

# Sandwell

Metropolitan Borough Council

## Land and Asset Management Committee

Thursday 7 March, 2019 at 5.15 pm  
in Committee Room 1 at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

### Agenda

(Open to Public and Press)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Declarations of interest in matters to be discussed.
3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2019.

### Key Decision

4. The Future Use of Blackheath Library: Partnership Working with Black Country Housing Group.

**J Britton**  
**Chief Executive**

Sandwell Council House  
Freeth Street  
Oldbury  
West Midlands

**Distribution:**

Councillors Gavan (Chair), Bawa, Dhallu, Edis, Eling, L Giles, Moore, and Preece.

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**Land and Asset Management  
Committee**

**24<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 at 5.15 pm  
in Committee Room 1, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Gavan (Chair);  
Councillors Dhallu, L Giles, Moore and Preece.

**Apologies:** Councillors Eling and Edis.

1/19 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November, 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

2/19 **Appropriation of Various Properties to the Housing Revenue Account (Key Decision Ref. No. SMBC07/01/2019)**

The Committee was asked to consider the appropriation of seven properties to the Housing and Communities Directorate for utilisation as housing stock.

The Committee noted the circumstances around each of the properties.

5 Dagger Lane, West Bromwich was a house previously used to provide a service tenancy to Parks and Countryside. It was proposed to refurbish the house and use it for social housing accommodation.

A former Government building on Greenwood Avenue, Oldbury had been used by the Council as office accommodation to support the network of children's centres. It was proposed to refurbish the building and convert it into four temporary accommodation units.

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25 Woodland Drive, Smethwick had previously been leased to Sandwell Adventure Play Association for use as a children's play centre. It was proposed to return the property to housing stock and explore the possibility of building another property on the site.

Harry Mitchell Lodge, Smethwick had previously been occupied under a service tenancy and it was now proposed to modernise the property and return it to housing stock.

Heath Lane Cemetery Lodge, West Bromwich had until recently been occupied under a service tenancy. It was proposed to modernise the property for use as housing stock.

57 Edgbaston Road, Smethwick had been used to provide emergency accommodation for the homeless, however it no longer met modern accommodation standards. Proposals had been drawn up to convert the property into five self-contained flats.

Riddins Mound Training and Enterprise Centre, comprised 28 individual office units with a play centre, previously operated by Sandwell Adventure Play Association (SAPA) on the ground floor and five garage units adjacent. The SAPA play facility had now closed and in its current state the building was not viable to market. It was therefore proposed to convert the property into a minimum of 22 flats to provide temporary accommodation, and two bungalows for social rent on the site of the adjacent garages.

The proposals, if approved, would increase the Council's housing stock by 33 units.

Noting the desirable location of some of the properties, members discussed whether selling the properties on the open market would generate larger receipts for the Council. It was also noted that, if returned to housing stock, any future tenant would be eligible to purchase the properties under Right to Buy legislation.

The Committee requested a further report assessing the alternative options for 5 Dagger Lane, 25 Woodland Drive, Harry Mitchell Lodge and the Heath Lane Cemetery Lodge, including sale on the open market, to ascertain the most financially viable option for the Council.

**Resolved**

- (1) that a further report be submitted detailing the alternative options for 5 Dagger Lane, 25 Woodland Drive, Harry Mitchell Lodge and the Heath Lane Cemetery Lodge, including sale on the open market, to ascertain the most financially viable option for the Council;

**that the Cabinet be recommended to:-**

- (2) declare the following properties surplus to the requirements of the Council service areas identified:-
  - (a) premises at Greenwood Avenue, Oldbury, B68 8JE, shown on site plan SAM/20700/006 (Appendix 1), surplus to the requirements of Children's Strategic Commissioning;
  - (b) 57 Edgbaston Road, Smethwick, B66 4LG, shown on site plan SAM/16120/002 (Appendix 2), surplus to the requirements of Housing and Communities;
  - (c) Riddins Mound Training and Enterprise Centre, former Sandwell Adventure Playground Association (SAPA) Play Centre and associated garage block, Applewood Grove, Cradley Heath B64 6EW, shown on plan SAM/01605/044 (Appendix 3) surplus to the requirements of Property Services;
- (3) subject to (2) (above), authorise the Director – Regeneration and Growth to appropriate the land and premises shown for identification purposes at Appendices 1, 2 and 3 from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account;
- (4) subject to (2) and (3) (above), authorise the Director – Housing and Communities to manage and let the premises referred to in (2) (a), (b) and (c) (above) as part of the Council's housing stock;

(5) subject to (2), (3) and (4) (above), authorise the Executive Director – Resources to adjust the accounts accordingly to reflect the transfer of the properties referred to from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account.

