 1.7km apart, there is considerable overlap between the two using this standard. This is illustrated in the map below.



The grey circle represents the area within 1.6 km of Beckenham Public Hall; the labelled circles represent the same distance from the existing libraries.

If the library were moved from its current location to the Public Hall, much of the area currently within 1.6km of Beckenham library would still be within 1.6km of either the new library or Penge library. The area near Elmers End (in Clock House ward) would fall outside the 1.6km radius but much of the area to the north of Beckenham town centre (mainly in Copers Cope ward) would be nearer to a library.

Given the short distance between the existing library and Penge library, relocation to Beckenham Public Hall would mean that a greater area of the borough would be within 1.6km of a library. However those residents living in the area south of Elmers End Green would have slightly further to travel to access a library⁶.

In addition, the area to the east of Beckenham town centre towards Shortlands station, along Bromley and Manor Roads, would be within 1.6km of the Public Hall. Although some of this area is also within the same distance of Shortlands library, we have seen that that library has shorter opening hours and is much less well used than Beckenham library. We have also seen that the uptake of library services in Shortlands ward is considerably lower than in Clock House ward. Therefore a relocation is also likely to benefit those in the Shortlands ward.

⁶ A resident living on Elmers End Green is about 1.2 km from the current Beckenham Library and 1.7km from Beckenham Public Hall

The relocation is likely to mean that some residents, particularly in Clock House ward, may change to using Penge library, as this would be the nearest to their homes. Bromley Council should bear this in mind when planning future service delivery.

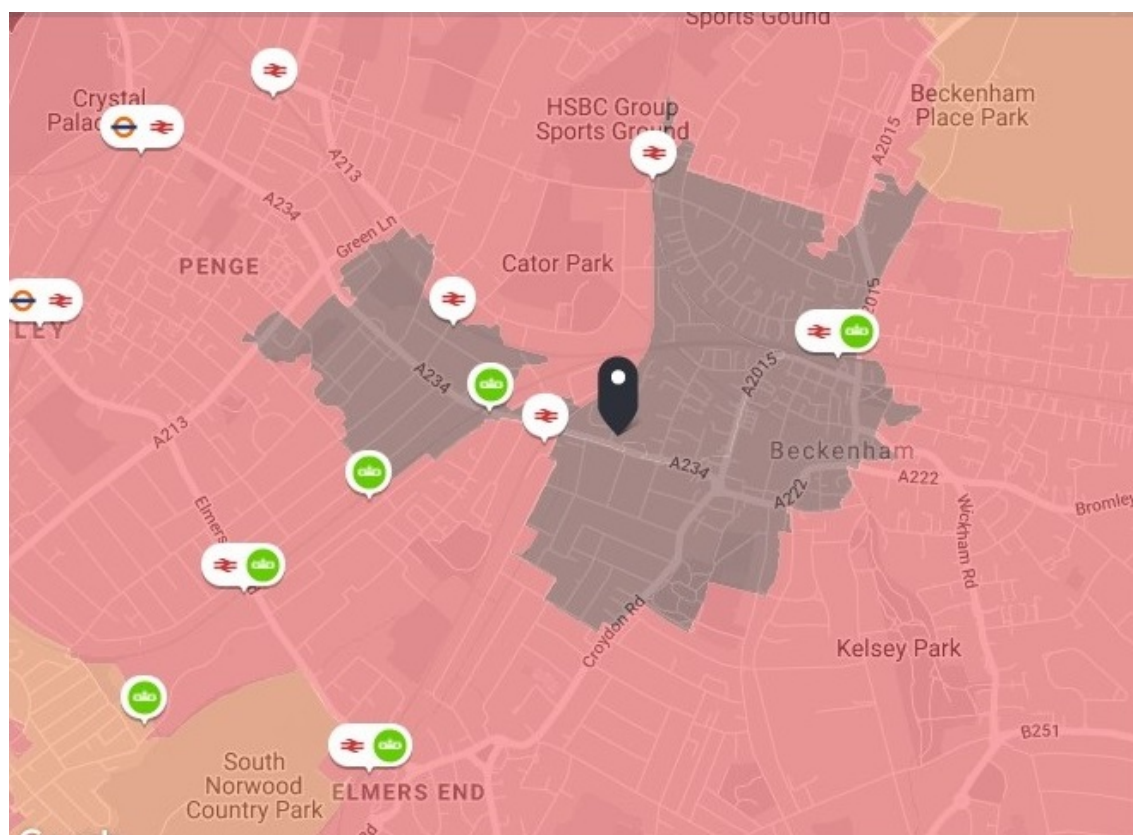
In conclusion, location of the library at Beckenham Public Hall has the potential to reach more residents than the current library.

Transport links

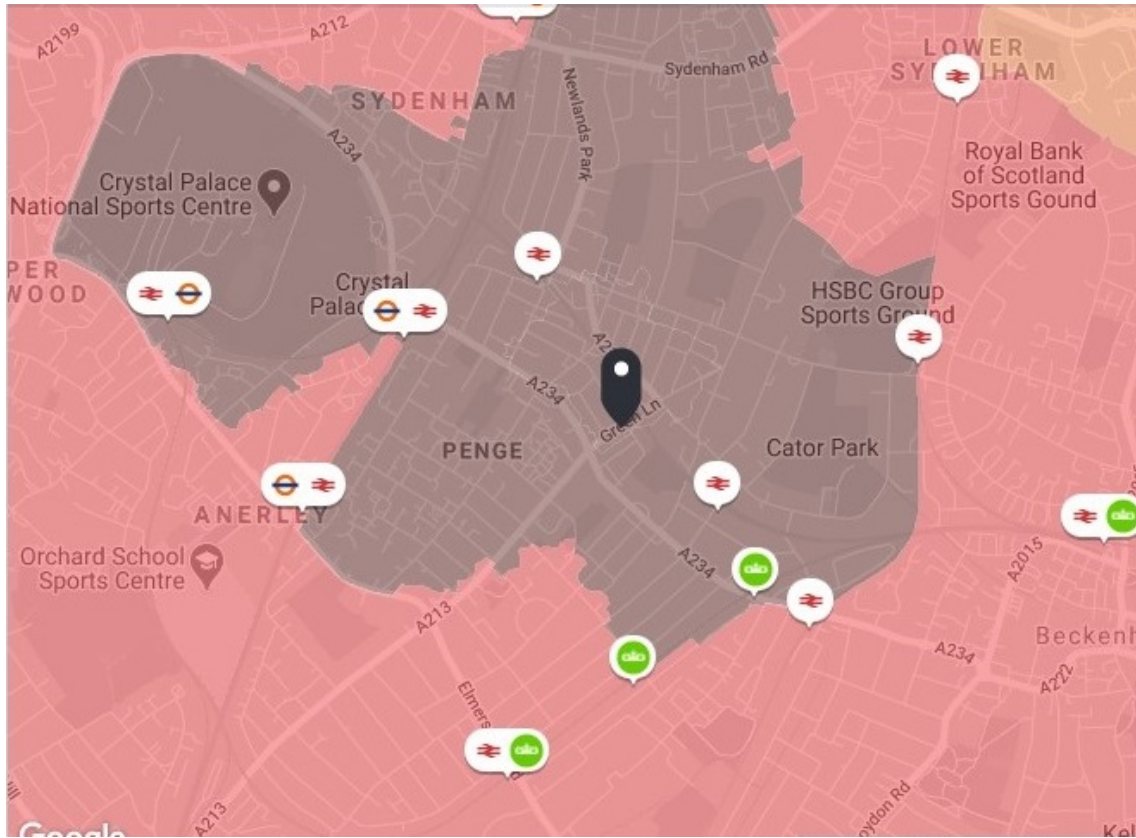
The PLUS survey for adults conducted in 2015 asked the means of transport by which respondents had reached the library. 48% had walked and 15% had used public transport; 33% came by car or motorbike and 3% cycled. Respondents to the survey held in conjunction with this proposal showed that 70% of respondents walked, 16% drove, 14% used public transport and 2% cycled.

