Analysis of closure options

1. Introduction

About this appendix

1.1 In chapter 10 of the review report at appendix A, we summarised a longlist of options for change that were designed to achieve the strategic outcomes for the Library Service Review. The longlist of options was evaluated, resulting in a recommended shortlist. In this appendix, we explain why we are proposing re-opening the option of closing some libraries.

1.2 Given our conclusion that it is not feasible for the Council to spend more on the library service, improvements to the service would need to be found from savings elsewhere in the library service's budget. Saving money by closing some libraries would release significant resources which could fund some of the improvements in the options longlist.

1.3 Library managers are very reluctant to propose closures but believe that this is the only way to improve the overall performance of the service given that it is very unlikely that the Council will be able to increase funding to the service. Although some of the other options are designed to deliver some savings from efficiencies, these would not deliver enough to fund more than a handful of the improvement measures.

1.4 The main way to release sufficient funds to deliver more improvements across the service would be to close a number of the poorer performing and less viable library buildings.

1.5 In this appendix, we summarise all of the borough's libraries and consider their performance and viability and the impact of closure. More details on each library can be found in Appendix F which includes detailed site profiles for each library which help to inform these options.

1.6 We then recommend four libraries to be considered for closure, subject to formal consultation, together with a number of measures to deal with some of the effects of closure. The remaining nine libraries are proposed to be retained with investment and improvements in the service offer and model.

Why consider closures again?

1.7 The Council decided in 2021 to seek £500k in savings from the library service and to consult on a proposal to close five libraries:

- Bradmore Green
- Broad Green
- Sanderstead
- Shirley
- South Norwood

1.8 In the first round of consultation, participants showed strong opposition to the proposed closures. In response to the feedback, the Council decided not to progress with the

closure option and instead consulted on a range of alternative options for savings (see chapter 8 of the review report at Appendix A). The option preferred by a majority of respondents was to reduce the opening hours by 21%, with 56% of respondents preferring that option.

1.9   The Council decided to proceed with the reduction in staffed opening hours which would be accompanied by measures including introducing Open+ (ie self-service opening) and encouraging more volunteering. For the reasons set out in chapter 9, these measures failed.

1.10   First, the introduction of Open+ proved technically complex, slow and expensive and so Open+ has been implemented in only two libraries so far of the planned five. It is too early to judge the success of Open+ although take-up in Selsdon Library (introduced from May 2023) has been low. It was introduced in Norbury Library from October 2023.

1.11   Second, it has proved very difficult to recruit and retain volunteers and numbers are far lower than hoped. This reflects a downwards trend in formal volunteering in recent years, which worsened further as a result of the pandemic.

1.12   As a result of these problems, the actual reduction in opening hours since April 2022 has been 39% (if Open+ opening hours are included) or 48% (if they are excluded).

1.13   Croydon's library service take-up fell during the pandemic when libraries were closed due to lockdowns, and service take-up has been recovering slowly. However, as outlined in chapter 9 of the review report at Appendix A, following the reduction in opening hours, user numbers have fallen considerably, with the exception of the rise in the number of issues of books and other materials thanks to a big increase in issues of digital books and materials which now have a 29% share of all issues in 2022/23. This increase in issues of books and materials, while welcome, is from a very low base compared with issues per head of population in other councils.

1.14   We concluded in chapter 10 of the review report at Appendix A that, **despite the best endeavours of committed library staff and the enthusiastic support of loyal library users, Croydon's library service is now a failing service.**

1.15   We are exploring the option of library closures as a way to release resources that can be re-invested in repairing the damage caused by the changes made in 2022.

# 2. Understanding the current library network in Croydon

2.1   Croydon is the London Borough with the largest population and the third largest geographical area. In this section we highlight some key data that helps to provide an overview of the library service and the population it serves.

2.2   We begin by showing a series of maps. These maps are designed to aid understanding of the borough and its population but need some explaining. These maps present data from updated 2021 Census data and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 allows relative deprivation levels across the country to be compared.

2.3   The index is based on population data at Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) level: "LSOAs were created based on 2011 Census data by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). There are 32,844 LSOAs in the country and of these 220 LSOAs are in Croydon. Each one has between 400 and 1,200 households with between 1,000 and 3,000 people"[1].

2.4   The IMD allows deprivation in Croydon to be compared for each local area (or LSOA) within the borough with deprivation levels across the country.

2.5   Below we illustrate the relative density of the population (ie how many people live in an area) in comparison with the location of libraries. The libraries in the north of the borough are closer together, but they are serving much denser concentrations of population compared with the south which has large areas of green space. In this map, the darker areas have a denser population.

2.6   To reach the people that need them, libraries need to be located where people go. This means that in some areas libraries may be some distance from each other and in others they could be little more than a mile distant, particularly if there are two distinct shopping districts.

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[1] From the Croydon Borough Profile June 2023.

Figure E1: the location of libraries and population density

Croydon Libraries and 2021 Population Density
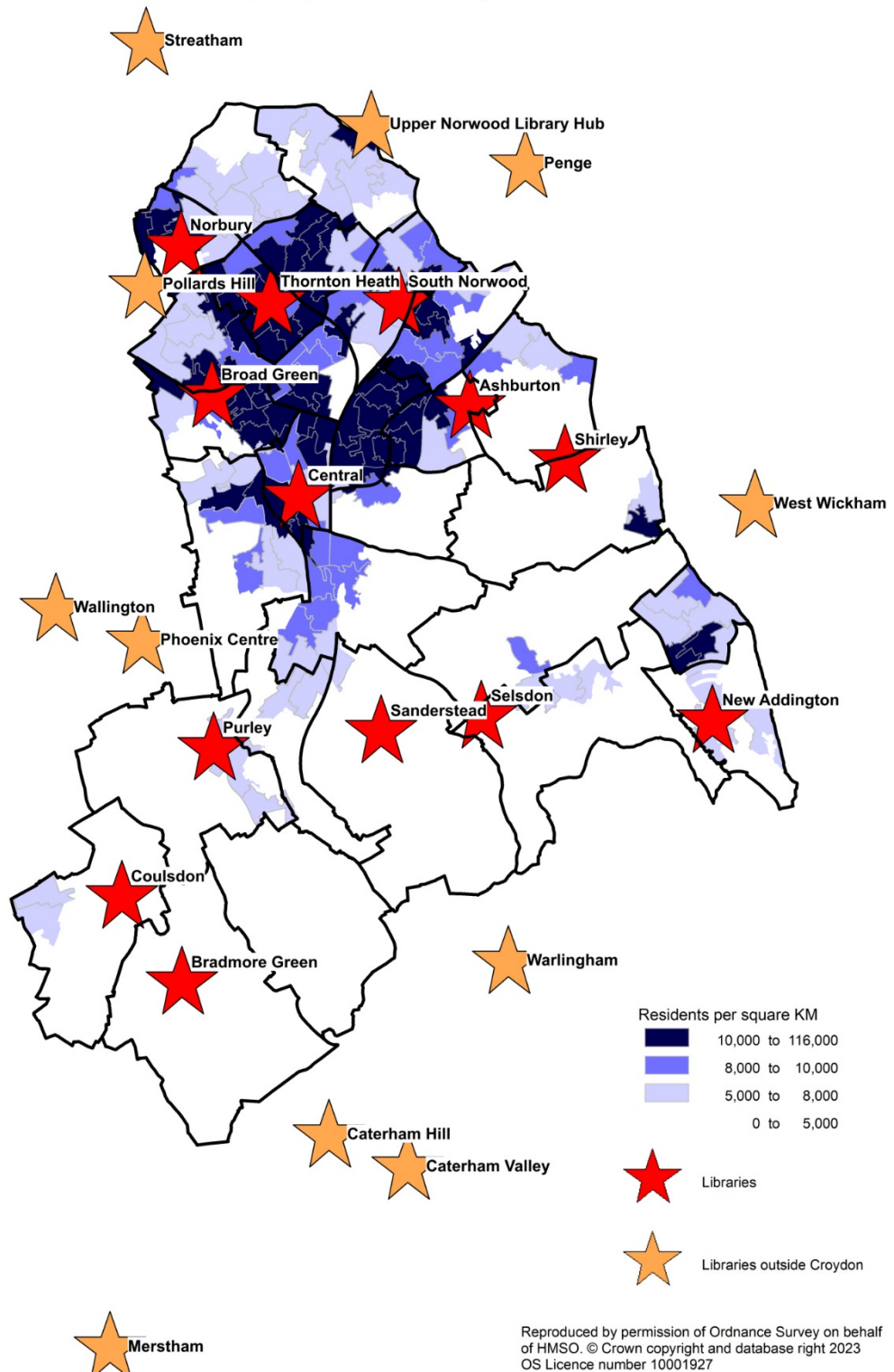
2.7   Much of the south of the borough is more prosperous than much of the north. However, there are pockets of deprivation in parts of the south (eg Old Coulsdon) and the east (eg New Addington) and pockets of greater prosperity in the north (eg in parts of Norbury). The darker areas of the map are more deprived, and are also where most libraries are located.