3/19

**Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**Resolved** that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the proceedings to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

4/19

**Land off St Paul's Road and Chatwin Street, Smethwick (Key Decision Ref. No. SMBC06/01/2019)**

The Committee considered a proposal to dispose of the freehold interest in the site off St Paul's Road and Chatwin Street, Smethwick, shown on plan no SAM/45760/007 (Appendix 4), for development with health care facilities and, if appropriate, an element of residential use.

At its meeting on 21 August 2013 the former Asset Management and Land Disposal Cabinet Committee had given approval to dispose of the freehold interest in land off St Pauls Rd/Chatwin St, Smethwick for a health centre subject to terms and conditions being agreed within a period of 12 months. (Minute No. 38/13 refers.) Officers subsequently had discussed terms for disposal but the purchasers were, at that time, not in a position to progress the development and the offer to sell was subsequently withdrawn.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had since confirmed an on-going need for a new surgery in this area. Informal discussions had therefore been held regarding potential development of the Council's land. The CCG's Board had approved the business case for development of a health centre in July 2017.

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In accordance with the Council's Land Disposal Protocol an external agent had been appointed to negotiate the terms of disposal with a view to maximising the capital receipt achievable. Discussions with planning officers had indicated that the site was also suitable for a residential use.

The proposed purchaser had expressed a desire to build the health care facility with an element of residential use and on this basis a sale figure has been agreed, subject to funding and planning approval. It was noted that use of the site for a health facility only would achieve a lesser value.

To ensure that the land was developed with a health care provision it was intended that the sale would proceed by way of a Development Agreement and/or a restriction on use. If planning permission was obtained for anything other than a health care facility with, if appropriate, an element of residential use then the Council would retain the right to rescind the Agreement and retain any deposit paid.

The balance of the purchase monies and transfer of the freehold would take place upon practical completion of the new health centre, which was likely to take up to 24 months from the date that planning consent was issued, if issued.

The Committee welcomed the proposals and the investment in the area.

### **Resolved that the Cabinet be recommend to:-**

- (1) declare the site off St Paul's Road and Chatwin Street, Smethwick, shown on plan no SAM/45760/007 (Appendix 4), surplus to Council requirements;
- (2) subject to (1) (above), and to timescales for exchange of contracts being adhered to, authorise the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to dispose of the freehold interest in the land off St Paul's Road and Chatwin Street, shown on plan SAM/45760/007 (Appendix 4) for development with a health facility and, subject to planning consent, an element of residential use and otherwise on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Growth;

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- (3) subject to (1) and (2) (above), authorise the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into or execute under seal, if necessary, any other related documentation in connection with the disposal of the land referred to in recommendation to the above, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director – Regeneration and Growth;
- (4) authorise the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to dispose of the freehold interest in the site off St Paul’s Road and Chatwin Street, Smethwick, shown on plan no SAM/45760/007 (Appendix 4) on the open market for the best price and otherwise on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director – Regeneration and Growth, in the event that the timescale agreed for the exchange of contracts is not adhered to or if the sale does not for any other reason proceed as outlined in (1) and (2) (above).


(Meeting ended at 5.52 pm)

Contact Officer: Stephnie Hancock  
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## REPORT TO LAND AND ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**07 March 2019**

<b>Subject:</b>	The Future Use of Blackheath Library: Partnership Working with Black Country Housing Group.
<b>Presenting Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Syeda Khatun - Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities.
<b>Director:</b>	Executive Director – Neighbourhoods Dr Alison Knight.
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Forward Plan (28-day notice) Reference:</b>	SMBC10/03/2019
<b>Cabinet Member Approval and Date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2019
<b>Director Approval:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> December 2018
<b>Reason for Urgency:</b>	Does not apply.
<b>Exempt Information Ref:</b>	Does not apply
<b>Ward Councillor (s) Consulted (if applicable):</b>	<p>Rowley Regis Town Lead: Cllr Susan Eaves  Rowley Regis Deputy Town Lead: Cllr Julie Webb  Rowley Regis Cabinet Town Leads: Cllr Ann Shackleton and Cllr Kerrie Carmichael  Rowley Ward: Cllr Barbara Price, Cllr Susan Eaves, Cllr Chris Tranter  Blackheath: Cllr Bob Price, Cllr Kerrie Carmichael, Cllr Danny Millard  Tividale: Cllr Lorraine Ashman, Cllr Maria Crompton, Cllr Sandra Hevican  Cradley Heath and Old Hill: Cllr Ann Shackleton, Cllr Caroline White, Cllr Julie Webb</p>