Public transport

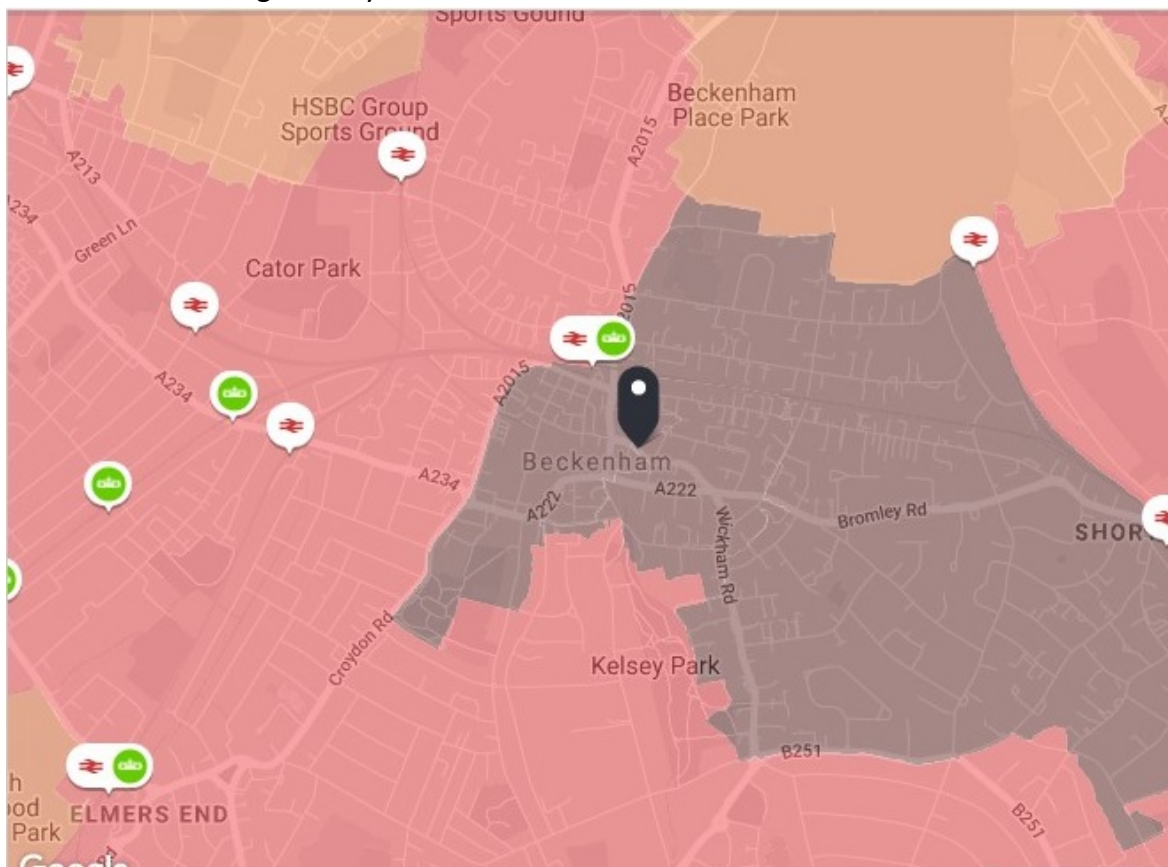
Although distance as the crow flies gives an indication of the accessibility of a library to different areas of the borough, actual travelling time is more important. To assess these, we have used Passenger Transport Access Level (PTAL) maps created from data provided by Transport for London. These show average travelling times to locations at off-peak times by public transport or foot, whichever is quicker. Each uses the key below:



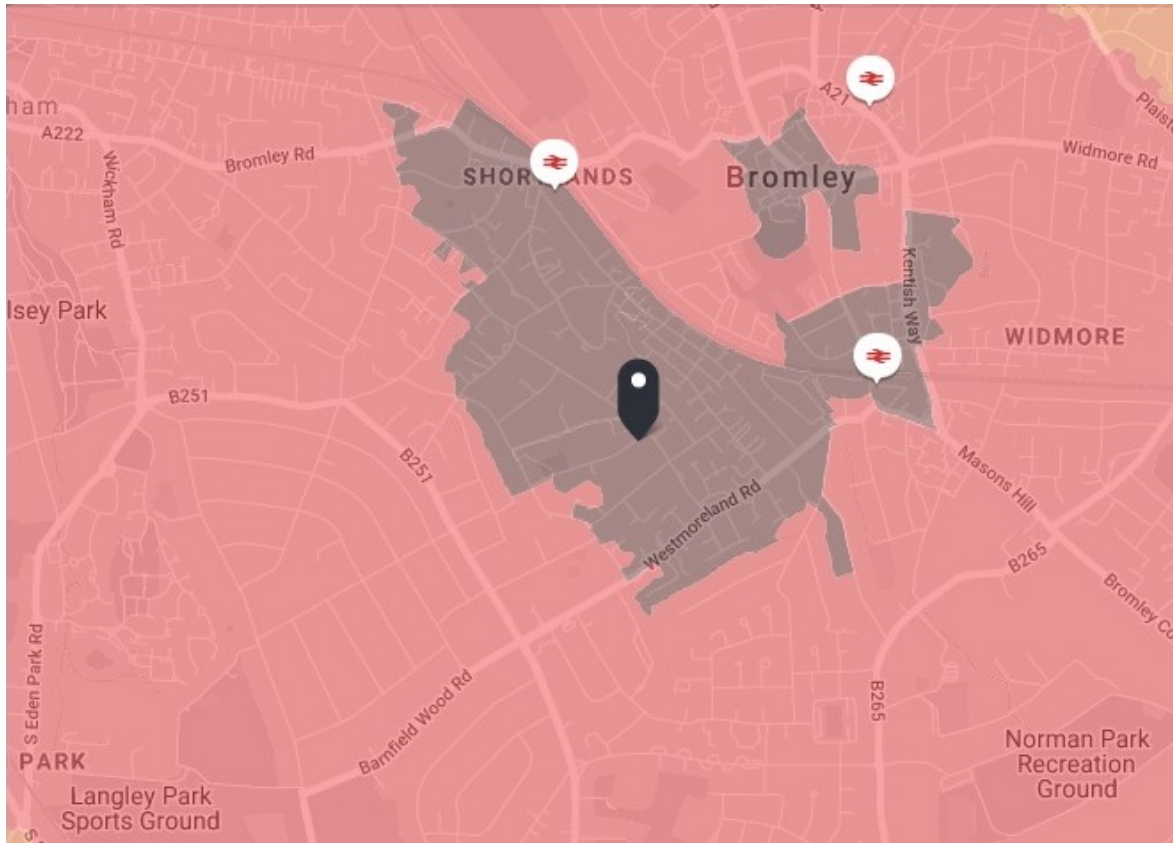
Travel times to the existing Beckenham library



Travel times to Penge library



Travel times to Beckenham Public Hall



Travel times to Shortlands library

From these maps, we can see that almost all of the area currently within 15 minutes travel time of the current library is also within 15 minutes travel time of either the Public Hall or Penge library. We can also see that much of the area to the east of Beckenham town centre is currently not within 15 minutes of any library, but this would change if the library were moved.

Both the existing library and the Public Hall are well served by public transport. There is a bus stop outside the existing library served by four bus routes; two of these connect the library with Beckenham Town centre. The library is around 200m from Clock House railway station and 400m from Beckenham Road tram stop. Children, the elderly and disabled people are eligible for free travel on public transport. Bromley Road St George's bus stop is outside Beckenham Public Hall and served by three bus routes including the 227 which runs past the existing Beckenham library. Two further bus routes are served from Beckenham Junction bus stop about 150m from the Public Hall. There are main line trains and trams at Beckenham Junction station, about 400m from the Public Hall. Although it is unlikely that many library users will arrive by train, Beckenham Junction is served by more routes than Clock House station, whilst the tram route serves both Beckenham Junction and Beckenham Road tram stops. We can therefore conclude that both the existing site and the Public Hall are within easy reach of good public transport facilities and that much of the area to the east of Beckenham town centre, which is currently not within 15 minutes of any library, would be so if the library were moved.