Figure E2: the libraries mapped against deprivation

Croydon Libraries with 2019 IMD
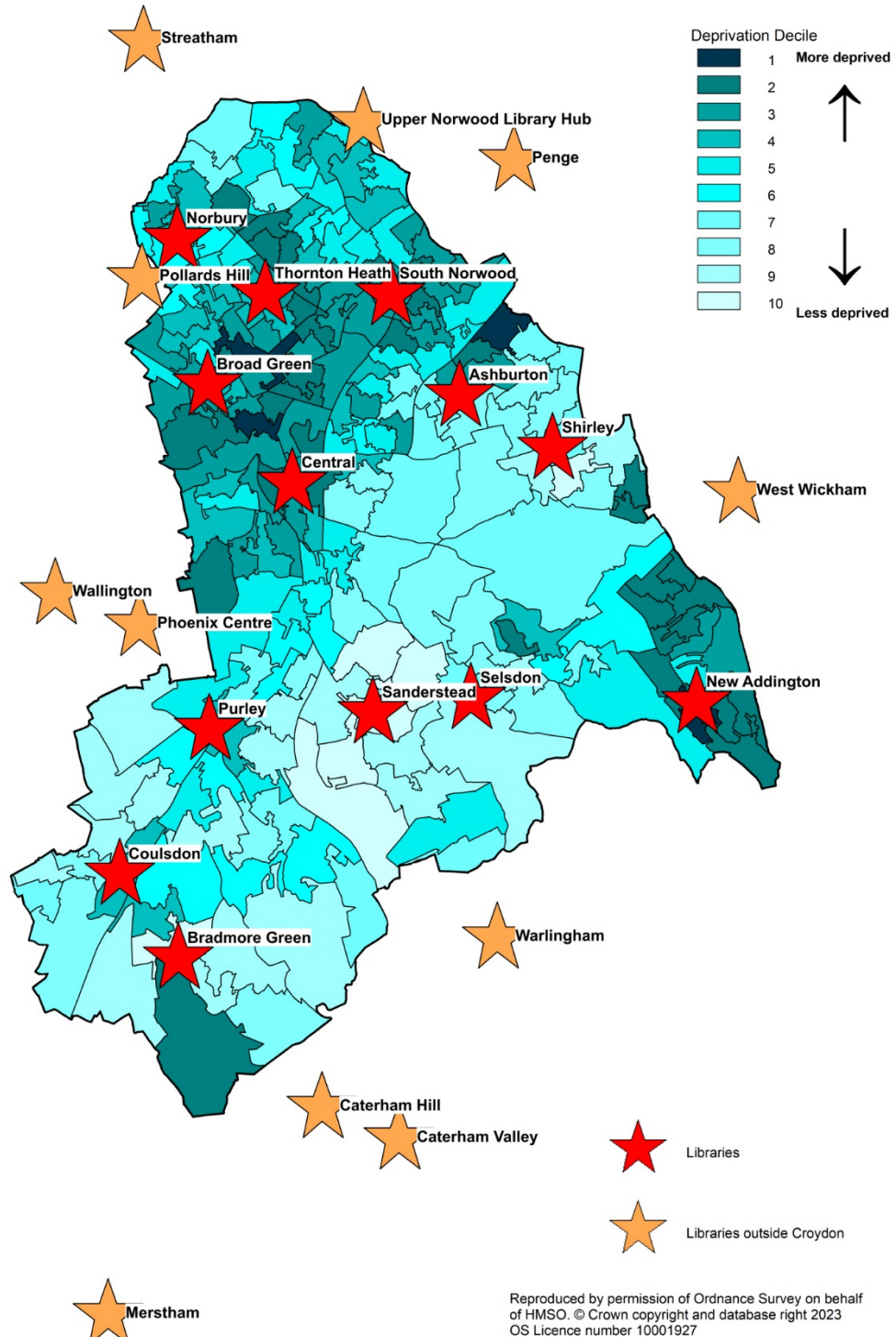
2.8   The location of libraries are not merely a matter of geography.. In areas of high deprivation, people can be more reluctant to travel far as they might not be able to afford public transport if not entitled to free travel. Also, crime and fear of crime can limit people's (especially young people's) willingness to travel. Crime is a serious problem for some parts of the borough.

Figure E3: the libraries mapped against deprivation impacted by crime

Croydon Libraries with 2019 IMD - Crime
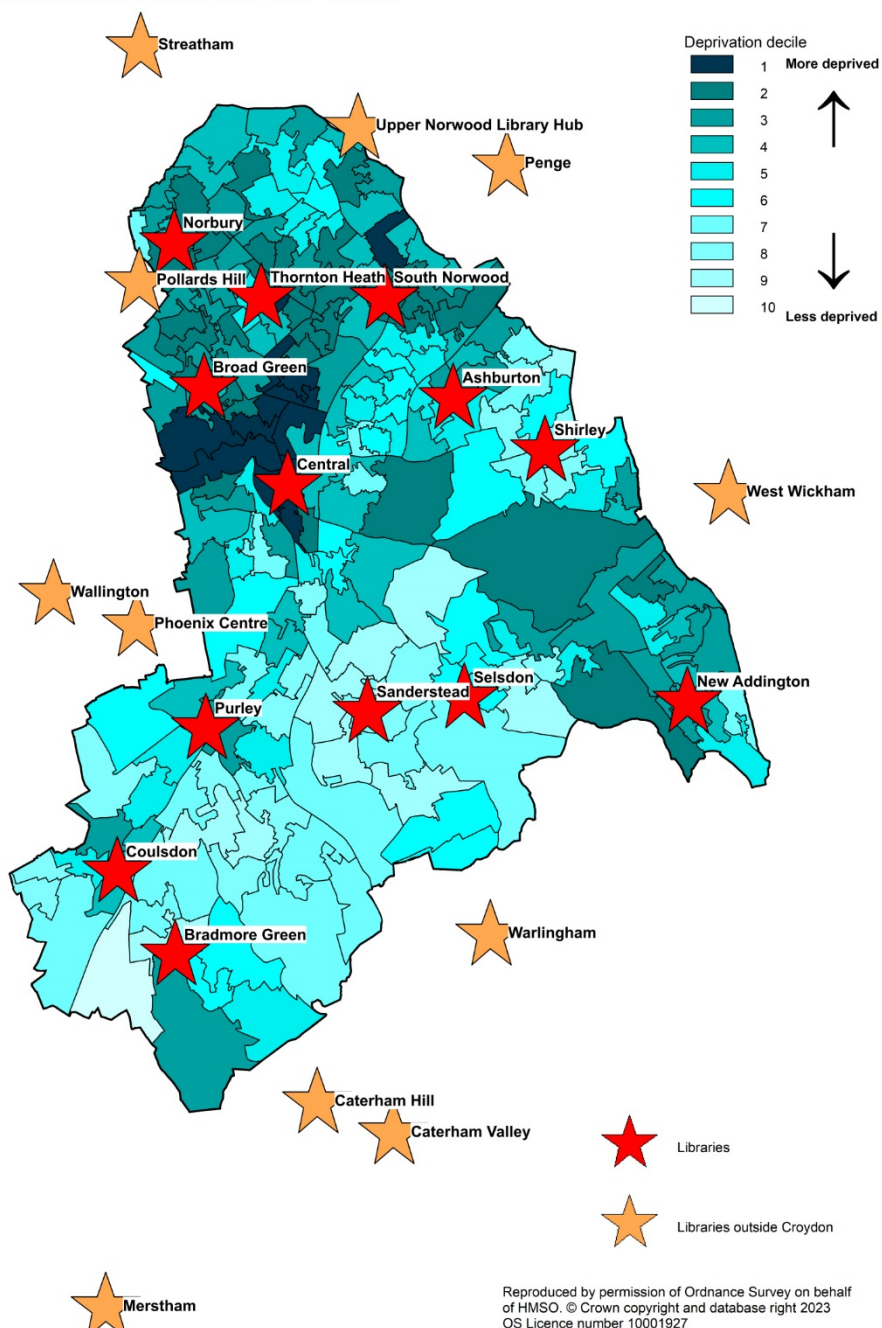
2.9   The network of libraries is not evenly distributed across the borough. There are 29,449 residents who live in LSOAs where the centre of the LSOA is more than 1.6km (ie 1 mile) from the nearest Croydon library (including Upper Norwood Library in Crystal Palace which is joint owned by Croydon and Lambeth). These areas are shown in blue below. However, they include people who live close to other libraries outside of the borough which they can use, eg Croydon residents also have access to libraries in Merton, Sutton and Surrey through membership of The Libraries Consortium.