<b>Scrutiny Consultation Considered?</b>	Scrutiny has not been consulted.
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	<p>Paul Evans Asset Manager Paul_Evans @sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Rebecca Jenkins Service Improvement Rebecca_Jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk</p>

### **DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That, the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods and the Executive Director - Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and the Leader, be authorised to evaluate land valuations, necessary building surveys and a capital appraisal report in connection with proposals for the future use of Blackheath Library as a Local Service Centre for Rowley Regis;
- (2) that, subject to the satisfactory evaluation of land valuations, necessary building surveys and a capital appraisal report by the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods and the Executive Director - Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and the Leader, as referred to in (1) above, the Cabinet be recommended to:-
  - a) acquire the freehold interest in land at 145 High Street, Rowley Regis, B65 OEA (Blackheath Library), as shown on Plan SAM-24200-001 (Appendix 1) from Black Country Housing Group on terms to be agreed by the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer and the Director - Regeneration and Growth;
  - b) declare land at 402 High Street, West Bromwich (the site of former Shaftesbury House), identified on Plan SAM-24140-041 (Appendix 2) surplus to requirements;
  - c) declare the land and premises at Payne Street, Rowley Regis, identified on Plan SAM-37260-003 (Appendix 3) surplus to requirements;
  - d) declare the land at the junction of Meredith Street and Upper High Street, Cradley Heath, identified on Plan SAM-49700-002 (Appendix 4) surplus to requirements;
  - e) declare the land and premises at 106a Birmingham Road, Rowley Regis, identified on Plan SAM-05340-007 (Appendix 5) surplus requirements;
  - f) subject to b, c, d, e (above), authorise the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to dispose of the freehold interest in the land shown in Plans SAM-24140-041 (Appendix 2),

SAM-37260-003 (Appendix 3), SAM-49700-002 (Appendix 4) and SAM-05340-007 (Appendix 5) to Black Country Housing Group on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Growth;

- g) as part of the Transforming Local Services project, authorise the creation of a Local Services Centre at 145 High Street, Blackheath (Blackheath Library);
- h) subject to a and g (above) authorise the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into a lease with Black Country Housing Group for the second floor of 145 High Street, Blackheath (Blackheath Library), on terms and conditions to be agreed by Director - Regeneration and Growth;
- i) subject to a to h (above) authorises the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into a partnership agreement with Black Country Housing Group which will outline the timescale for the purchase of land at 145 High Street, Rowley Regis, B65 OEA (Blackheath Library), as shown on Plan SAM-24200-001 (Appendix 1) and the development of the sites referred to in b, d, d and e (above), shown in Plans SAM-24140-041 (Appendix 2), SAM-37260-003 (Appendix 3), SAM-49700-002 (Appendix 4) and SAM-05340-007 (Appendix 5) surplus requirements;
- j) subject to a, b, c, d, e, f and i (above) authorises the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, to enter into or execute under seal if necessary, any other relevant documentation in relation to the execution of the above recommendations, on terms to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Growth.
- k) note that the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities will maintain oversight of the project;

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek authority to work in partnership with the Black Country Housing Group for the Council to acquire Blackheath Library at 145 High Street, Blackheath, B65 OEA.
- 1.2. The acquisition of the Library will be based on the Council selling four Council owned sites to Black Country Housing Group to at least the agreed value of the Blackheath Library.
- 1.3. The purchase of Blackheath Library would enable the Council to create a thriving Local Service Centre for Rowley Regis residents, involving a single reception/customer access point for residents, offering a range of services including voluntary community services.

## **2. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VISION 2030**

- 2.1. **Ambition 7** - We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.
- The re-development of the sold Council sites by Black Country Housing Group will provide much needed affordable housing units for the Borough.
  - Based on the existing planning statements for the four sites the creation of circa. 88 social housing properties can be expected.
- 2.2. **Ambition 8** - Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their children.
- Once purchased Blackheath Library will become a thriving local services centre for Rowley Regis involving a range of services from different locations. This will allow local residents to easily access a range of services in a welcoming environment.
  - The proposal will support the regeneration of the town by concentrating footfall at Blackheath Library on the High Street, which is likely to be of benefit to local businesses.
  - The proposed residential development of Payne Street and the other parcels of land will also help to improve the way the area looks.
  - The proposal will support the delivery of the Digital Strategy's strategic outcomes: i) Digital Communities supporting social inclusion, ii) Skills confidence and trust, iii) Transformation of Services, and iv) organisation fit for the future.
- 2.3. **Ambition 10** - Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focussed on what really matters in people's lives and communities.
- Subject to Cabinet's decision, we will continue working with local partners from the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) to look at options to share space in the library and provide services and support that residents need and want. This will help to create a whole offer for Rowley Regis across partners.