Private transport

Around 16% of adult respondents to the survey that accompanied these proposals indicated they travelled to the library by car, and the current site was perceived by participants in stakeholder engagement to be more convenient in that parking was easier at the existing library.

There are twelve dedicated parking spaces at the rear of the existing library for which no charge is made; two of which are for disabled customers. In addition, there are 128 parking space including 16 disabled spaces near the leisure centre within 100m of the library, charged at £1.20 per hour. The St Georges Road car park is within 100m of the Public Hall and has 142 spaces, only two of which are for disabled people, and charged at 70p an hour⁷. For the 16% of adult survey respondents who reached the library by car or motorbike, the reduction in free parking could be a disincentive to visit.

Transport conclusions

From this we can conclude that if the library was relocated, whilst some residents would be at a greater distance and travelling time from the new Beckenham library than they were from the existing library, few would find themselves outside 15 minutes travelling time of a Bromley library, although some users of the current library would be closer to Penge library than Beckenham. Those who live close to the Public Hall would be closer to a library. We can also see that some areas of both Copers Cope and Shortlands wards would be closer to a library than they currently are.

The minority of library users who access the library by car, especially those who have limited mobility, may find the journey more difficult.

Overall, the proposed move would be beneficial to a wider area of the borough.

Impact on residents

We have demonstrated above that most residents in Clock House ward would remain within 1.6km and 15 minutes travelling time of a Bromley library and that more residents from Copers Cope and Shortlands wards would fall into this category if the library were to be relocated. Thus more people overall would live within a short travelling time of a library within the area.

From our demographic analysis, we can see that Clock House and Shortlands wards have a similar proportion of people aged under 18 to the borough average, but that Copers Cope has a smaller proportion. Shortlands has a higher proportion of people aged 65+. Clock House has a more ethnically diverse population than Shortlands or Copers Cope. Although the data available does not enable any certainty, it is likely that a greater number of people aged 65+ would be closer to a library, and that more people aged under 18 or from a non-white background would be further from a library.

There are only two areas of higher deprivation in the three wards – one of these is close to the existing library but would be within 15 minutes travelling time of Penge library, and the

⁷ This information is taken from the Transport Technical Note, which is appended to the feasibility study

other is to the north of Beckenham town centre, within 1.6km of the Public Hall. We can conclude that relocation would extend the potential reach of the library service especially to older people. It is likely that fewer people from a black and ethnic minority background would be within this extended reach and that more of this group would be further from a library, although most would still be within 15 minutes traveling time of either Penge library or the Public Hall. More people living in areas of higher deprivation would be within easy reach of a library.

However, it must be noted that potential customers are not the same as actual customers. We know from the demographic analysis that 28% of members of the current library live in Clock House ward, and that some of these would find themselves nearer to Penge library than the relocated library. In the survey run in conjunction with this project, 58% of adult respondents (427 people) said that the main reason that they used the library was that it was the closest to their home. If the library were to be re-located some customers who currently use Beckenham library would live closer to Penge library. In order to retain their custom, we would suggest that Bromley Council should continue to monitor use at Penge library when planning future service delivery and that community outreach programmes are further developed.

Local facilities

It is often said that public libraries are a local function, serving the people who live in the immediate locality of the library. Whilst this is broadly true, there are many other reasons why people may use a particular library branch. They may work or study in the vicinity, and this is reflected in the Libraries and Museums Act 1964, which requires higher tier local authorities to provide a library service to anyone who lives, works and studies within that local authority. However, people may also use a particular library if, for example, they do their shopping, have relatives or change buses in the area. There are many reasons why people may choose to use a library at a particular location. Some of these are dependent on the lives of the individuals and are almost impossible to predict – for example, having relatives living near a particular library. But there are some where it is reasonable to infer that close proximity to a library would drive up business levels at the library. Some of the most common are:

- Schools and other educational institutions
- Shops
- Places of employment
- Transport nodes
- Leisure facilities

Schools and educational establishments

Schools are important in encouraging the use of local libraries, both for key stages 1 and 2 where many schools organise class visits to the library and also at secondary, further and higher levels where students use libraries as a place to study and to socialise. Large schools are often a significant employer. Walking distance to KS1 and 2 schools is important for organised visits, not least as marshalling a class of twenty or thirty on public transport is no

mean undertaking. Location is slightly less important for secondary education, as class visits are not so common, pupils do not always live in the immediate vicinity of the school and have free bus transport.

The table below shows the schools in the area and their pupil numbers, the distances by road to the existing library and Beckenham Public Hall, nearest library after relocation and whether the change would increase or decrease the distance to the nearest library.

School	Number of pupil places	Distance to existing Beckenham library (km)	Distance to Beckenham Public Hall (km)	Nearest library after relocation	Change in distance (km)
Balgowan Primary	680	1.1	1.4	Public Hall	+0.3
Churchfield Primary	358	1.0	2.4	Penge (1.5km)	+0.5
Harris Primary Beckenham	300	2.0	1.2	Public Hall	-0.8
Harris Primary Beckenham Green	210	1.4	0.1	Public Hall	-1.3
Mariam Vian primary	644	2.3	2.9	Public Hall	+0.6
St Mary's Catholic Primary	422	2.3	1.1	Public Hall	-1.4
Worsley Bridge Primary	365	1.9	1.1	Public Hall	-0.8
Eden Park High (secondary)	620	2.3	2.9	Public Hall	+0.6
Harris Academy Beckenham (secondary)	1000	2.9	1.2	Public Hall	-1.7
St Christopher The Hall independent	102	1.9	0.9	Public Hall	-1.0
Riverside School Beckenham site (SENS)	Not known	0.5	0.9	Public Hall	+0.4

This shows that five of the schools would be at a greater distance from a library after relocation and six would be nearer. Churchfield Primary would be nearer to Penge library than any other after relocation.

In addition, Clare House Primary and Unicorn Primary would be almost as close to the Public Hall as they are to Shortlands library. The Langley Park schools for girls and boys, with 3,400 pupils in total, are closer to West Wickham library than either the existing Beckenham library or the Public Hall, but the Public Hall is slightly closer than the existing library.

Of those that are adversely affected, none would be more than 600m further from a library than at present, although in the case of primary schools this could mean the difference class visits being practical and impractical. The close proximity of the Public Hall to the Harris Academy and the Harris Primary Beckenham Green could be advantageous.

Whilst the picture is mixed and some schools would lose out, overall the Public Hall is likely to better serve more schools. That said, it takes time and effort for libraries to build relationships with schools.

Shops

Many people combine a visit to the library with a shopping trip – there are local examples of successful branch libraries located close to shops and supermarkets; for example, at Orpington library. Where people are using the library to study for extended periods, it is convenient to be able to visit a café if one is not provided at the library. In the survey conducted in conjunction with this project, 45% (332 people) of adult respondents said that they combined a visit to the library with one to local shops, and 66% said that they visited Beckenham town centre at least once a week⁸.

The current Beckenham library is located on Beckenham Road. Although the area is largely residential, to the west of the library there is a parade of shops, cafes and a restaurant, and this pattern continues beyond Clock House station and indeed beyond Beckenham tram stop, forming a semi-continuous shopping street. There is a Sainsburys Local about 350m from the library towards the tram stop, and Beckenham High Street Sainsburys superstore is 600m to the east.

Beckenham Public Hall is located on Bromley Road in Beckenham town centre. Whilst Bromley Road itself has a few restaurants and businesses, Beckenham High Street intersects with Bromley Road about 50m from the Public Hall, and is a busy commercial hub extending for about 1km from Beckenham Junction station to the war memorial roundabout. There are numerous shops, including a Marks and Spencer food hall, banks, restaurants, cafes and bars. Beckenham Junction Waitrose superstore is 450m from the Public Hall, Lidl High Street Beckenham is also 450m and Beckenham High Street Sainsburys superstore is 800m distant.

⁸ Almost 91% of respondents visited Beckenham town centre at least once a month. However, this does depend on how respondents define the town centre.

There is little doubt that Beckenham Public Hall is closer to a greater number and wider variety of shops and businesses than the current library and that many of those shops are the type that customers are prepared to travel further to reach.