Figure E4: areas whose residents live more than 1.6km from nearest Croydon library
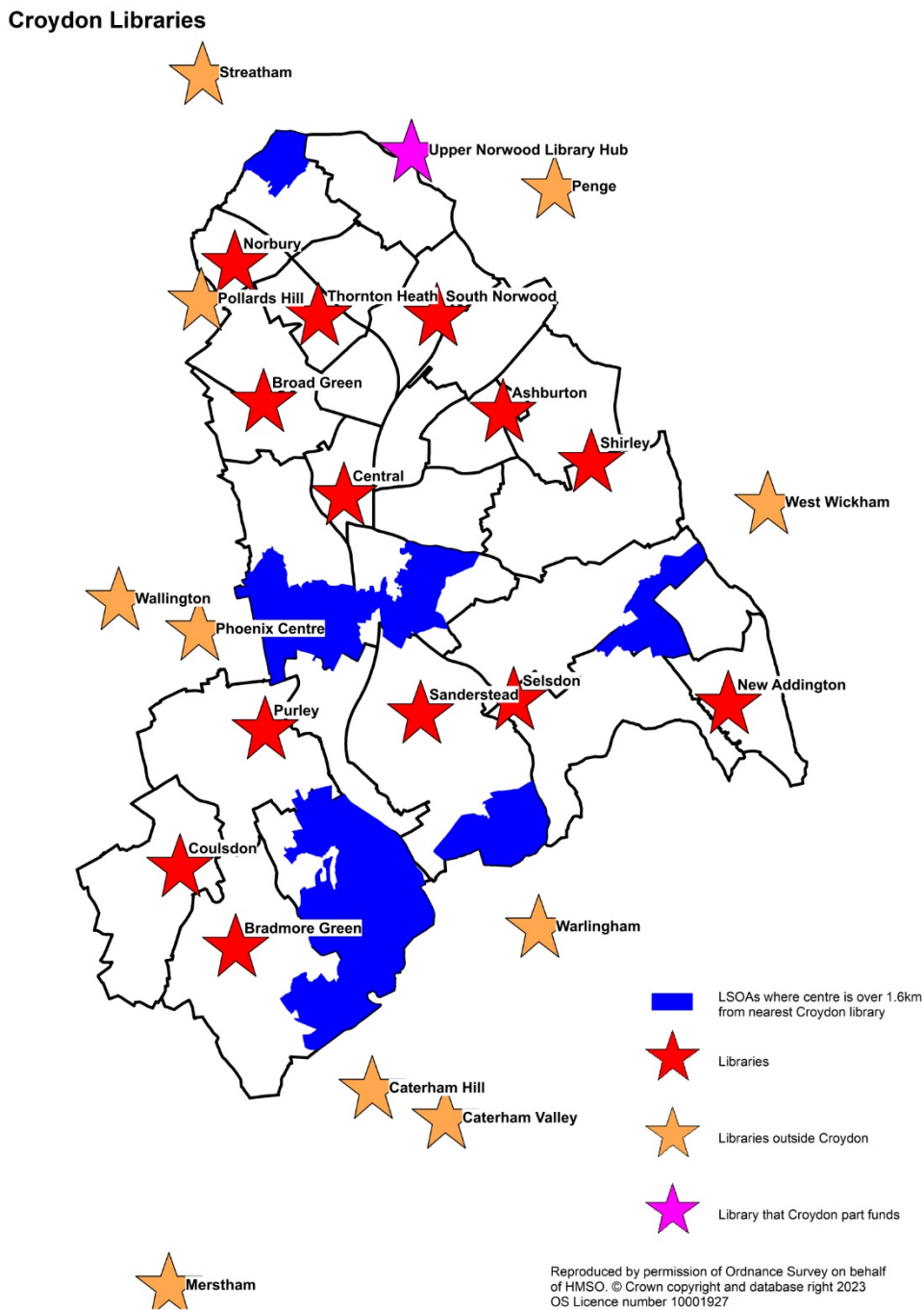
2.10   Each library is very different. They range in age, design, size and opening hours. In Appendix G, we provide a profile of each library including data, such as performance, activities, condition and proximity to other public facilities and libraries.

2.11   A summary of performance is shown below.

Table E1: summary of performance of each library for 2022/23

Library	Visits	Issues	PC hrs	Event visits[2]	Hours	Cost (£)[3]	Cost (£) per visit
Ashburton	38,593	45,619	3,021	2,997	32	308,009	8
Bradmore Green	17,370	14,698	178	574	16	83,273	5
Broad Green	11,315	8,113	838	688	16	93,272	8
Central	316,046	153,099	25,117	10,390	40	1,028,316	3
Coulsdon	27,315	29,505	857	1,098	24	156,475	6
New Addington	12,268	7,729	1,452	1,378	24	130,230	11
Norbury	17,030	27,742	2,484	1,789	24	152,425	9
Purley	14,485	22,754	1,020	1,327	16	101,690	7
Sanderstead	18,784	31,951	497	916	24	114,099	6
Selsdon	48,695	63,566	1,976	2,524	24	248,049	5
Shirley	11,006	12,371	723	808	16	98,746	9
South Norwood	12,582	19,359	1,386	1,483	16	123,971	10
Thornton Heath	28,651	32,064	3,145	1,446	24	219,703	8
All libraries	**574,140**	**468,570**	42,693	**27,418**	**296**	**2,858,257**	5

2.12   All except Central Library are now part-time, with most closed on Saturday (often the busiest time for libraries). Two libraries (Selsdon and Norbury) have 3 days a week of Open+ self-service opening with a security guard on-site but no library staff. The opening hours below are 39% lower than before 2022/23 and 48% lower if Open+ hours are excluded.

2.13   Since visits during Open+ hours at Selsdon Library have been so low, it worth noting that opening hours *excluding* Open+ are now only 296 hours a week compared with 566.5 hours in 2019/20.

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[2] Event visits is the estimated number of attendees at events and activities organised by the library service in each library.
[3] The cost of operating each library represents an estimate after allocating library management costs to each library. It included both planned and reactive maintenance into account and so will not represent the long-term planned maintenance and refurbishment costs required for each library.

Table E2: library opening hours (including Open+ hours in italics)

2022-23	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thur	Fri	Sat	Total
Ashburton	10m-6pm	10am-6pm	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	9am-5pm	32
Bradmore Green	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	16
Broad Green	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	16
Central	10am-6pm	10am-6pm	10am-6pm	Closed	10am-6pm	9am-5pm	40
Coulsdon	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	9am-5pm	24
New Addington	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	10am-6pm	10am-6pm	Closed	24
Norbury	*10am-6pm*	10am-6pm	*10am-6pm*	10am-6pm	10am-6pm	*9am-5pm*	48
Purley	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	16
Sanderstead	10am-6pm	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	24
Selsdon	10am-6pm	*8am-6pm*	10am-6pm	*8am-6pm*	*8am-6pm*	9am-5pm	54
Shirley	Closed	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	16
South Norwood	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	16
Thornton Heath	10am-6pm	Closed	10am-6pm	Closed	Closed	9am-5pm	24
						Total	**344**

2.14   There have been marked differences in the rate of recovery of visits to libraries since the pandemic, largely determined by their reductions in opening hours. We have compared the number of visits to libraries for the first six months of the current financial year (ie April to September 2023) with the same period in 2019/20 (ie the year before the pandemic and the reduction in opening hours).

2.15   Overall visits are still 59% below the level in 2019/20, but this hides significant variations. For example, New Addington's are 83% lower than in 19/20 whereas Ashburton's are only 36% lower. Interestingly, Central Library's visits are 61% lower, despite having the lowest reduction in opening hours (25%).

2.16   As might be expected, the largest reductions in opening hours is associated with the largest falls in visits, if we exclude Central Library and Norbury Library (as this has only recently returned from an extended closure for refurbishment). Excluding those two libraries, of the six libraries with the biggest percentage reduction in opening hours, five also have suffered the biggest percentage reduction in visits as the table below illustrates.

Table E3: visits and opening hours for the period April to September and percentage change for 2023/24 compared with the same period in 2019/20

April-September	2019/20		2022/23		2023/24		% change	
Library	Visits	Hrs	Visits	Hrs	Visits	Hrs	Visits	Hrs
Ashburton	35,612	44.5	17,303	32	22,918	32	-36%	-28%
Bradmore Green	22,773	44.5	8,151	16	12,335	16	-46%	-64%
Broad Green	19,066	35.5	4,306	16	8,377	16	-56%	-55%
Central	454,316	53.5	163,920	40	175,291	40	-61%	-25%
Coulsdon	31,951	44.5	13,032	24	17,324	24	-46%	-46%
New Addington	43,273	52.5	4,920	24	7,421	24	-83%	-54%
Norbury	31,335	44.5	6,353	24	9,213	24	-71%	-46%
Purley	25,608	44.5	7,145	16	8,680	16	-66%	-64%
Sanderstead	21,035	34.5	9,538	24	11,740	24	-44%	-30%
Selsdon	38,315	44.5	14,933	24	22,471	24	-41%	-46%
Shirley	16,144	44.5	5,376	16	6,529	16	-60%	-64%
South Norwood	20,577	34.5	6,655	16	7,173	16	-65%	-54%
Thornton Heath	41,231	44.5	11,578	24	19,479	24	-53%	-46%
Total	801,236	566.5	273,210	296	328,951	296	-59%	-48%

2.17 The complexity of the opening hours and performance in the table above makes it harder to judge the relative performance levels of each library. Therefore, in order **to understand how popular each library is *for the hours that it is open*, we have calculated the average number of visits for each opening hour for each library. We have then identified the rank of each library for visits per opening hour.**

2.18 While it shows that Selsdon Library has slightly increased its average number of visits per hour and ranks second behind Central Library at 36 visits per opening hour, the third busiest library in terms of total visits overall (Ashburton) is only in sixth place when measuring visits *per opening hour*. Bradmore Green has bucked the trend, increasing its visits per hour to 30 visits per hour and ranks 4th on that measure in the first six months of 2023/24.

Table E4: showing differences in opening hours, visits per hour and rank

April - Sept	2019/20		2022/23		2023/24		Change in visits/hr[4]
Library	Visits/hr	Rank	Visits/hr	Rank	Visits/hr	Rank	Since 19/20
Ashburton	30.78	5th	20.80	4th	27.55	6th	-11%
Bradmore Green	19.68	12th	19.59	5th	29.65	4th	51%
Broad Green	20.66	11th	10.35	11th	20.14	8th	-3%
Central	326.61	1st	157.62	1st	168.55	1st	-48%
Coulsdon	27.62	6th	20.88	3rd	27.76	5th	1%
New Addington	31.70	4th	7.88	13th	11.89	13th	-62%
Norbury	27.08	7th	10.18	12th	14.76	12th	-45%
Purley	22.13	10th	17.18	7th	20.87	7th	-6%
Sanderstead	23.45	8th	15.29	9th	18.81	9th	-20%
Selsdon	33.12	3rd	23.93	2nd	36.01	2nd	9%
Shirley	13.95	13th	12.92	10th	15.69	11th	12%
South Norwood	22.94	9th	16.00	8th	17.24	10th	-25%
Thornton Heath	35.64	2nd	18.55	6th	31.22	3rd	-12%
Total	**54.40**		**35.50**		**42.74**		**-21%**

Assessing the performance, viability and impact of each library

2.19 The reduction in library opening hours has led to a reduction in library visits, PC usage and other library-based activities and the impact of this is likely to have been hardest on the most vulnerable people in the community. As the gap analysis in Chapter 10 demonstrated, much now needs to be done to achieve the strategic outcomes *and* to ensure the service is serving as many as possible of those most in need.