### **3. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1. Blackheath Library is a three-storey building built in 2011 by Black Country Housing Group with some funding from the Council at the time. The building is owned by Black Country Housing Group (BCHG). The Council has a sixty-year lease (from 2011) of the ground floor at a nominal rent to run the Blackheath Library service.

- 3.2. BCHG has decided to cease activities from the library and sell the building.
- 3.3. The Council has a positive working relationship with BCHG and has been given first option to buy the library.
- 3.4. As part of the Transforming Local Services Project the Council has assessed the options around Blackheath Library and has developed a business case for the purchase of the Library and for the creation of a Local Service Centre for the Rowley Regis area. This will support the delivery of the Digital Strategy and its key transformation themes (digital by default workforce, access to services and digital inclusion); and will use the principles of community-led support in support of our Vision 2030 aspirations.
- 3.5. Under this proposal, Blackheath Library would be a location where residents can come together to: -
- access information, advice and guidance (provided by Council and partner services)
  - access hands on support with digital inclusion, (including increased opportunities and support to access on line services through access to public Wi-Fi, digital skills training and hands on support from staff; as well as signposting and promotion of services available on MySandwell portal) in line with Sandwell's Digital Strategy
  - be signposted to services/groups/classes within the local area
  - access a range of activities that are of interest to people in the local area
  - access face to face support around housing
- 3.6. It will also be a place where: -
- a range of activity takes place run by the VCS
  - customers in need of an adult social care social work assessment can book an appointment and be seen by their worker, and where families accessing Community Operating Group (COG) services can meet their worker.
- 3.7. The proposal is for:
- 3.7.1. The Council to purchase Blackheath Library.
- 3.7.2. The Council to sell 4 parcels of land to Black Country Housing Group.
- 3.7.3. The creation of a thriving local services centre involving: -

- the creation of a shared Council reception/single access point from Blackheath Library to create seamless information, advice and guidance for residents;
  - creating a fully co-located office accommodation environment for Rowley Regis teams (Neighbourhoods staff (including Housing Management, ASC, Welfare Rights), ASC Social Work Team(s), and Children's Trust COG);
  - creation of flexible space to enable customers of Neighbourhoods, Children's and ASC services to be seen privately and book an appointment within the Rowley Regis locality;
  - replacing the current cashier's facility at Payne St, with a card only or cash and card payment machine (as appropriate) at Blackheath Library to support channel shift;
  - bringing more VCS activity into the building, aligned to the services offer.
- 3.8. Staff and services currently located at Payne Street, Blackheath and Harvest Road would move to Blackheath Library (Rowley Regis Local, Rowley Regis COG and 2x Adult Social Care Social Worker teams).
- 3.9. The library's long-term future and sustainability is likely to be impacted by the desire of BCHG to move out of the building and potentially dispose of the building. This creates uncertainty. In addition, the library is experiencing decreased footfall and wants to encourage more people to access the library offer.
- 3.10. Rowley Regis Local is currently located at Payne Street. It is anticipated that over time, footfall to the Rowley Regis Local will reduce in line with the Council's move to more digital access to services. Through bringing the Local and Library into one location and providing a single reception (jointly staffed by Locals and Libraries) it is felt that customers can be better supported and have access to a range of information, advice and guidance. This will also help to ensure the sustainability of Blackheath Library service through increasing footfall to the building.
- 3.11. The proposal involves two Adult Social Care Teams, the Rowley Regis C and Rowley Regis Local teams co-locating within the office environment space at Blackheath Library. This will strengthen their service delivery through fostering closer working arrangements and ensuring that they are equipped to be digital by default to free them to work on what matters most.
- 3.12. As part of the development of proposals for Blackheath Library, discussions have taken place with a small selection of VCS organisations to understand the sector's interest in delivering services from this location. Further discussions will take place to refine what VCS activity will be on

offer at Blackheath Library to supplement existing VCS activity, and the Council and COG offer from the building.