Places of employment

Many working people visit a library near their place of work rather than near their home. The latest labour market statistics suggested that about 65% of people aged 16 – 64 in Bromley were employees⁹ and it is reasonable to infer that the majority do not work at home. Therefore, there is a significant potential market for libraries related to places of employment.

As noted above, the number of shops and businesses in Beckenham town centre exceeds those in the vicinity of the existing library, although this is near to the fire and ambulance stations and to the offices of Link Asset Services. It is likely that many more people work close to the Public Hall than the present library.

Since the current library has well over one hundred thousand visits a year and library customers are likely to use at least some of the local shops, relocation may have a negative impact on shops in the vicinity although relocation would be likely to bring benefits to shops in central Beckenham.

Transport nodes

We have discussed above the accessibility of the two sites by public and private transport and this is an important determinant in the best location of a library. However, the degree to which a place is where people switch between modes of transport, for example changing from bus to train, can also encourage use of local libraries.

Beckenham Junction station had 2.6 million passenger entries and exits in 2018/19, whilst Clock House had 1.2 million¹⁰. There are four bus routes serving the existing Beckenham library and seven serving Beckenham town centre.

It can be concluded that the Public Hall is located at a more significant transport node than the current library.

Leisure facilities

Proximity to parks, gyms, leisure centres and other attractions can increase also library usage.

The existing Beckenham library is adjacent to the Spa Leisure Centre. This is a Bromley Council owned facility managed by a charitable trust, MyTime Active. As well as providing two pools and a gym, the complex includes a creche and soft play area and offers venue hire and events. As we shall see in the analysis of stakeholder engagement, 62.8% of respondents to the survey on the relocation of the library said that they combined their visit to the library with one to the leisure centre.

⁹ NOMIS Labour market profile Bromley 2019

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157264/report.aspx#tabempunemp>

¹⁰ Office of the Rail Regulator <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage/>

Beckenham Public Hall is close to Beckenham Green public space, and also to Breeze Yoga and the Dance Company studios.

However, from the point of view of proximity to leisure facilities there can be little doubt that the current Beckenham library is better located than the Public Hall.

Impact on Residents: Conclusion

We have considered the locations of the existing and proposed libraries, their accessibility by public and other transport, the demographic profile of the area and local facilities. We have demonstrated that if the library were to move, more people would live closer to a Bromley library than at present and that they would be able to reach the new library easily by public transport. Whilst the population served would be larger, some people especially those within Clock House ward with its younger and more diverse population would be further from a library than they are now. The new location would be an improvement in terms of proximity to shops, places of employment and transport nodes, and on balance educational establishments. Relocation may have a negative effect on those who use the leisure centre as they would no longer be able to combine visits.

On balance it is our conclusion that if no library was currently located in Beckenham, and a new location were being sought then a central Beckenham town location would be suitable.

The new facility

In this section we look at how the new facility could work in an integrated and productive way. We will:

- Compare the existing and proposed facilities
- Consider operational models and look at what is done elsewhere
- Look at options for the operation of the library and the Public Hall
- Opportunities for programming and partnership working in new facility
- Consider the impact on the existing contract with Greenwich Leisure Ltd

What makes a good library?

Successful modern public libraries are designed to meet the needs of the communities they serve. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport Libraries Taskforce toolkit¹¹ suggests that library services contribute to seven outcomes that are critical to the individuals and communities in their areas:

- cultural and creative enrichment
- increased reading and literacy
- improved digital access and literacy
- helping everyone achieve their full potential
- healthier and happier lives
- greater prosperity

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-shaping-the-future-good-practice-toolkit/libraries-shaping-the-future-good-practice-toolkit>

- stronger, more resilient communities

Libraries are seen by the general public as free, safe, neutral spaces that are open to all. They should provide a good range of books and other materials to suit their communities and events and activities that promote reading and learning for all. Libraries also have a key role to play in providing access to digital services, particularly for those who are not digitally enabled or who need help with online forms and applications. They should aim to be at the heart of local communities, working together to improve the life chances of local people.

In the context of this project, the ambition is to provide an enhanced library offer. The project objectives reflect this and include:

- Design a library that holds at least as many books as the existing library.
- Design a library that is high quality and future proofed.
- Create flexible spaces that can be used for a range of activity both during the day and evening.
- Create opportunities to display objects and artwork from Bromley's Historic Collections.
- Design a site that is as accessible as possible.
- Create a special venue that is welcoming to all, enables a cohesive and uplifting visitor experience.
- Create opportunities for income generation and wider social activity.

Beckenham Library

The current Beckenham library was purpose built in 1939 and has been used as a public library for 81 years. It is situated in Beckenham Road, close to the Spa Leisure Centre and Clock House railway station. The library is open plan with a large ground floor and a small mezzanine that houses the local history collection, and which is not fully accessible to all.

The library is well used by its local community and performs well in terms of visits and borrowing. Approximately 126,000 people visited the library in 2018/19 and 224,500 books were borrowed. The library provides around 50,000 books for loan, a range of online resources, bookable public computers with internet access and free Wi-Fi and space for reading and study. Activities include a computer club to enhance basic IT skills, five reading groups and a range of activities for children and young people that often attract 30 children at a time.

Our conversations with front line staff and public tell us that the open plan nature of the library building is attractive but provides challenges in terms of events: there is no separate meeting room or events space. 78% of adult respondents to the 2017 PLUS survey rated the attractiveness of the library as good or very good, which was the second lowest in the borough; an indication that action is required.

The Public Hall

Beckenham Public Hall currently comprises of three floors and a basement, with two public halls at first floor level and a large meeting space on the ground floor. Part of the building is leased to the Club. There is lift access to the first floor.

The hall currently hosts 23 weekly community activities, taking up 52 hours each week. They range from yoga and salsa to meetings of churches and local societies. Of these, for 14 hours a week, there are two or more activities taking place in different areas. The hall is also available to hire for weddings and functions.

In 2019, an initial feasibility study was carried out to determine the amount of space that could be released in the building to accommodate a public library. It was calculated that a total of 639m² would be available for the library. This included making use of both the basement and the second floor, as well as taking the area currently occupied by the Club. The current feasibility study has demonstrated that it is not economically viable to use either the basement or the second floor for library purposes, and it is also proposed to retain more of the area occupied by the Club.

Bisset Adams were asked to create four options for the arrangement of the building, two of which would be taken forward for more detailed assessment. The two options taken forward, options 3 and 4, maximise the space available within the Public Hall and accommodate the library, and both use some parts of the current Club space to expand the library¹². Each option includes shared space available for both library activities and public hire. Option 3 provides more library space and less space for hire and community activity than option 4. Additionally, a combination of the two – the final proposal - has been produced; this maximises the use of available space for the public library function, using the ground floor design for Option 4 and the first floor of Option 3. In all options, furniture layouts and fittings have been developed with careful consideration of the listed building fabric. However, the final layout and choice of furniture will be developed in the subsequent RIBA Stages, should this project be progressed.

The new designs all offer a number of benefits to the library:

- The building is attractive from the outside and the designs ensure a welcoming mix of the old and the new.
- All areas of the library are fully accessible unlike the existing library
- One great advantage of the proposed move is the availability of separate rooms for events and activities, as well as for hire, something that is not possible at the current site. This would enable the library service to provide a wider range of events and activities. It will also introduce the possibility of hiring rooms out for community events and private functions and generating income.
- The provision of customer toilets also makes the new facility better able to attract those who wish to study in the library for longer periods.

¹² A larger proportion of the existing Club is used for library purposes in option 4.