2.20 The options for achieving those outcomes and improving the service that were explored in chapter 10 (eg extending opening hours at some libraries, introducing more activities and events and conducting outreach) will only be possible if resources are diverted from elsewhere in the library service.

2.21 The principal way of releasing those resources would be to close a number of libraries. In this section we set out our approach to assessing each library and recommending whether it should be considered for closure.

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[4] 'Change' shows the percentage increase or decrease in visits per hour for each library for the period April to September 2023 compared with the same period in 2019.

2.22 We have based our analysis on a set of assessment criteria designed to address the gaps that need to be bridged in order to achieve the outcomes for the review:

Table E5: summary of assessment criteria for retaining a library

Criterion	Factors to consider
Performance	• **Usage** including visits and issues. • **Event attendances** and attendances for other activities. • **PC hours in use.** • Unit costs, ie **cost per visitor**.
Location	• The **visibility** and prominence of the building. • The level of natural **footfall** in the vicinity. • **Public transport access** for users.
Building	• The **suitability** of the building to accommodate the full range of library uses (ie Universal Offers). • The **adaptability** of the building allowing for various uses. • The overall **condition** of the building and the extent of remedial work required.
Impacts of change	• The approximate size of the **population served**. • The **extent of deprivation** in the catchment area. • **Other public facilities** in the vicinity, including **other libraries**. • The extent of **existing community group use**. • The **number of volunteers**.

Notes on the data used on performance

2.23 The data used in our assessments includes both data that is directly reported from the Library Management System (LMS) and data that is collated with a degree of manual intervention or judgement:

- **Issues** of physical books and materials and PC hours are reported directly from the LMS.

- **Visits** are recorded by counters at the entrance to the library and collected periodically by library staff. When the counters fail, staff have to resort to counting users. As a result, data on visits is not wholly reliable. We have noted if there are any particular problems with reliability of the visitor numbers in our assessment of each library.

- **Library budget and cost per visit**: we have calculated a budget for each library. Some of the figures included are actual costs for each library (eg repairs), others are estimates, eg disaggregating and reallocating the cost of library management to each library or the disaggregating of business rates for the Central Library (which is part of a larger complex). The budget for repairs and maintenance included in the cost of each library are the costs incurred in 2022/23. This can mean that maintenance costs could be inflated by major expenditure in one library in a particular year. It also flattens the R&M costs for Selsdon and Ashburton which,

because they share a building, have any cost of repairs to the fabric of the building incorporated in their standard annual lease costs.

Notes on the commentary on location and building

2.24   Our commentary on location and building relies on a mixture of objective, subjective and factual observations:

- **Location**: comments on visibility and footfall are based on visual inspections at different times of day and a map-based review of distances between sites, eg between a library and its local shops. Our approach rejects the 'build it and they will come' philosophy, partly because most people clearly don't and partly from experience of the impact on performance of moving a location from a quieter spot to a busy area such as a shopping centre.

- **Public transport access**: this is based on a simple assessment of the availability of bus, tram or train routes to the library.

- **Suitability**: this is a judgement on the size of the library, its layout and zoning and its potential for delivering the full range of Universal Offers.

- **Adaptability:** this is a judgement on the ability to use the building for a range of uses and considers the extent to which spaces can be reconfigured readily (eg by moving wheeled bookshelves to create a temporary event space).

- **Condition**: as the most recent library condition surveys are now out of date, this judgement is based on a visual inspection of the exterior and interiors and interior design.

2.25   Rather trying to generate a numerical score for these judgements, we have simply provided a Red, Amber or Green rating and provided a written commentary on key points of interest.

Notes on the commentary on impacts of change

2.26   For each library, we have summarised context about the library, its catchment area and need in the area. We also indicate the nearest libraries and the schools that might use them as well as the level of community use and involvement in the library and the number of volunteers.

2.27   The background to the data used includes:

- **Catchment area and population**: to estimate the geographical catchment area, we have drawn a radius of 1.6km (ie a mile) around each library and then included each Lower- layer Super Output Area (LSOA) whose centre is within that radius. This allows us to use LSOA census data which includes data on deprivation across various datasets. This approach provides a 'best-fit' picture of the people who live

within 1 mile or a 20-minute walk[5]. The term 'Lower-layer Super Output Area' is a "geographical area for census statistics" which "comprises between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons"[6]. In this section we have generally limited references to 'deprivation' to the main "Index of Multiple Deprivation" which takes a range of deprivation factors into account for each LSOA. We have focused our commentary on the top two deciles from the index, ie the 20% most deprived LSOAs in England. 17.7% of LSOAs in Croydon as a whole are in the 20% most deprived LSOAs in the country. For each library, we have shown what percentage of LSOAs in its catchment area are in the 20% most deprived; this provides an indication of levels of deprivation in the area that it serves. The higher the percentage, the greater the deprivation.

- **Alternative provision**: for each library, we have listed other libraries within 2 miles on foot (as calculated using Google Maps), including libraries in other boroughs. In the case of New Addington Library, we have the two nearest both of which are more than two miles away. We have indicated how many schools are within 1km of the library.

- **Community use**: we have included the number of regular community group uses of the library and the number of active volunteers.

2.28   In our written text accompanying each library, we have highlighted where the population in the catchment area differs significantly from the average for Croydon. In this section w**e only highlight differences in the proportions by age, ethnicity, health or disability where these vary significantly from the Croydon average.** Issues of accessibility **to** the building are not mentioned **as all have level access** but we do highlight where there are particular issues such lack of accessible toilets or problems with accessibility *within* the building.

General observations and the status of recommendations

2.29   More data on each library is shown in the library profiles which can be found Appendix G.

2.30   The factors we have used in this assessment are not designed to be final, definitive statements of why a library should change or close as the proposals are still at a formative stage. The process of formal consultation will allow for closer examination of the data and the generation of new insights that should inform any final decision on whether to close libraries or change them and how best to improve them.

2.31   More research would be needed into each library recommended for change or closure before a final decision could be made. Areas for examination include:

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[5] Transport planners assume 1 mile is a 20-minute walk. Of course, this represents an average so many people may walk faster and some slower, eg older people and people with heavy shopping or children's buggies. Road layouts will also affect the speed at which people can walk.
[6] Office for National Statistics: "Census 2021 geographies".

- Feedback and the experience of people using that library and from other people in that area, particularly those who do not use the library and suffer from deprivation.

- The experience of young people who do and do not use a library. Of particular importance will be perceptions of safety and of the 'turf' in and around the library.

- The experience of people who do not have access to a car and/or have mobility challenges, especially in relation to public transport and reasonable walking distances (eg a half mile walk up a steep hill will be different to a half mile on the level).

- The experience of other disadvantaged groups and people with protected characteristics. This will not just examine mitigations of impacts of change but the type of change needed to provide a good service to groups with protected characteristics.

- The nature and type of alternative library provision and outreach needed in a particular locality, taking the specific needs of any minority communities into account.

- The appetite and capacity of community organisations to get more closely involved in a library building or the library service.

2.32 The recommendations for closing, changing or retaining a library are based on the commitment that savings from closures will be reinvested in improving the service and that a package of options for improving the service will be implemented.

2.33 This means that a recommendation to retain a library should *not* be read as a recommendation to keep it as it is. Instead, it represents an indication that a retained or changed library would be capable of delivering the outcomes required if it is invested in, either through longer staffed opening hours, more partnership delivery, refurbishment and/or a livelier service offer.

2.34 During the process of consultation, we will have the chance to explore the options with the people who live, work and study in Croydon and to improve the data and assumptions lying behind these assessments before any final decisions are made by the Council.

3. Review of all thirteen libraries

About this section

3.1　In this section we assess each of the libraries using the criteria outlined in the previous sections, before setting out our recommendations and rationale.

Review of Ashburton Library

3.2　Ashburton library is one of the larger libraries and occupies part of the Oasis Academy building. This is a modern building covered by a PFI contract which provides for maintenance within the annual budget. Its interior is functional but dull, not fitting that of a cultural institution.

3.3　It is one of the best-performing libraries. Although it has the second longest opening hours and budget cost, its unit costs (ie cost per visitor) are close to the average. Although its location is not ideal, it is a prominent building with good bus links.

Table E6: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank
Opening hours (pw)	32	2nd
Library visits (pa)	38,593	3rd
Library issues	45,619	3rd
Event attendances	2,997	2nd
PC hours in use	3,451	1st
Budget (£)	323,732	2nd
Cost per visitor (£)	8	5th=
Internal area (m²)	650	

Location	Rating
Visibility	🟩
Footfall	🟧
Public transport access	🟩
Building	
Suitability	🟩
Adaptability	🟩
Condition	🟩

3.4　The library performs well and is serving an area which includes LSOAs within the 20% most deprived in the country.

Table E7: impacts of change and recommendation

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	53,738
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	12.5%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Shirley (1.2) South Norwood (1.5) Central (2.0)
	Schools within 1km	4
Community use	Existing community group uses	None
	Number of volunteers	4

Recommendations	• **Retain Ashburton Library Service.** • **Upgrade the interior design of the library.**
Rationale	• **This is a high-performing library with unit costs close to the average.** • **It serves a catchment area with some of the highest needs in the country.** • **The building is practical and in good condition but the interiors are dull and need upgrading.**

Review of Bradmore Green Library

3.5 Bradmore Green Library is a small branch library directly behind a primary school. It is not in a prominent location, being on a side residential road and so does not benefit from significant footfall apart from the adjacent primary school. The building is cramped, difficult to adapt given its unusual shape and does not allow for a full range of library services.

3.6 The library is only open two days a week and so overall performance is comparatively low. However, its visits per hour are in the top third of the network and given its lower running costs, its cost per visit is second lowest. Due to its small size and inflexibility it does not lend itself to events and PC usage is much lower than any other library.