- 3.13. The anticipated benefits of the Blackheath Library project to residents are:-
- Securing c.68 new houses with 100% nomination rights.
  - Ensuring the sustainability of Blackheath Library through increasing footfall.
  - Accessibility of services (Council and partners) improved through their location in a single building, and a single reception and triage team receiving customers.
  - Accessibility of services and digital inclusion improved through an increase of digital support available at Blackheath Library.
  - Services located in a welcoming environment.
  - Access to more voluntary sector activity at Blackheath Library, aligned to the services on offer and the needs of Rowley Regis residents.
  - Increase in footfall to Blackheath High Street supporting local businesses.
- 3.14. The anticipated benefits to the Council are:-
- Improving services to Rowley Regis residents
  - Strengthen working relationships with VCS organisations
  - Providing a long-term solution to the location of Rowley Regis Local, COG and ASC teams; enabling them to benefit from a modern co-located working environment
  - Realising efficiencies through working more closely together and providing a single reception team.
  - Contribute to delivery of Digital Strategy
  - Vacant land being developed in a co-ordinated way
- 3.15. The proposal to acquire the Library will be subject to an independent strategic investment assessment and will be required to achieve the necessary pass rate prior to the decisions being enacted. The Executive Director – Neighbourhoods and the Executive Director - Resources will review the outcomes of the strategic investment assessment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities and the Leader.

#### **4. THE CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1. BCHG has agreed to the principle of the council selling land to BCHG to at least the value of the library building.
- 4.2. An options appraisal has been undertaken by the Transforming Local Services Project Board and the preferred recommendation is to look at co-locating services to Blackheath Library.

- 4.3. BCHG and the Council would benefit from the proposed purchase and associated land swaps as this would secure social (affordable) housing on the land sold in the region of 88 units. The new build will see significant investment in the borough.
- 4.4. The Council would have 100 % nomination rights on first lets and 50% nomination rights on subsequent re-lets. BCHG does not wish to “land bank” the sold land and the land should be developed in a reasonable time.
- 4.5. The four sites identified to sell to Black Country Housing Group are as follows: -
- The site of the existing council offices at Payne Street, Blackheath (site plan SAM-37260-003 attached)
  - The site of the former Shaftesbury House, 402 High Street, West Bromwich (site plan SAM-24140-041 attached)
  - Meredith Street / Upper High Street, Cradley Heath (site plan SAM-49700-002 attached)
  - 106 A Birmingham Road, Rowley Regis (site plan SAM-05340-007 attached)
- 4.6. To assist the Council with the development of the model for Blackheath Library and how VCS activity will be supported, Black Country Housing Group has agreed, following Council acquisition to lease the second floor of the library for a minimum period of three years with an option for a further two years. The lease will be based on market rent/service charge terms.
- 4.7. Due to the complex nature of the overall proposal it is suggested that the Council and Black Country Housing Group sign a partnership agreement which will outline the timescale for the development of the sites and the formal purchase of the library by the Council.
- 4.8. Black Country Housing Group Board discussed the outline proposals at its Board meeting on 24 January 2019. Black Country Housing Group Board is due to approve the sale of Blackheath Library and purchase of the four sites at its Board meeting on 28 March.
- 4.9. Subject to the Cabinet’s approval of the proposals outlined in this report, approval of the capital appraisal, and approval from BCHG Board, work will progress on the partnership agreement with BCHG. It is anticipated that this will take around 6 months to develop and agree. After this, work can commence to prepare Blackheath Library building with the aim of staff and services being transferred by April 2020.



## **5. CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

- 5.1. Public consultation will take place once timescales for the four sites and the move of staff and services to Blackheath Library are available (as per the Partnership Agreement).
- 5.2. As part of the consideration of options for Blackheath Library, engagement has taken place with a small selection of Voluntary Community Services organisations, to explore the sector's interest in and demand for delivering services from the Blackheath Library location. Subject to the approval of the purchase of the Blackheath Library building, further discussions will need to take place to refine the VCS services that will be delivered from Blackheath Library.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1. An alternative option would be not to buy the library. The future of the ground floor library provision is secured by means of the existing lease. Such an approach would, however not allow the council to modernise service provision.
- 6.2. The long-term sustainability of existing neighbourhood services, ASC and COG activities from the current Payne Street offices must be questioned. Space is already at a premium at Payne Street and there is limited potential to modernise services from this location.
- 6.3. Another option would be to lease the rest of the library building from Black Country Housing Group. This would mean the council giving up free hold assets to rent premises, which is against the recently agreed asset management plan. Black Country Housing Group, also want a longer-term solution to the building and would not be keen on a rented option.

## **7. STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The Council and Black Country Housing Group have sought independent valuations of the buildings involved within this proposal. Subject to approval to proceed, these valuations will need to be jointly agreed by the Council and BCHG.
- 7.2. The sale of four buildings referred to in this report is estimated to generate a capital receipt in excess of the purchase price of Blackheath Library.
- 7.3. The review of future costs and income has indicated that this proposal will be at least self financing within current Council resources. The indicative rental streams from external organisations is estimated to meet the on-going operational expenses.