- A kitchen enables some catering at events, both those run by the library when the space is hired.
- It may be possible, depending on which design option is selected, to create a separate teenage area. In the current library the teenage area is within the children’s library. This is often discouraging for older teenagers, who do not wish to be classified as children. Retaining older teenagers as library users is a big challenge across the country and a separate identified area can help.
- Improved study areas with power sockets for customer devices
- The furniture in the children’s library is designed to permit the space being used flexibly, so that larger activities can take place with the area.
- The historic Grade II listed Public Hall can be restored to its former grandeur

Comparison of the existing and proposed libraries

The table below compares the floor space available at the two sites:

	Library space accessible to the public	Space available to hire	Shared space for use by public library and for hire	Total floor area (Excludes space for staff use and corridors, storage etc)
Current Beckenham Library	569 m ² (of which 42.2 m ² is the mezzanine floor and not fully accessible)			569 m²
Current Public Hall		333 m ²		333 m²
Proposed new combined facility – option 3	444.7 m ²		94.2 m ²	538.9 m²
Proposed new combined facility – option 4	393.3 m ²		198.7 m ²	592 m²
Final proposal combining options 3 and 4	482.4 m ²		94.2 m ²	576.6 m²

The table shows that the proposed combined facility, whilst providing bookable space and other facilities such as toilets and kitchen within the library, will result in a net loss of bookable space and of dedicated library space. Further details can be found in the survey drawings in the appendices to the feasibility study report.

This does show that there is a net loss of library space in each of the options. Option 3 would result in a loss of dedicated library space accessible to the public of 22%, or 5% if the shared hire space is included. Option 4 would result in a loss of dedicated library space accessible to the public of 31%, or 5% if the shared hire space is included. The final proposal would result in a loss of dedicated library space accessible to the public of 19%, or a gain of 1% if the shared hire space is included. The final proposal means that the overall amount of space available to the public, both library and for hire, is almost exactly the same as the existing Beckenham library.

Space available for hire would be reduced by 71% in option 3, and 52% in option 4 and 71% in the final proposal, although if the shared area were to be used for library activities as well as for hire, this would only be available for lettings for some of the time, particularly out of library hours.

The amount of library space could be increased in each of the options by including some library bookshelves in the community space; however, this would restrict the flexibility and use of these areas for both library and external activities. It would also be possible to use all of the space currently occupied by the Club, although this would mean displacing the Club entirely from the building.

In option 4, there are two areas available for hire, but in the other options there is only one, which means that no more than one hire could take place at any one time. However, library space could be made available for hire to small groups outside library opening times provided that arrangements were made to arrange furniture suitably.

Structural engineers have confirmed that the floor loadings of the Public Hall are less than the recommended levels for a library; to save on the cost of major floor strengthening works, a more economical solution has been proposed, and the library design limits the height and number of bookshelves and maximises wall mounted shelving. This means, whilst the library will be entirely safe, fewer bookshelves can be accommodated on both floors, particularly in the centre of rooms.

The number of books that can be accommodated in the Public Hall would also be reduced, without compromises and further investment on floor strengthening. There are 17,324 children's books and 32,195 books for adults in the existing library.

Option 3 incorporates shelving which would accommodate 18,737 books. It may be possible to display up to 1,000 children's books in book boxes. The current Beckenham library has very good issue figures, so we can assume that up to 30% of

books will be on loan at any one time. This gives a total estimated book stock for option 3 of 28,200, a reduction of 43% on the existing library.

Option 4 incorporates shelving which would accommodate 17,116 books. Using the same methodology, this gives a total estimated book stock for option 3 of 25,800, a reduction of 48% on the existing library.

The final proposal has shelving which would accommodate 20,052 books. Using the same methodology as before, this gives a total estimated book stock for this option of 30,000, a reduction of 39% on the existing library.

Part of the reason for the high number of books that are accommodated at the existing library is that the shelves are in bays that are higher than at the new library, and also that some stock is located on the mezzanine floor which is not fully accessible. Lower shelves reflect good practice in library design as they are accessible to more people including wheelchair users, and all the proposed options have shelving which is no more than 1.5m high.

The online revolution that has taken place in the last twenty years has already meant that many reference sources are now more commonly used online than in book form, and this has led to many public libraries dispensing with much of their print reference stock. The impact of eBooks in the fiction market in public libraries has been slower, due to a number of factors including customer preference and a lack of supply of British published e-titles. However, it seems likely that in the longer term there will be a shift to the lending of more e-books by public libraries, which would diminish the impact of a loss of shelf space at the new facility. This position has been strengthened by the online shift caused by the closure of libraries due to the pandemic.

There are 15 computers available for public use at the current library. Option 3 has 9 such computers, option 4 has 8 and the final proposal has 8. Computers for public use remain popular in libraries, although in recent years there has been a rise in the number of customers using their own electronic devices through the free Wi-Fi that libraries provide. It should be noted that should the project be taken forward, the numbers of public computers could be adjusted in line with predicted demand.

Since the onset of coronavirus, which has seen the temporary closure of all libraries in England, GLL have launched their Library Without Walls online and e-book service which will be retained when libraries re-open. In some areas, audiences have grown by 2,000% as a result¹³. As a consequence the budget allocated to e books will be re-assessed going forward and will result in a reduction of physical stock to adapt to changing reading habits.

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https://www.bromley.gov.uk/press/article/1617/bromley_online_library_use_soars_as_lockdown_creates_libraries_without_walls

Integration of the library with Public Hall facility

Due to the close physical inter-relation between the spaces in the new facility, the preferred approach would be to integrate the library and Public Hall functions under one management, as proposed by the Council. As well as staff to manage the library functions, there would need to be caretaking staff to set up rooms, manage bookings and coordinate the events process¹⁴. A robust online bookings system would be preferable. For private functions, such as weddings and parties, security is essential and should be built into the hire cost. The key to success is to have sufficient resource to enable a quality offer to the public. Partnerships with local businesses, such as caterers and florists can be established, and the new facility can be marketed and promoted as appropriate. The improved condition of refurbished hire space would make it more attractive to potential customers.

Many library services across the country share their premises with other community and cultural facilities. There are many benefits, including attracting new audiences to the library, broadening the range of cultural events and generating income.

- Canada Water Library in Rotherhithe also houses a theatre space, leased to a theatre company but also used for conferences and other events.
- Willesden Green Library in Brent has rooms for hire, including a professional quality performance space and a sprung dance floor.
- West Norwood Library in Lambeth shares its premises with a Picturehouse cinema

Library opening Hours

The new facility also brings opportunities for expanding library opening hours. Any extension of library hours would require an agreement with GLL. Rather than a closed, empty library when there are activities elsewhere in the building, the library facilities can be available. This has obvious budget implications and many library services have explored cost effective options.

One option is the Open Plus model to extend library opening hours without reducing those times when it is staffed. This is used around the country in many libraries. Technology enables monitored portions of the library to remain open without staffing through admission with a membership card and provision of self-service facilities. Customers can borrow or return books, study and use computers. This may not be suitable for the Public Hall but the possibility could be explored.

Another option used in some library services is to have a security guard presence in the library and basic facilities available, e.g. borrow or return books, study and use computers.

These ideas are not advocated as a replacement for a friendly face and professional help from library staff, but as a way of making library facilities available for longer.

The use of staff tablets is being rolled out across Bromley libraries. This will mean that staff can assist customers from any area in the library, rather than having to

¹⁴ This has been confirmed by the Director of Libraries of GLL

answer enquiries at a fixed desk. This will be beneficial to the operation of the proposed service.

Programmes, Partnerships and Digital Resources

The new building, with its separate spaces, could also bring opportunities in terms of partnership working with community and cultural organisations. For example, the library service can offer space and new audiences to writers and artists in return for readings and activities; health services can promote awareness, residents can learn new skills from courses and workshops run by partners. Success in this area comes from enabling skilled practitioners in their fields to deliver events, rather than take library staff away from their core duties.

We have learnt during lockdown that it is important to build communities digitally as well as around physical assets and that experience can be used to develop a digital platform for the new Beckenham library, mirroring activities in the library with activities online. This proposal is supported strongly by GLL. Social media marketing of libraries has been proven successful, and an online identity for the new Beckenham library would help to engage with the local community and to encourage an interest and a pride in the new facility.

Facilities for hire to the public

As we have referred to above, there are currently 23 regular activities each week in the Public Hall. Some of these take place at the same time in different areas of the building. The proposed design options developed so far may restrict this, as there is less space available to hire. Furthermore, as we have suggested above, there will be opportunities to host more library events and activities, some of which will require separate spaces, and this could further limit the potential for lettings and therefore the number of organisations that can use the hall.