Table E8: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank		Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	16	9th=		Visibility	🟥
Library visits (pa)	17,370	7th		Footfall	🟥
Library issues	14,698	10th		Public transport access	🟧
Event attendances	574	13th		**Building**	
PC hours in use	178	13th		Suitability	🟥
Budget (£)	83,273	13th		Adaptability	🟥
Cost per visitor (£)	5	11th=		Condition	🟧
Internal area (m²)	180				

3.7 This is Croydon's smallest neighbourhood library serving a relatively small population in an area of low population density. The catchment area includes one LSOA which is in the 20% most deprived nationally and has a slightly higher proportion of residents over 65 than the Croydon average. The number of current active users registered at the library is the lowest, suggesting it has a small but loyal user base.

3.8 There is a fair degree of overlap with the catchment area for Coulsdon Library whose users appear to extend well into Bradmore Green Library's catchment area. Bus routes to Coulsdon are within a short walk from the vicinity of Bradmore Green Library. In a previous round of consultation, concerns were expressed about difficulties in travelling to Coulsdon. This will need to be explored further if this option is progressed.

3.9 There are few volunteers and it is not used regularly by community groups, but there are good relations with the next door school.

Table E9: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	Population served	18,306
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	10%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Coulsdon (1.2)

	Schools within 1km	3
Community use	Existing community group uses	None
	Number of volunteers	4
Recommendations	• **Consider Bradmore Green Library building for closure.** • **Consider targeted outreach work on the Tollers Estate.** • **Explore opportunities to deliver a library link service offer for the community impacted by closure.**	
Rationale	• **The overall performance of the library is comparatively poor, although its unit costs are low.** • **The population in the catchment area is relatively small and there is some overlap with Coulsdon Library's catchment area.** • **There is a pocket of deprivation in the catchment area which should be targeted for library outreach.** • **The building is small and is unsuitable for the full range of the library service offer.** • **Coulsdon Library already serves residents in Bradmore Green Library's catchment area but would require a short bus journey for those not using a car.**	

Review of Broad Green Library

3.10 Broad Green Library is the second smallest library in the library network. It is a prominent, single storey building that is situated on a side road, near a day care nursery, school and day care centre. There are no shopping parades in the vicinity of the library and no bus routes on the road and so visibility and access are limited.

3.11 Although the interiors are cluttered and unattractive, the building's open plan design is practical, albeit with limited ability to zone activities and the static shelving makes it difficult to adapt it for events and activities.

3.12 The library is only open two days a week which limits its overall comparative performance which is generally poor with the second lowest number of visits which also leads to unit costs which are fairly high given its smaller budget. Fewer attend events, due to the constraints of opening hours, size and adaptability.

Table E10: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank		Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	16	9th=		Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	11,315	12th		Footfall	
Library issues	8,113	13th		Public transport access	
Event attendances	688	12th		**Building**	
PC hours in use	838	10th		Suitability	
Budget (£)	93,272	12th		Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	8	5th=		Condition	
Internal area (m²)	236				

3.13 As the library is located in an area of high population density its physical catchment area suggests it serves a large population. Although its overall performance is comparatively low, the current active user numbers registered at Broad Green suggest a regular following who live close by. The catchment areas is predominantly Asian, Black, Mixed and Other and the impact would need to be identified.

3.14 The library is situated close to areas of high deprivation with several LSOAs in the most deprived decile although these are also largely in the geographic catchment areas of Thornton Heath and Central libraries. This library is close to a Tamil community who make use of the library and would be impacted if the library closed and it is used by a Tamil community group. Although the road that the library is on has no bus routes, there are several bus stops 400m to 500m from the library that residents could use to reach alternative provision if it closed.

Table E11: impacts of change and recommendation

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	63,533

	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	24.3%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Thornton Heath (1.2) Central (1.4) Pollards Hill (1.5) Norbury (1.7)
	Schools within 1km	2
Community use	Existing community group uses	4
	Number of volunteers	1
Recommendations	• **Consider Broad Green Library building for closure.** • **Research the barriers to library use in local areas of high deprivation for active outreach.** • **Assess the impact on the different ethnic groups in the catchment area and of the wider equalities impact.** • **Explore opportunities to deliver a library link service offer for the community impacted by closure.**	
Rationale	• **The overall performance of the library is comparatively low, reflecting its opening hours and location.** • **The catchment area for the library is an area which includes LSOAs with high deprivation.** • **Its catchment area is largely within the catchment areas of Central and Thornton Heath libraries.** • **The library serves a local Tamil community and community group and they would be impacted by closure.** • **Although the library itself is on a road with poor public transport access, the catchment area appears well-served by bus routes.** • **If the option of closure is considered, consultation should include particular engagement with the local Tamil community.** • **Research is also required into the pockets of population outside the catchment areas of Central and Thornton Heath libraries.** • **Research is also required into the needs of local people and the potential for targeted library outreach.** • **The library building is very poorly located which might explain its recent poor performance (even before opening hours were reduced).** • **The open plan design is flexible but does not lend itself to the full range of library services.**	

Review of Central Library

3.15   Central Library is the largest library in the network. It is located near to the large shopping centre although it is not located close to highest areas of town centre footfall. The library is part of the Croydon Clocktower complex but is invisible until one is inside the entrance to the Clocktower. The interiors are generally functional and unattractive and dominated by the sound of the escalators that serve its three floors. Apart from the ground floor children's library, there is no further physical demarcation in the open plan design and so no separate training rooms or event spaces. Arts Council England funding will be spent on creating an event space in 2024.

3.16   The library's performance is the highest in the network. Its budget is also the highest, but high usage means that its unit cost per visit is the lowest. However, its performance is comparatively poor and has not recovered well since the pandemic despite its opening hours being reduced only from 6 to 5 days a week. In the period April to September 2023 visitor numbers were still just 38% of the number for the same period in 2019. A wide range of activities and events are laid on, albeit their frequency is low for a busy central library.

Table E12: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank		Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	40	1st		Visibility	🟥
Library visits (pa)	316,046	1st		Footfall	🟧
Library issues	153,099	1st		Public transport access	🟩
Event attendances	10,390	1st		Building	
PC hours in use	25,177	1st		Suitability	🟧
Budget (£)	1,129,329	1st		Adaptability	🟧
Cost per visitor (£)	3	13th		Condition	🟧
Internal area (m²)	6633 (3 floors)				

3.17   Central Library accounts for half of all visits and a third of all physical issues and its location in the centre of Croydon makes it fairly easy to reach on public transport from most parts of the borough for those determined to use it. Its performance may be improved if resources can be found to return it to 6 day a week opening (or increase it to 7 days a week).

3.18   Given its importance to the library service for the public, closure cannot be considered and its catchment area includes areas of high deprivation. However, its problems need to be addressed. The principal problems are the building and its location. The continuing work to regenerate Croydon's town centre and shopping centre may throw up the opportunity to relocate the library to the busy heart of Croydon's shopping centre.

Table E13: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	71,783
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	22.5%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Broad Green (1.4) Thornton Heath (1.9) Ashburton (2.0)
	Schools within 1km	4
Community use	Existing community group uses	TBC
	Number of volunteers	15
Recommendations	• **Retain Central Library Service.** • **Look for an alternative location in a more suitable building at the heart of the changing shopping district.**	
Rationale	• **The library is the highest performing library in the network with the largest budget.** • **It accounts for half of all visits and hosts a popular progamme of activities that could be expanded.** • **The number of visits remains well under half of pre-pandemic levels and is only slowly recovering.** • **If resources can be found to reintroduce six day opening or move to seven day opening, this would make better use of this large asset.** • **Its catchment area includes a large population and LSOAs with high levels of deprivation.** • **The library is invisible from the street and the building is poorly designed and unsuitable for the full range of library activities.** • **Opportunities should be sought for moving the library to a better location and more suitable building as part of the regeneration of Croydon's shopping district.**	

Review of Coulsdon Library

3.19 Coulsdon Library is well-located in a prominent building albeit with poor signage within Coulsdon's extended shopping district. For a small library, the space is adequate for core services but does not lend itself to a full range of library events and activities, due to its layout. The interior is drab, but a redesign of the interior could help the library to provide a broader service. A community garden at the rear has been attractively refurbished by a voluntary group, the Hive. There is no direct access from the library interior to the garden but this may be possible with some remodelling.

3.20 Although a relatively small library open three days a week, its comparative performance is fairly good and its unit costs comparatively low.

Table E14: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	24	3rd=	Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	27,315	5th	Footfall	
Library issues	29,505	6th	Public transport access	
Event attendances	1,098	9th	Building	
PC hours in use	857	9th	Suitability	
Budget (£)	176,739	6th	Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	6	9th=	Condition	
Internal area (m²)	337			

3.21 The library's catchment area has a smaller level of population, reflecting the lower density of its housing and includes some areas with higher level of deprivation. The catchment area overlaps with Bradmore Green's catchment area.

3.22 There are few volunteers within the library at present, but the Hive has an active team of volunteers working on the garden and grounds maintenance. There may be a possibility of working with the Hive on extending their involvement in the library.

3.23 As one of the more popular libraries (despite its small size) and one of only two libraries in good locations in the borough, closure would have a serious impact on residents in the south of the borough who are some distance from alternatives.