7.4. The financial model is summarised below. Savings are anticipated in years 1 to 3 and from year 4 onwards the project is anticipated to generate a net pressure of £24,700 following the loss of income from the BCHG and the increased cost of building repairs and maintenance.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	105,100	105,100	105,100	140,600
Income	(97,200)	(121,200)	(121,200)	(91,200)
(Surplus) / Deficit	7,900	(16,100)	(16,100)	49,400
Saving in Service Charge from BCHG	(24,700)	(24,700)	(24,700)	(24,700)
<b>Net (Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>(16,800)</b>	<b>(40,800)</b>	<b>(40,800)</b>	<b>24,700</b>

7.5. A revised business plan will be produced by 2022 to resolve the pressure from year 4 onwards. This will involve exploration of options for new tenant(s), moving additional services into the space, and/or identification of other assets in the area that can be considered surplus. The development of these options is underway.

7.6. If 68 units are built on the exchanged sites, in a full financial year based on 2018/19 council tax Band A this would generate £61,200 additional Council tax income per year.

7.7. Savings and efficiencies: -

- A shared reception across the Library and Locals service is likely to create some staff efficiencies in the future. This will be subject to full consultation with staff affected and Trade Unions.
- Through supporting the ASC social work service delivery model (by providing a location where residents can be seen), this will lead to efficiencies through fewer journeys made by ASC social workers to customers houses (travel costs and time saved).
- Through creating sufficient space for other workers who want to use 'locality' venues, this will support the ability of other teams to use the location for office accommodation hot desking (e.g. Children's Trust Care Management, Leaving Care Team, YOS). This will lead to some efficiencies associated with staff travel time and productivity.

## 8. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The Council Property Protocol requires an independent valuation of the sites. The valuations have been commissioned.

8.2. Any proposed procurement process will comply with the public procurement rules.

- 8.3. General authority. Section 2 of the local Government Act 2000 covers the promotion of wellbeing. This gives the Council power to do anything that is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area.
- 8.4. The Local Government act 1972 requires the Council to demonstrate “best consideration reasonably achieved” when disposing of land. The independent valuations comply with this requirement.
- 8.5. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 ‘to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons’ in the area that want to make use of it. Local authorities have the power to offer wider library services beyond the statutory service to other user groups, and the Act allows for joint working between library authorities. In considering how best to deliver the statutory duty each library authority is responsible for determining, through consultation, the local needs and to deliver a modern and efficient library service that meets the requirements of their communities within available resources.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1. An equality impact assessment screening exercise has been carried out and has identified no significant equality implications.

## **10. DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 10.1. Data used in relation to this project will comply with current data protection legislation, regulations and council policies and procedures.

## **11. CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 11.1. Any partnership agreement between the council and Black Country Housing Group will be based on the requirement to sequence the land disposal and site development in a way that keeps the opportunity for criminal activities to a minimum.
- 11.2. The new housing units will have regard to the principals of secure by design.
- 11.3. A risk register has been completed for the project, which will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Transforming Local Services Project Board.

## **12. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS**

- 12.1. The focus of the Transforming Local Services project is to ensure that frontline services have a sustainable future. The proposal leads to the long-term sustainability of Blackheath Library (through concentrating footfall) as well as ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Blackheath library building itself. By co-locating services this helps to strengthen frontline services as a whole and creates a thriving local services centre for Rowley Regis Town. The revenue required is available and sustainable.
- 12.2. An increase in footfall within the library and the local area on the High Street will benefit local businesses and services.
- 12.3. The Council will continue to work with its partners to ensure that service provision continues to evolve.
- 12.4. The business plan has identified a budget to ensure that we can invest in the building over the long-term.

### **13. HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)**

- 13.1. The Blackheath Library building will provide a range of benefits to the community. This would be a location where residents can come together to: -
  - access information, advice and guidance,
  - access hands on support with digital inclusion, (incl. increased opportunities and support to access on line services through access to public Wi-Fi, digital skills training and hands on support from employees; as well as signposting and promotion of services available on MySandwell portal.)
  - be signposted to services/groups/classes within the local area.
  - access a range of activities that are of interest to people in the local area
  - access face to face support around housing
- 13.2. It will also be a place where customers in need of an adult social care social work assessment can book an appointment and be seen by their worker, and where families accessing COG services can meet their worker.
- 13.3. Wider benefit will be provided through the training opportunities available in relation to the new build properties.

### **14. IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

- 14.1. The council will be disposing of outdated assets at Payne Street and adding modern library building to its portfolio.