The Public Hall is currently available for hire for one-off functions such as weddings and parties, although actually only seven functions took place in 2019. The refurbished building will offer an attractive venue with on-site catering, albeit with more limited space than at present. There are a number of competing venues within Beckenham, including Beckenham Place Mansion, Venue 28, Azelia Hall and Goals Beckenham. In addition, there are specialist wedding venues nearby at Addington Palace, the De Vere Selsdon, Oakley House and the Manor at Bickley, although these cater for a different market to that which the Public Hall is likely to attract.

Under the current terms of the existing contract with GLL, the share of any income derived from room hire would need to be negotiated. The contract terms state that the Council reserves the right to a share of any income generated through new charges or ancillary services/commercial uses introduced after contract award .

Impact on the GLL contract

Bromley Library Service, including the existing Beckenham library, is currently managed by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL). The current 10 year contract includes an agreement that any new library buildings will be managed by GLL. GLL are fully responsible for the management of hall hire in all Bromley Libraries, notably Bromley Central Library .

The hire of space to local organisations within library opening hours should not impose a severe staffing burden and it may be possible to accommodate this within the existing contractual arrangements, subject to negotiation with GLL. However, many of the current events in the Public Hall are held outside current library opening hours, and on one day a week as late as midnight: extra staffing resources would be needed to accommodate this .

GLL have considerable experience of managing public spaces for hire within libraries and leisure centres and have a centralised major events team which are well placed to manage larger occasions such as weddings.

Benefits and challenges

Moving the library to the Public Hall is both an opportunity and a challenge. The new designs bring a number of benefits:

- An attractive building both inside and out
- Separate space for library events and activities
- The potential to operate both the library and hall hire under one management
- A flexible layout
- Customer toilets
- A kitchen
- A town centre location with easy access to public transport and shops

However, we have identified issues that must be considered:

- A loss of both library space and space available for hire
- A reduction in the number of books that can be accommodated
- Ensuring that there is capacity for the events that already take place in the Public Hall, along with the intended library activities.
- Ensuring that staff with events skills and effective booking systems are in place. If increased usage of the facilities and income generation from hire of rooms are important, the offer to the public must be of sufficient quality.

The potential of the existing site for housing

If this proposal were to be taken forward, then the site of the existing library would be released for development of housing. Our understanding is that the site would be offered for sale to a developer.

Increasing the number of homes in Bromley is a key priority in the Council's Housing Strategy 2019-2029. The population has increased by 9% since 2001 and is predicted to grow by a further 6% by 2027.

The strategy states: 'The 2016 London Plan has required a net figure of 641 additional homes to be provided in Bromley each year – a total of 6413 in the ten years between 2015 and 2025. Bromley's aim was 641 new homes per year until 2030, as set out in the Bromley Local Plan (2019). This target has been exceeded so far, and the Local Plan projects an average of 700 new homes per year until 2030. However, the Strategic Housing Market

Assessment (SHMA) commissioned by the South East London Housing partnership including Bromley carried out in 2014 calculated that Bromley may have a potential need for approximately 1320 additional homes per year to meet demand. The draft of the new London Plan, currently out for consultation, reflects this higher figure, setting the target at 1424. The Council is challenging this figure, whilst recognising that there are undoubtedly significant pressures, especially in terms of affordable housing’.

Chapter 10 is an appraisal of the existing brief feasibility study on the site, which was carried out in 2019, which estimated that up to 46 residential units could be created on the site, of which 50% would be affordable. The existing library site is part of the Elm Road Conservation area, with a number of historic buildings adjacent, including the library itself, an Art Deco building. Four options have been proposed, each with benefits and constraints, to address some of the issues. Two options focus on rearticulating the massing of the building to a more acceptable height and building line, and two re-provide the library on the site, either through an extension to the existing or through a new build with library on ground floor.

In all cases, the percentage parking allocation is reduced to current guidelines, and the numbers of units is reduced to achieve a better outcome from a conservation and planning point of view.

The library site will deliver an excellent location for residential development, although the number of residential units initially thought possible may not be achievable.

In November 2019 a report by Cushman and Wakefield indicated that the capital receipt for the site would be in the region of £2.12 million. However, this figure must be viewed with caution, both because one cannot be sure of a capital receipt until it is actually received, and also because the property market may be adversely affected by the impact of Coronavirus.

Costs and revenues

Capital costs

Capital costs for each are estimated to be:

Element	Option 3	Option 4	Final proposal
Backlog and future maintenance	£1,093,000	£1,093,000	£1,093,000
Library refurbishment	£2,386,000	£2,457,000	£2,512,000
Estimated cost of relocating library stock and equipment	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Gross expenditure	£3,529,000	£3,600,000	£3,655,000
Less capital receipt on current site	£2,120,000	£2,120,000	£2,120,000
Net expenditure	£1,409,000	£1,480,000	£1,535,000

Note: Costs for addressing the backlog of maintenance on the Public Hall are costs associated with the building, regardless of whether the project is taken forward or not but could be staged over a number of years if the library relocation does not go ahead.

It should be noted that the cost estimates above do not include re-provision of IT or self-issue equipment, furniture or for any new library stock. Whilst it would be possible to move the library using existing equipment, this would reduce the impact of the new library, and we would recommend that £40,000 should be allowed for this purpose. We would also recommend that 10% of the existing book stock of the library should be new. The results of the public survey strongly supported the improvement of library stock, computers and self-issue kiosks.

Revenue costs

We have suggested above that provided the current opening hours are maintained, no additional staff might be needed to operate the new library, although this would ultimately depend on the outcome of negotiations with GLL.

We have referred above to the possibility of extending library opening hours and to providing space to hire outside of library opening times, but the economic practicality of either would depend on the outcome of negotiations with GLL, and therefore both costs and revenue cannot be known until these have taken place.

GLL already receive a 100% discount on National Non Domestic Rates on library buildings in Bromley due to their charitable status and receipt of a discretionary allowance. This means that there should be no impact on the GLL contract in respect to rates.

As agreed in the contract terms GLL currently pay for utilities costs for the existing Beckenham library which is not an energy efficient building. If there is a major impact on utilities costs for the new library this would be discussed with GLL and contract change control processes applied if any revision to this arrangement is needed. .

The Club pays the Council a rent; if the area that the Club occupies were reduced as proposed, then this is also likely to be reviewed. MyTime Active does not pay rent on the building; instead this is included in a wider contract with the Council. It is possible that this contract may need to be varied if the responsibility for managing the Public Hall were removed.

Although there are a number of unknown factors when calculating revenue costs, staffing is normally by far the greatest element in any library budget, so we can conclude that if library opening hours remain the same, then revenue costs are unlikely to change greatly.

A further source of revenue for Bromley Council would be Council Tax on any housing developed on the site of the existing Beckenham library and a reduction in costly nightly paid temporary accommodation costs, although exact amounts are impossible to estimate at such an early stage in the development of the proposal.

Stakeholder Engagement

A key part of the feasibility project was to get views from residents and stakeholders at this formative stage of the process.

The timing was unfortunate as it coincided with the Coronavirus outbreak and the methods of speaking to people had to change. This is an early engagement exercise, but should the project be taken forward to a later stage, there would be a formal consultation process when the designs are more fully developed.

During March and April 2020, we carried out a range of engagement and listening exercises to gather the views of as wide a range of people as possible.

This included:

- Two online (and paper) surveys
- Two drop-in sessions at the library
- One to one telephone interviews or email submissions
- Baby Bounce session to speak to parents
- Ward Members briefing session
- Two library staff briefing sessions
- One session with students on designing the library

Despite the growing Coronavirus crisis, we managed to reach the groups below:

- Residents
- Users of Beckenham library and LB Bromley libraries in general
- Users of the Public Hall
- Library staff
- Schools
- Children and young people
- Local organisations and businesses
- Ward councillors

Had the Coronavirus not impacted on the process, we would have hoped to engage with a wider group of stakeholders and more people than we actually did, but as we have referred to above, this deficiency can be addressed by further engagement and consultation if the project is taken forward. Library staff were engaged with throughout and at the end of the process, and for this reason they were the only group to have seen the current design proposals.