Table E15: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	24,606
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	0%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Bradmore Green (1.2) Purley (1.7)

	Schools within 1km	2
Community use	Existing community group uses	2
	Number of volunteers	4
Recommendations	• **Retain Coulsdon Library Service.** • **Explore further involvement of the Hive in the library.** • **Explore the remodelling of the library to provide direct access to the community garden.** • **Invest in refurbishing the library's interior.**	
Rationale	• **For a small library, Coulsdon's performance is comparatively good as are its unit costs.** • **The library serves a small population which does not include areas with the highest levels of deprivation.** • **Its catchment area overlaps with Bradmore Green's.** • **If Bradmore Green Library is closed, the nearest library is Purley Library (which has its own limitations).** • **The building's interior needs refurbishment to make it more adaptable and better able to provide a full service.** • **There is an active voluntary group that manages the community garden.**	

Review of New Addington Library

3.24 New Addington Library is located in the New Addington Centre at the end, but just outside the main shopping parade. There is poor signage for the library and the library interior is unattractive, cramped and with functional furnishings. The building is shared with CALAT and the services are discussing moving the library to the ground floor (it is currently spread over two).

3.25 Where once the library was one of the best performing in the network it is now one of the worst with *visits still 83% lower than pre-pandemic levels and PC use 78% down*. The causes of this extreme decline are not yet fully understood but are thought to include closing on Saturday and market day and new provision in the area. **The cost per visitor is now the highest in the network.** The decline in performance needs to be understood but does call the current library into question. While much lower, the usage of PCs and attendance at events is at or close to the median compared with other libraries.

Table E16: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	24	3rd=	Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	12,268	11th	Footfall	
Library issues	7,729	12th	Public transport access	
Event attendances	1,378	7th	**Building**	
PC hours in use	1,452	6th	Suitability	
Budget (£)	149,385	7th	Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	12	1st	Condition	
Internal area (m²)	TBC			

3.26 Although the library is no longer performing well and the population in its catchment area is relatively low, this is an area with high levels of deprivation. It includes LSOAs in the most deprived decile nationally. Residents are some distance from any alternative library provision which is not in easy walking distance for most.

3.27 Given that there are many people in need, but the library is failing to reach many people, a rethink is required. Closure is not a realistic option given the level of need and remoteness of New Addington from other libraries. Instead, change might involve reducing the physical size of the library and/or relocating it alongside active outreach, possibly via local community centres and closer working with partners including CALAT, health and community services.

Table E17: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	23,872

	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	73.3%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Selsdon Library (2.9) West Wickham (3.5)
	Schools within 1km	1
Community use	Existing community group uses	N/A
	Number of volunteers	5
Recommendations	**Retain New Addington Library Service.** **Research the barriers to library use in New Addington and introduce active outreach.** **Explore partnership models of service delivery to improve the offer and attraction for residents.**	
Rationale	**The performance of New Addington Library has fallen drastically compared with pre-pandemic levels and its recovery is much slower than elsewhere in the network.** **The catchment area for the library has a relatively small population, but one that has high levels of deprivation.** **Alternative libraries are some distance from New Addington and closing the service is not recommended.** **The library building is not well-designed or located and some change is needed to make it effective.** **A change in the service could involve collocating a library offer with more services, developing the relationship with CALAT, reducing the physical size of the library and/or relocating it alongside active outreach, possibly via local community centres.** **A different approach would also increase engagement and reach with communities across New Addington and Fieldway**	

Review of Norbury Library

3.28   Norbury Library is one of the larger libraries in an Edwardian building in a prominent location, albeit some distance from the busier shopping parade in Norbury. The library has been recently refurbished and now has attractive interior design. The building does have problems, particularly with its poor level of energy efficiency even after the refurbishment. It is expensive to heat in winter and has had to be closed at times due to excessive heat in the summer.

3.29   There are separate spaces for the Children's library, study and PC use and a first-floor hall that can accommodate 60 users. Open+ was introduced in October 2023, too recently to assess its impact on performance. The building can accommodate the full range of library services and includes the largest hall and potential performance venue in the network.

3.30   Following an extended period of closure for refurbishment, usage is some way from returning to pre-pandemic levels with visits in the period April to August 2023 only 29% of the level for the same period in 2019 (just before closure). The number of visits and issues is close to the median for the network for 2022/23 and levels of event attendance and PC hours in use are higher than most.

3.31   The operating costs for this large building mean that the cost per visitor is among the highest in the network. There is no active marketing of the Hall and so venue hire income is low.

Table E18: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	24	3rd=	Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	17,030	8th	Footfall	
Library issues	27,742	8th	Public transport access	
Event attendances	1,789	4th	**Building**	
PC hours in use	2,484	4th	Suitability	
Budget (£)	187,491	5th	Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	9	3rd=	Condition	
Internal area (m^2)	1192			

3.32   With high levels of housing density, the library's catchment area has a relatively large population which overlaps with that for Broad Green Library. It includes areas with significant levels of deprivation. It also shares a large part of its catchment area with Thornton Heath Library. Its catchment area population is majority Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups and any change will need to take account of any differential impacts.

3.33   It is notable that the nearest library is not a Croydon library but is Merton's Pollards Hill Library which is less than a mile away. Merton Council is also a member of The Library

Consortium which allows residents in both boroughs to use each other's libraries and their stock. Thornton Heath Library is just over 1 mile away and active users over the past year registered at Norbury Library overlap with Thornton Heath Library's distribution of active users.

3.34 The library has recently received significant investment with its refurbishment creating attractive spaces and interior design. This is also one of the few libraries in the network whose layout and size allow it to offer the full range of library service offers.

3.35 However, it appears that the library's location will continue to limit its performance. Its impressive interiors following the substantial investment in the building could reasonably be expected to result in a surge in demand. However, its visits per hour have only been rising gradually since the pandemic and have been second bottom in the network since the April 2022. Thornton Heath Library's visits per hour (31 per hour) have been twice the level of Norbury Library's (15 per hour) for the period April to September 2023. The number of visits in this financial year are only just over half of that achieved by Coulsdon Library, for example, despite being in a building three times the size.

3.36 However, it continues to meet evident need, performing comparatively well for event attendances and PC hours in use, for which it is in the top third across the network and it serves a catchment area that includes areas with high levels of deprivation. It is recommended that the library be scaled back considerably in size with provision located in a smaller section of the building or elsewhere in Norbury, closer to the shops.

3.37 The building is well supported by local community organisations and there may be the opportunity for collaboration, community management or a community asset transfer, although the size of the building and its energy performance will make its long-term viability as a community asset challenging.

Table E19: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	40,914
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	12.5%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Pollards Hill (0.8) Thornton Heath (1.2) Broad Green (1.7) Streatham (1.9)
	Schools within 1km	1
Community use	Existing community group uses	5
	Number of volunteers	3
Recommendations	• **Retain the Norbury Library Service.** • **Review the operating model for the building including options to license space for hire or tenancy to generate income and footfall.** • **Explore with community organisations their interest in the building and/or community management of the library spaces.**	

	• **Research the barriers to library use in areas of high deprivation in Norbury for active outreach.** • **Assess the impact on the different ethnic groups in the catchment area and of the wider equalities impact.**
Rationale	• **The performance of the library is comparatively poor given its size and recent investment.** • **The number of visits is 71% down on pre-pandemic levels and its visits per hour are second worst in the network.** • **The library's catchment area includes areas of high need and a majority of Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups, although much of its catchment area is shared with Thornton Heath.** • **The building is large with attractive interiors, but its location is not ideal for maximising library take-up and it has poor energy efficiency.** • **The library building has sufficient space in a good condition to deliver a comprehensive programme across the library Universal Offers** • **The library's catchment area is shared with libraries at Thornton Heath and Pollards Hill.** • **The Library is well-supported by local community organisations with an interest in its future.**

Review of Purley Library

3.38 Purley Library is one of the larger libraries, with a large children's library and a large reference/reading room. Its location is very poor, located on a corner site on a busy road that is isolated from the high street and Tesco by the A23 gyratory. The building requires investment to bring it up to standard, although its garden is well-maintained by volunteers from Recre8: CR8. With investment it would be large enough to accommodate the full range of library services, although the wisdom of such an investment is questionable given its location.

3.39 The overall performance of the library is generally close to the median for the network, including visits per hour which for the current financial year is at the median. Visits per hour are only 6% lower for the period April to September 2023 compared with the same period in 2019. It is one of the larger libraries and so might be expected to perform better, but its location will hold it back.

Table E20: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank		Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	16	9th=		Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	14,485	9th		Footfall	
Library issues	22,754	7th		Public transport access	
Event attendances	1,327	8th		**Building**	
PC hours in use	1,020	8th		Suitability	
Budget (£)	121,080	10th		Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	7	8th=		Condition	
Internal area (m²)	610				

3.40 The population in the catchment area is comparatively small due to the generally low density of housing, but there is an area of high deprivation in Waddon to the north of the library, outside its immediate geographic catchment area, but closer to the Phoenix Centre in Sutton. However, geography and the Phoenix Centre's location make it relatively inconvenient from that part of Waddon. The population has a higher proportion of people who are over 65; higher of people of White ethnicity; and lower of Black ethnicity than the average for Croydon.

3.41 Given that it is only open two days a week, Purley Library's general performance suggests that it is meeting a need, albeit one that could be met from smaller premises and more effectively in a better location, ideally close to the high street. In the meantime, there may be interest from local organisations in sharing the site.

3.42 Closing the library would create a large area within the south of the borough with no library provision (particularly if Sanderstead Library were to close) and would miss the opportunity to take advantage of reaching more people through a better and busier location.