14.2. The council will be disposing of surplus land in a planned way which should see the sites developed quickly.

## 15. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1. This report follows detailed work over many months by the Transforming Local Services Project Board.
- 15.2. The library's long-term future and sustainability is likely to be impacted by the desire of Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) to move out of the building and potentially dispose of the building. This creates uncertainty and an opportunity.
- 15.3. The proposals address a number of issues and problems that are likely to impact on service provision, future use and sustainability of current buildings in Blackheath.
- 15.4. The proposals will result in the council modernising local services for Rowley Regis town and support the building of affordable housing units across the borough.

## 16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1. Transforming local Services project papers.

## 17. APPENDICES:

- 17.1. Site plans

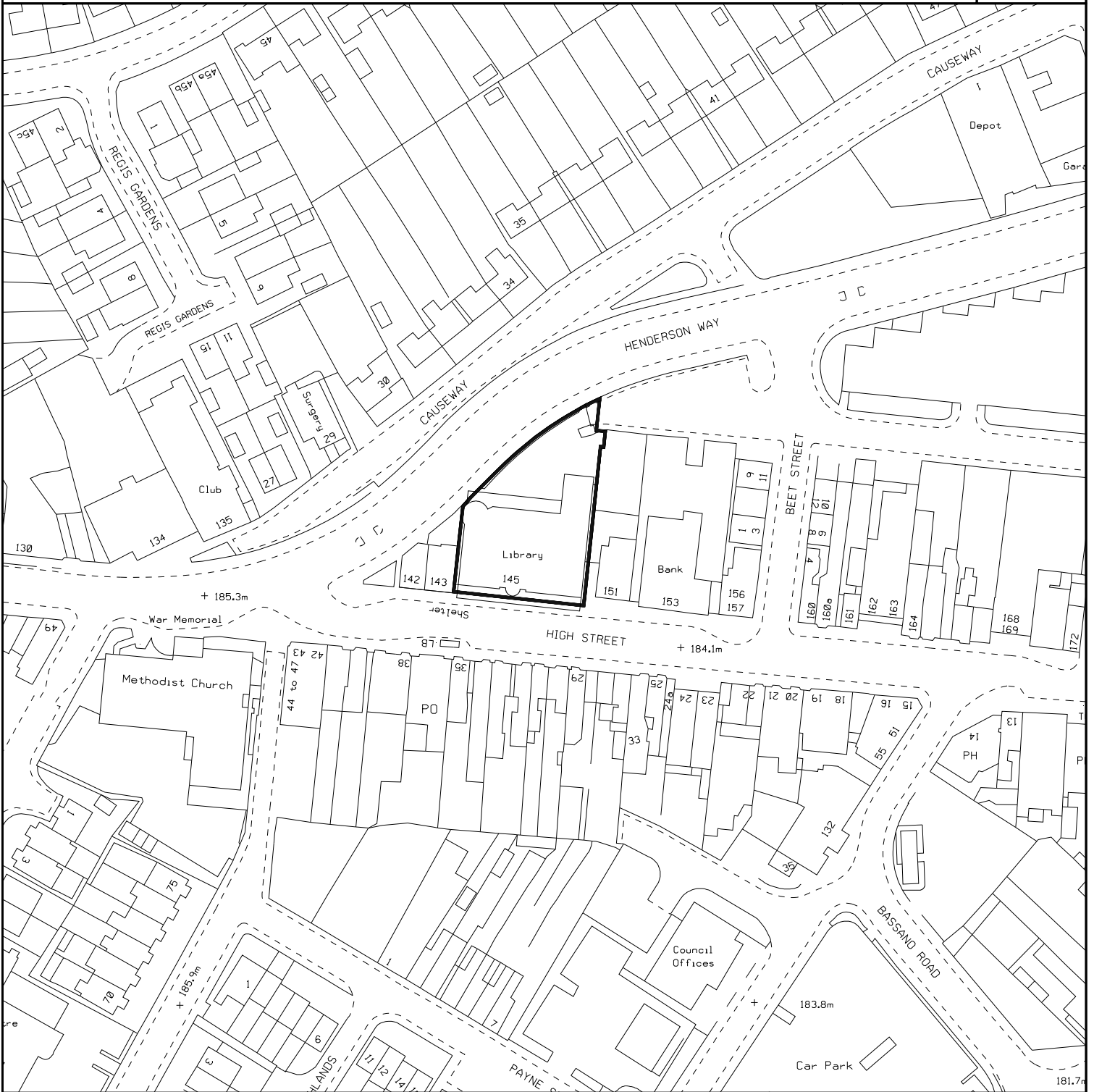