Nevertheless, 68 people gave us their views in direct conversation, by telephone and by email. We have referred to these people as engagement participants throughout this document. 757 adults and 52 children responded to the online surveys. 79.5% of respondents to the adult survey and 87.2% of child respondents had a postcode starting in BR3, the area which includes Beckenham, Elmers, End, Shortlands, Eden Park and Park Langley.

Comments on the proposal by ward members can be found in Appendix A.

More detail can be found in the engagement and survey reports attached to this report:

Appendix A: Engagement Report

Appendix B: Adult Survey: Statistical Breakdown

Appendix C: Adult Survey Analysis

Appendix D: Adult Survey: Free text comments

Appendix E: Children's Survey Statistical Breakdown

Appendix F: Children's Survey Analysis

Appendix G: Appraisal of the existing brief feasibility study

Summary of the key findings of the engagement

We have broken down the feedback gathered through the stakeholder engagement (including the surveys) into seven distinct themes, based on our lines of enquiry and the responses:

1. Housing provision: did people recognise the needs for more housing in the area?
2. Beckenham library: current service provision: Thoughts on the current Beckenham library
3. Beckenham library: ideas and suggestions for future service provision
4. Public Hall usage: thought from those who currently used the Public Hall
5. Combining services in a refurbished Public Hall: how did people see it working?
6. Beckenham Town Centre considerations: location and access
7. Comments on the engagement process

Where appropriate we have included the numbers and percentages of survey respondents holding particular views. Due to the nature of focus groups, this is not possible for engagement participants, but we have indicated the level of consensus within these groups.

We should note that we have reported feedback as it was presented to us, and inclusion here does not mean that we necessarily endorse those views. It should also be noted that the detailed design for the Public Hall was not at a suitably advanced stage at the time of the engagement to be presented to the engagement groups.

Engagement Theme 1: Housing provision in Beckenham and the proposed library redevelopment

- The need for more housing was recognised, to address population growth and homelessness. There was a strong consensus amongst the engagement participants that affordable housing was important, although only 6 survey respondents (0.8%) made this point.
- Amongst engagement participants there was a strong consensus that there were other options available for redevelopment as an alternative to the library site, and several alternatives were suggested. These are listed in Appendix A. In the adult survey, 6 respondents (0.8%) felt that alternative sites for development were available.
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that the impact of removing the library from the Conservation area and reducing green space was a major concern. No survey respondents raised this point.
- A number of engagement participants were concerned about the impact on the Clock House area generally and compliance with planning policy and guidance
- 82.4% (617 people) of adults responding to the survey opposed the proposed redevelopment. Of these, twelve (1.6%) had anxieties about the size of the new library in the Public Hall.
- Baby Bounce parents were generally in favour of retaining the same site for the library.

- Baby Bounce parents were concerned about the height of a new development in the library site.

Engagement Theme 2: Beckenham Library: current service provision

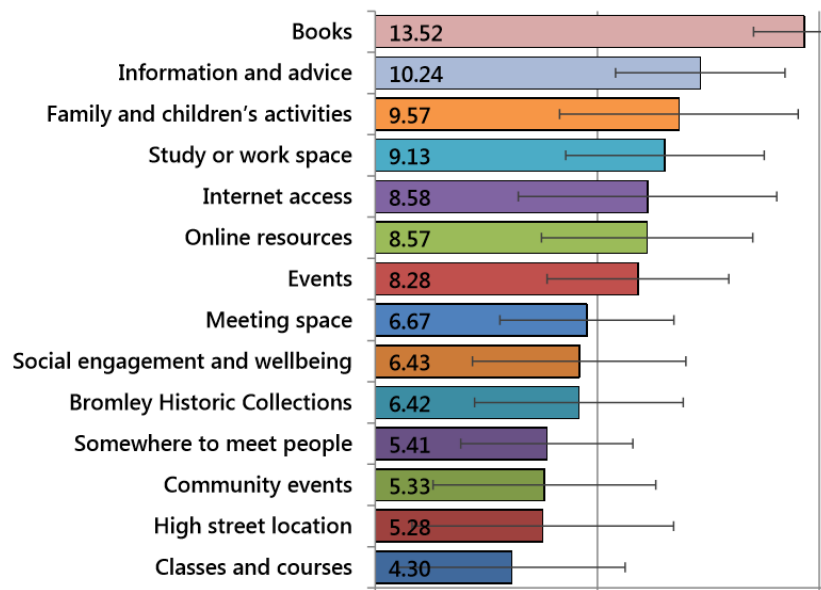
- There was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants emphasised the purpose-built nature of the building and its suitability for delivering library services
- There was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants that the library has a strong local identity and a strong community base
- Beckenham library forms a community hub with The Spa and Venue 28 within a conservation area: the majority of engagement participants using the library also use the park behind and beside it, the Leisure Centre, and the shops in the Clock House parade.
- A significant statistic from the Adult Survey was that 62.8% (458) of respondents combined their visits to the library with use of the Spa Leisure Centre. This may in part be explained by the lack of public toilets at the library and the willingness of leisure centre staff to allow library users to use the facilities there.
- The majority of engagement participants referenced the bus routes, tram stop and railway station, all in close proximity to the library.
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that walking distance to the town centre was considered to be easily manageable. 482 survey respondents (65.9%) walked to the library.
- The appreciation of a safe and secure space in a residential area was highlighted by a significant number of engagement participants. The current site was seen as a safe place for children and families and there was some concern about the busy road to cross to the Public Hall with children
- There was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants that the current library is accessible for people of all ages and compliant with equalities legislation: largely on one floor with free parking facilities. Access to the mezzanine was not considered to be a significant issue¹⁵.
- The majority of Adult Survey respondents used the library on a weekly basis, closely followed by monthly. 379 (51%) used no other library, 240 (32%) also used Bromley Central and 115 (15%) used Penge Library
- The majority engagement participants said that they visited Beckenham library due to its location within a wider context of other buildings, including local shops and the leisure centre.
- Library staff recognised the need for a facelift to the current library. They felt that some of the layout was difficult but liked the open plan nature of the building and that it is largely on one floor.

Engagement Theme 3: Beckenham Library: future service provision

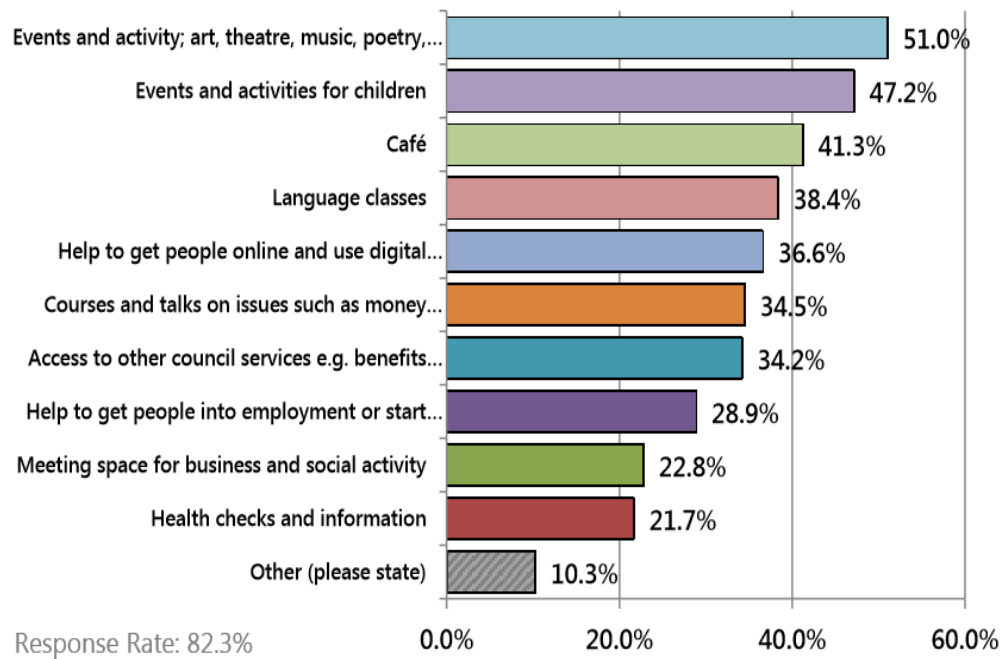
- 154 (29.8%) of respondents to the adult survey felt that no changes to the library were required