Table E21: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	25,201
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	0%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Phoenix Centre (1.4) Coulsdon (1.7) Sanderstead Library (1.9)
	Schools within 1km	3
Community use	Existing community group uses	3
	Number of volunteers	2
Recommendations	• **Retain the Purley Library Service** • **Seek a better location and building for Purley Library** • **Explore local partnerships to develop the service offer and model**	
Rationale	• **The overall performance of the library is close to or at the median for most performance and cost indicators.** • **After the pandemic and the reduction in open hours, visitor numbers fell drastically and are recovering only slowly.** • **The population in the catchment area is relatively small and less deprived, albeit there is one LSOA in the top 20% most deprived in the country in Waddon beyond the catchment area.** • **Usage figures for PC use suggest there is need for a library in the area.** • **The library building is large enough to house the full range of library services but would require investment.** • **There is little point investing in the current building as it is in a poor location.** • **A smaller library in a better location on the high street would perform better overall and at lower unit cost.**	

Review of Sanderstead Library

3.43   Sanderstead Library is a small but prominent building on a large plot on a busy road. The building is set back from the road and is some distance from shopping districts and other areas of heavy footfall. The small size of the library and its design restrict the range of library services that can be offered.

3.44   The library is open three days a week and its visits and issues are just above the median and the cost per visit below the median. However, attendances at events are below median and PC hours in use are particularly low (representing only 1% of all PC across the network) probably reflecting the relative prosperity of the area. Visits per hour are just below the median.

Table E22: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank		Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	24	3rd=		Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	18,784	6th		Footfall	
Library issues	31,951	5th		Public transport access	
Event attendances	916	10th		**Building**	
PC hours in use	497	12th		Suitability	
Budget (£)	129,033	9th		Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	6	9th		Condition	
Internal area (m²)	260				

3.45   The population in the catchment area for the library is relatively low and the area is among the least deprived in the country. Compared with the average for Croydon, the population has a higher proportion of people who are over 65; higher of people of White ethnicity; and lower of people of Black ethnicity.

3.46   The catchment area of the library is largely covered by the catchment area for Purley and Selsdon libraries. Most parts of Sanderstead Library's catchment area have relatively poor public transport accessibility but, given its overall prosperity, a proportion of residents may drive for supermarket shopping to either Tesco in Purley or Sainsburys next door to Selsdon Library. Indeed, active library users registered at Selsdon Library are distributed across much of Sanderstead's catchment area.

3.47   Given its small size, the relatively low level of need and that many residents are in the catchment areas of two other libraries, it is recommended that Sanderstead Library is considered for closure. Closer analysis is required of the transport options for users of Sanderstead Library.

3.48   The library is well-supported by Friends of Sanderstead Library and Sanderstead Residents Association who may be interested in the library building as there are few other public facilities in its vicinity.

Table E23: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	20,608
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	0%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Selsdon Library (1.3) Purley Library (1.9)
	Schools within 1km	1
Community use	Existing community group uses	2
	Number of volunteers	5
Recommendations	• **Consider Sanderstead Library building for closure.** • **Explore the level of community interest in retaining the building.** • **Explore the particular impacts on people with mobility issues that might prevent them making use of another library.** • **Explore options for Library Link provision to serve the community impacted by closure.**	
Rationale	• **The library's opening hours, visits and issues are at or just above the median and the cost per visit and visits per hour just below.** • **The population in the catchment area is among the least deprived in the country.** • **The library is a small building in a location that does not benefit from busy footfall.** • **Much of the catchment area for the library is within the catchment area for Purley and Selsdon libraries.** • **Public transport accessibility in the catchment area is poor, but residents are more likely to be already using cars to visit local supermarkets.** • **The library is well-supported by the local community and there may be interest in keeping the building in use.**	

Review of Selsdon Library

3.49   Selsdon Library is part of the Sainsburys supermarket site in Selsdon. The entrance to the library is on the same level as the entrance to Sainsburys and benefits from its busy footfall. The interiors are very attractively designed with designated areas for various library uses, including a separate children's library area. No further work is required to make it a successful library providing a full library service, with one important exception: signage. The library is invisible from outside and has no shop signage or directional signage. Even when inside the Sainsburys main entrance, the library is 'hidden' at the back of a corridor.

3.50   The library is open for three days a week with staff present and three days a week with Open+ access although the visitor numbers on Open+ days are very low, representing only 4% of visits in the period since Open+ was launched.

3.51   The library's performance for visits and issues is the best of all libraries apart from Central Library, despite it only being open for three days a week (with library staff present). Usage figures are good (compared with the rest of the network) and although the budget is third highest, its popularity means its cost per visit is equal second lowest.

TableE24: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank		Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	24	3rd=		Visibility	🟥
Library visits (pa)	48,695	2nd		Footfall	🟩
Library issues	63,566	2nd		Public transport access	🟩
Event attendances	2,524	3rd		**Building**	
PC hours in use	1,976	5th		Suitability	🟩
Budget (£)	276,691	3rd		Adaptability	🟩
Cost per visitor (£)	5	11th=		Condition	🟩
Internal area (m^2)	535				

3.52   The geographic catchment area for the library is relatively small and is mostly less deprived. Compared with the average for Croydon, the population has a higher proportion of people who are over 65; higher of people of White ethnicity; and lower of people of Black ethnicity.

3.53   Selsdon Library is the best located and designed of the borough's library network. As a result it performs well and should be retained. With longer staffed opening hours and even Sunday opening, it has the capacity to play a more active role in the south of the borough, hosting more events and activities.

Table E25: impact assessment of closure

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	22,603
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	0%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Sanderstead (1.3)
	Schools within 1km	2
Community use	Existing community group uses	
	Number of volunteers	TBC
Recommendations	• **Retain Selsdon Library Service.** • **Extend its staffed opening hours so that it can play a more active part in the cultural and community life in the south of the borough.** • **Introduce improved signage and market its presence, particularly to users of Sanderstead Library.**	
Rationale	• **Performance is high and unit costs low.** • **The library serves a small population which does not include areas with the highest levels of deprivation.** • **The library has the capacity and location to provide a suitable alternative for many users of Sanderstead Library.** • **The building is well-located and well-designed and can host the full range of library offers.** • **With longer staff opening hours, it could be a venue for more library activities and cultural events.** • **It needs much better signage.**	

Review of Shirley Library

3.54 Shirley Library is a small library on a corner site slightly outside main area of footfall of the local shopping parade. Signage is poor and the building is slightly hidden by mature trees. The building and interiors require investment, but it is too small to cater for larger events and activities.

3.55 It is now open two days a week and has the fewest visits and third lowest level of book issues. Before the pandemic and the reduction in opening hours, it had the lowest number of visits and of visits per hour. Visits per hour are now slightly higher for the two days a week that it is open, but it is still third lowest (for the period April to September 2023). It has the third highest cost per visit.

Table E26: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	16	9th=	Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	11,006	13th	Footfall	
Library issues	12,371	11th	Public transport access	
Event attendances	808	11th	**Building**	
PC hours in use	723	11th	Suitability	
Budget (£)	109,346	11th	Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	9	3rd=	Condition	
Internal area (m^2)	279			

3.56 The population in the geographic catchment area is relatively low but includes some LSOAs in the 20% most deprived in the country. Compared with the average for Croydon, the population has a higher proportion of people who are over 65; higher of people of White ethnicity.

3.57 The library shares some of its geographic catchment area with Ashburton Library. The east of Shirley Library's catchment area is also close to West Wickham Library (currently undergoing refurbishment) in Bromley. Bromley Council is not a member of The Libraries Consortium, and some arrangement would be required with Bromley Council if residents were to be encouraged to use West Wickham library if Shirley Library were to close. It is likely that West Wickham is used for shopping by many residents in Shirley, but this requires further research.

3.58 Given the older population in the catchment area and the areas of deprivation, further analysis is required of the take-up of the library service and the impact of any closure, particularly given public transport access. Shirley Library is a small library which requires investment and performs poorly. It is recommended for closure, subject to sufficient mitigation being in place. Library outreach work to the most deprived parts of the community would be needed.

Table E27: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	25,893
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	12.5%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries	Ashburton Library (1.2) West Wickham (1.4)
	Schools within 1km	4
Community use	Existing community group uses	0
	Number of volunteers	5
Recommendations	• **Consider Shirley Library building for closure.** • **Consult Bromley Council over potential arrangements for Croydon residents to use West Wickham Library.** • **Explore the particular needs of residents in the most deprived LSOAs.** • **Explore potential mitigations for the older community in the catchment area.** • **Explore opportunities to deliver a library link service offer for the community impacted by closure.**	
Rationale	• **Shirley Library has historically performed poorly and continues to do so.** • **The catchment area includes areas of deprivation that need to be targeted for library outreach work.** • **There are two libraries within one and a half miles of the Shirley Library site.** • **Public transport access to those two libraries needs further examination.** • **The building is small and requires investment but has limited space for the fully range of library services.**	

Review of South Norwood Library

3.59   South Norwood Library is in a prominent position with a visible sign on a busy road. The library is close to South Norwood's shopping parade but is outside the area with significant footfall. There are bus routes and a train station nearby. The building is one of the larger of the small libraries but is on five floors reached by stairs and with lift access. The building has numerous problems, including management and oversight (including safeguarding for children) over five levels, energy performance, safe exits for people with disabilities. The lift has not been working and will take some months to repair due to procurement and supply timelines.

3.60   South Norwood Library has for many years been one of the poorer performing libraries in the network for visits and issues, even before the reduction in hours. Its visits per hour put it in tenth place for the period from April to September 2023 and 25% lower than for the same period in 2019. As a result, its unit costs are high with the cost per visitor being second highest. As one of the larger of the small libraries in the network, it is under-used.

Table E28: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	16	9th=	Visibility	🟩
Library visits (pa)	12,582	10th	Footfall	🟧
Library issues	19,359	9th	Public transport access	🟩
Event attendances	1,483	5th	**Building**	
PC hours in use	1,386	7th	Suitability	🟥
Budget (£)	137,396	8th	Adaptability	🟥
Cost per visitor (£)	10	2nd	Condition	🟧
Internal area (m²)	365			

3.61   The library has a geographic catchment area that has a large population which includes areas in the most deprived 20% in the country. The area also includes areas in the 10% most deprived in relation to crime. The population is slightly younger than the Croydon average and has a higher Black and lower White population compared to the average for Croydon. The population also includes areas where deprivation affecting children is high.