¹⁵ The mezzanine floor is not accessible for people with a mobility impairment, although library staff try to ensure access to material kept there for people unable to climb the stairs

- Some respondents to the adult survey suggested improvements should all be achievable within existing resources. These included:
 - Longer opening hours (50 respondents; 9.7%)
 - More events and activities (66 respondents; 12.8%)
 - More and better stock (75 respondents; 16.5%)
 - Refurbishment of the existing library (46 respondents; 8.9%)
 - Improved staffing (42; 8.1%)
- Respondents to the children’s survey were generally very supportive of the library and rated it highly in terms of being a safe place, having helpful staff, good stock and opening hours
- When asked what was important to them in a library, Adult Survey respondents indicated:



- The Adult Survey asked for suggestions for activities in the library: the graph below shows the preferences:



- Amongst adult survey respondents, books were seen as the most important element of the library, with preferences for types of stock shown in the table below:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Popular fiction	74.6%	491
Children's books	63.8%	420
Classics	59.1%	389
Travel	52.6%	346
Cookery	39.4%	259
Self-help	39.1%	257
Gardening	38.2%	251
Ebooks and downloads	37.4%	246
Starting a business	26.0%	171
Other (please state)	20.2%	133

- There was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants that library provision both across the borough and in Beckenham should reflect the increasing population
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that better use should be made of self-service technology and that there should be more volunteering opportunities.

- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that there is an opportunity to develop and expand the current library site as part of a more creative and ambitious scheme: they recognised the need to modernise libraries but felt that the current building is better suited for adaptation than the Public Hall

Engagement Theme 4: Public Hall usage

- There was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants that the Public Hall offered affordable, accessible and convenient meeting space in a central location with kitchen facilities for community groups
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants of the potential for refurbishing a listed building and confirmation that a Public Hall function and if it were made more attractive and better marketed, it would attract more custom
- 610 (90.8%) of adult survey respondents did not use the Public Hall.

Engagement Theme 5: Combining services in a refurbished Public Hall

- Based on plans previously published by Bromley Council, there was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants that the Public Hall space is not big enough to house an effective combined library and hall. It should be noted that the design for the changes to the building has been developed since the engagement took place.
- There was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants that moving the library into a smaller space with not enough capacity, accessible space or natural light sources would be detrimental to the provision of a good library service¹⁶
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that there will be enough space for all of the activities currently in the Public Hall to continue in a dual purpose building
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that accessibility issues will need to be addressed in any redevelopment proposal
- Library staff welcomed the opportunity for shared use and proximity to the town centre. They were happy to share events space. There were some concerns about adequate booking systems and security in the new building.
- There was concern from library staff about the new library being on two floors
- Some library staff would rather the current site was developed with a new library.
- Library staff felt that more designated space for events is necessary, particularly for children's events which often attract more than 30 children.
- Library staff had concerns about parking availability at the Public Hall
- Baby Bounce parents were concerned about the crossing a busy road with children to get to the Public Hall
- Baby Bounce parents feel that Clock House is a quieter, more residential location close to green space and serving a more child-focused demographic.

¹⁶ As we have referred to above, engagement participants had not seen the latest design plans for the library when the engagement took place.

Engagement Theme 6: Beckenham Town Centre considerations

- There was a strong consensus amongst engagement participants that transport links and easy walking distances outweighed the perceived benefits of a central location
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that the town centre extends from the Public Hall to Clock House station, rather than from the Public Hall to the War Memorial¹⁷

Engagement Theme 7: Engagement Process

- A small number of survey respondents had concerns about the process. Ten respondents (1.3%) felt that there was a lack of clarity about the relocation proposals and seven (0.9%) had a mistrust of the Council.
- There was a reasonable consensus amongst engagement participants that the engagement process should have been delayed due to Coronavirus restrictions and that the engagement should have been better publicised. The informal and formative elements of the process were reiterated to stakeholders and it was emphasised that there would be more consultation in the formal stage of the process if the project were to be taken forward.

Conclusion

In producing this business case, we have considered

- The potential market for a library and hire space at Beckenham Public Hall
- The impact on existing and future library users of the move
- The proximity of local facilities
- The opportunities and challenges brought by relocation
- The potential of the existing site for housing
- Net costs to London Borough of Bromley
- Stakeholder views

We have established that the current library is well used and in particular book borrowing is high. We have noted that in a survey of 2017 indicated that respondents felt that the library was in need of improvement.

The move to the Public Hall would bring more areas of the borough to within a 15-minute travel time of a library by public transport, and only small areas of the borough would be disadvantaged in this way. Whilst the overall population served would be larger, some people especially those within parts of Clock House ward with its younger and more diverse population would be further from a library than they are now. Clock House ward has a more child focused demographic than the town centre and the relocation may impact adversely on families. However there are good transport links between most parts of Clock House and the Public Hall. More areas of Beckenham, specifically Copers Cope and Shortlands wards, would be in reach of the relocated library. Penge library is well placed to accommodate

¹⁷ Where we have referred to Beckenham Town Centre elsewhere in the report, we have defined it as the area between Beckenham Junction and the war memorial. Clearly any number of definitions are possible but there are few shops between the war memorial and the existing library.

Beckenham library users who will live closer to Penge library after the relocation and choose to use Penge library as an alternative.

The proposed new location would be an improvement on the current, in terms of proximity to shops, places of employment, public transport and transport nodes, and on balance educational establishments.

The design exercise shows that a beautiful and inspiring new library could be achieved. This would allow a separate space for library activities, improved facilities including customer toilets and a kitchen and a town centre location. It is clear that there will be a net loss in community space and dedicated library space compared with the current allocation.

Increasing the number of homes in Bromley is a key priority in the Council's Housing Strategy 2019-2029. The population has increased by 9% since 2001 and is predicted to grow by a further 6% by 2027. If the site of the current library were released for development, it would allow the construction for up to 46 residential units.

The cost of the recommended design option to relocate Beckenham Library into the Public Hall is approximately £2.5 million, a figure arrived at after some exploration of cost savings which could be made. This can be set against an expected capital receipt of around £2.1 million for the existing library site for development.

Regardless of the relocation, if the Public Hall is to be brought up to standard and the outstanding, essential maintenance works carried out, this would cost £1.1 million. Therefore, the actual net cost of the relocation proposal to the Council would be somewhere in the region of £400,000.

In our engagement with the public, stakeholders recognised the need for more housing, but did not always agree that the site of the existing library was suitable. Of 752 adults surveyed, 82.4% opposed the proposed relocation of the library; this was also the view of some stakeholders individually consulted. Some stakeholders also felt that the Public Hall could not accommodate a library and hire facilities at the same level as current provision. However, the survey and other engagement took place before the present design options were fully developed and therefore participants had no opportunity to view them. Had they been able to do so they may have viewed them more positively. Frontline library staff based at Beckenham library welcomed the opportunity for shared event space and proximity to the town centre to improve and extend the range of services available.

As explained throughout, the engagement process was hampered by the onset of Coronavirus and was not as comprehensive as originally planned, nor did it reach as many or as wide a range of people and organisations. If the project is taken to a further phase, then a more effective engagement will be required.

Balancing these sometimes opposing factors means that the decision to proceed with the project consider the strengths as well as the potential drawbacks. The expansion of the potential catchment area and the fact that those who find themselves further from the Beckenham library could be able to use Penge library mitigate for the scheme to be taken forward. The provision of much needed housing is important, and the fact that the scheme

can be delivered with the proposed sale of the housing site are also factors in favour of the scheme. It is our conclusion that if no library was currently located in Beckenham, and a new location were being sought then a central Beckenham town location would be preferred, and that the library would offer facilities that do not currently exist within in the present building. This must be set against the loss of book stock within the public library, the reduction of space available for hire and any reduction of the organisations that can use the hire space, and the opposition which we noted in our public engagement.

It is our conclusion, if carefully managed, the relocation of the library could be successful, but it is difficult to make a strong recommendation for the continuation of the project.