3.62   Its catchment area overlaps those of Thornton Heath, Ashburton and Upper Norwood libraries, with the exception of one area which also has high levels of deprivation. There are bus routes from South Norwood to Ashburton and Upper Norwood libraries, but the connections to Thornton Heath Library are not as straightforward.

3.63   This is an area of high need and the level of PC hours (at the median) suggests there is demand for the service, including for events and activities for which attendance is above the median and had been comparatively high before the reduction in hours. Given the need, PC hours should be much higher.

3.64 However, that demand may not be best met from the library building in its current configuration. The building requires significant investment (and with escalating costs) and it is doubtful that the cost would deliver the same return in performance as investments across the network. Its five-level design is impractical for a library and its location does not benefit from the footfall that a position in the shopping district would provide. There is an opportunity to consider a wider site redevelopment with the adjoining Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Youth Centre to create a larger, more flexible community facility to increase the attraction and extend the service offer through partnership with other services.

3.65 The library is well-supported by a Friends group and the Brutalist Library Group. Both groups are interested in seeing the building retained and refurbished and have ideas for its improvement. Further work could be done to engage these groups and other partners with the development of plans for the site works and the operating model for the complex. Voluntary and community organisations can access funding streams for capital that councils cannot, providing the lease terms satisfy eligibility requirements. However, this is a significant asset to maintain and all parties would need to be clear about its sustainability. Further opportunities to collocate Family Hub and adult education services should also be explored to develop a more attractive overall offer at the site.

3.66 While this is explored (and during any eventual refurbishment), alternative locations could be considered for a scaled down library offering. The proposed new location for the library on Station Road is no longer available and so alternative sites would be needed. Any savings from closures elsewhere in the network could be focused on library outreach into deprived communities.

Table E29: impacts of change and recommendations

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	60,280
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	22.9%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries	Thornton Heath (1.4) Ashburton (1.5) Penge (1.7) Upper Norwood (1.8)
	Schools within 1km	6
Community use	Existing community group uses	2
	Number of volunteers	2
Recommendations	• **Retain South Norwood Library Service.** • **Explore opportunities to develop plans for an improved community facility jointly with the Samuel Coleridge Taylor youth centre.** • **Engage with community and voluntary groups to develop a viable model for the site development and operation.**	
Rationale	• **The library's performance is poor overall, with low visits per hour and high unit costs.**	

	The catchment area includes a high population and with areas within the most deprived in the country, including deprivation particularly affecting children and high deprivation related to crime. **The current library building requires significant investment, is impractical as a library and is not in an ideal location.** **The needs in the area are not being met from the current library building which is under-used** **There are community groups passionate about the library and the building who may have an interest in developing the building and becoming more involved**

Review of Thornton Heath Library

3.67   Thornton Heath Library is the third largest in the network. It is a prominent building with very obvious signage on a busy road, albeit some distance from Thornton Heath's shopping district. It has two floors, with a separate children's library area, PC room, space for study and meetings on the upper ground floor and on the lower ground floor there is an IT training room and meeting rooms, which includes a larger room used for activities which opens out on to a community garden. The building was substantially refurbished in 2010 and has attractive interiors although now needs redecoration and minor refurbishments. The main library area has fixed shelving which needs to be replaced to allow greater flexibility, eg for events.

3.68   The library was one of the higher performing libraries in the network in terms of visits, issues and PC hours in use and continues to perform well in comparison with the rest of the network, although its visitor numbers are half the pre-pandemic level for the period April to September 2023. It is, however, third for visits per hour in the same period. Occupying a large building, its cost per visit is at the median. Although its location is not ideal to maximise visits, its size allows it to provide the full range of library services.

Table E30: performance and viability data

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	24	3rd=	Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	28,651	4th	Footfall	
Library issues	32,064	4th	Public transport access	
Event attendances	1,446	6th	**Building**	
PC hours in use	3,145	2nd	Suitability	
Budget (£)	254,162	5th=	Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	8	5th=	Condition	
Internal area (m²)	768			

3.69   The library is an area of high housing density and so its geographic catchment area contains the largest population of the thirteen libraries. However, its catchment area overlaps significantly with four other libraries. The catchment area contains a number of areas in the 20% most deprived LSOAs in the country. It has a slightly younger population and a higher proportion of people of Asian and Black ethnic origin (23.5% compared with the Croydon average of 17.5% and 33.9% compared with an average of 22.6% respectively).

3.70   It is recommended that the library is retained (with some minor refurbishment) and, with longer opening hours, considered for venue hire. Even though it performs better than most, it is still underused and could be the focus of more active promotion and programming and other services, such as training. Its size means that it could accommodate more users from the catchment areas of libraries recommended for closure or scaling back.

3.71   There is a community garden project that manages a sizeable vegetable plot at the rear of the library, but volunteer numbers for the library itself are very low given the size of the library and population in the catchment area.

Table E31: impact assessment of closure

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	LSOA population within 1.6km	85,587
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	24%
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries	Norbury (1.2) Broad Green (1.2) South Norwood (1.4) Pollards Hill (1.5) Central (1.9)
	Schools within 1km	3
Community use	Existing community group uses	1
	Number of volunteers	4
Recommendations	• **Retain Thornton Health Library Service.** • **Invest in minor refurbishment.** • **Target library outreach from this facility and into the wider community, focusing on the most deprived.**	
Rationale	• **The library performs comparatively well, achieving the fourth highest number of visits and issues.** • **Its catchment area contains areas of high deprivation.** • **The library has been recently refurbished and has attractive interiors.** • **The library is large enough to offer a full range of library services, and with some minor refurbishment could be a good venue for the community.** • **The library has enough capacity to cater for users of other libraries in the area that might be closed or scaled back.**	

4. Summary of recommendations for change

Recommendations and the need for investment

4.1   The recommendations set out in this appendix are designed to improve the overall service and the four proposed closures are designed to release resources to invest in increasing the opening hours in the remaining libraries and to fund initiatives such as the introduction of targeted outreach for those most in need in the borough. Those improvements are explored further in Appendix B.

4.2   It is envisaged that the libraries recommended for retention are also subject to a range of improvements, including refurbishments, improved interior design and better signage. Further remodelling is recommended for three library services (New Addington, Purley and South Norwood) where more significant change is needed to deliver the outcomes for the service improvement.

4.3   In some cases, it is recommended that opportunities should be sought for moving the library service to a better location and building. This may not be for immediate implementation but would take place over time as regeneration schemes develop that would allow change to be achieved in a cost-effective way. Any such changes to a building of this would need to be subject to a clear business case and further consultation.

Table E32: recommendations for libraries to be retained

Library	Recommendations
Ashburton	• Retain Ashburton Library Service. • Upgrade the interior design of the library.
Central	• Retain Central Library Service. • Look for an alternative location in a more suitable building at the heart of the changing shopping district.
Coulsdon	• Retain Coulsdon Library Service. • Explore further involvement of the Hive in the library. • Explore the remodelling of the library to provide direct access to the community garden. • Invest in refurbishing the library's interior.
New Addington	• Retain New Addington Library Service. • Research the barriers to library use in New Addington and introduce active outreach. • Explore partnership models of service delivery to improve the offer and attraction for residents.
Norbury	• Retain the Norbury Library Service. • Review the operating model for the building including options to license space for hire or tenancy to generate income and footfall. • Explore with community organisations their interest in the building and/or community management of the library spaces • Research the barriers to library use in areas of high deprivation in Norbury for active outreach. • Assess the impact on the different ethnic groups in the catchment area and of the wider equalities impact.
Purley	• Retain the Purley Library Service. • Seek a better location and building for Purley Library. • Explore partnership models of service delivery to improve the offer and attraction for residents
Selsdon	• Retain Selsdon Library Service. • Extend its staffed opening hours so that it can play a more active part in the cultural and community life in the south of the borough. • Introduce improved signage and market its presence, particularly to users of Sanderstead Library.
South Norwood	• Retain South Norwood Library Service. • Explore opportunities to develop plans for an improved community facility jointly with the Samuel Coleridge Taylor youth centre. • Engage with community and voluntary groups and other services to develop a viable model for the site development and operation.
Thorton Heath	• Retain Thornton Health Library Service. • Invest in minor refurbishment. • Target library outreach from this facility and into the wider community, focusing on the most deprived.

Table E32: recommendations for libraries to be retained

4.4   It is recommended that four libraries are considered for closures, subject to extensive public consultation as described in Appendix A. In each case further work is required to identify the impacts of closures and any mitigating measures that can be put in place.

Table E33: recommendations for libraries to be considered for closure

Library	Recommendations
Bradmore Green	• Consider Bradmore Green Library building for closure. • Consider targeted outreach work on the Tollers Estate. • Explore opportunities to deliver a library link service offer for the community impacted by closure.
Broad Green	• Consider Broad Green Library building for closure. • Research the barriers to library use in local areas of high deprivation for active outreach. • Assess the impact on the different ethnic groups in the catchment area and of the wider equalities impact. • Explore opportunities to deliver a library link service offer for the community impacted by closure.
Sanderstead	• Consider Sanderstead Library building for closure. • Explore the level of community interest in retaining the building. • Explore the particular impacts on people with mobility issues that might prevent them making use of another library. • Explore options for Library Link provision to serve the community impacted by closure.
Shirley	• Consider Shirley Library building for closure. • Consult Bromley Council over potential arrangements for Croydon residents to use West Wickham Library. • Explore the particular needs of residents in the most deprived LSOAs. • Explore potential mitigations for the older community in the catchment area. • Explore opportunities to deliver a library link service offer for the community impacted by closure.