**Dr Alison Knight**  
**Executive Director - Neighbourhoods.**

**Finished? [Click here to remove buttons and surplus icons](#)**

# REGENERATION AND PLANNING

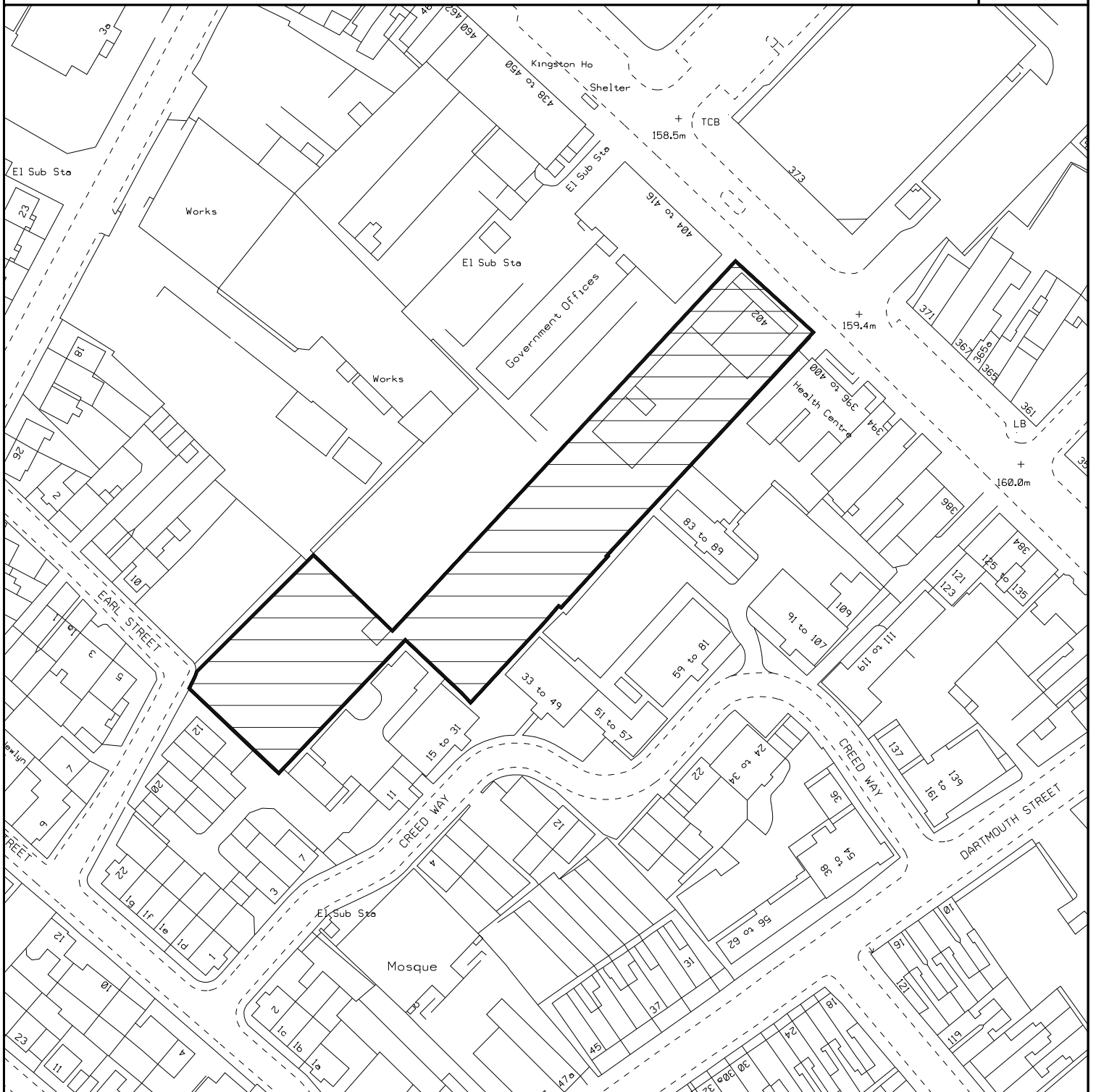
STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT




<b>LEGEND</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b> BLACKHEATH LIBRARY HIGH STREET ROWLEY REGIS		SANDWELL S09786SW	TERRIER 362
	AREA 1107.4 M2    1324.4 Y2		SCALE 1:1250	CENTROID 397229/286431
 <b>Sandwell</b> Metropolitan Borough Council	PLAN NUMBER SAM/24200/001		DRAWN DM	DATE 25-FEB-2019
	THIS MAP IS BASED UPON ORDNANCE SURVEY MATERIAL WITH THE PERMISSION OF ORDNANCE SURVEY ON BEHALF OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE ©CROWN COPYRIGHT UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES CROWN COPYRIGHT AND MAY LEAD TO PROSECUTION OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS SANDWELL MBC LICENCE NO 100032119 2019			

# IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY

## STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

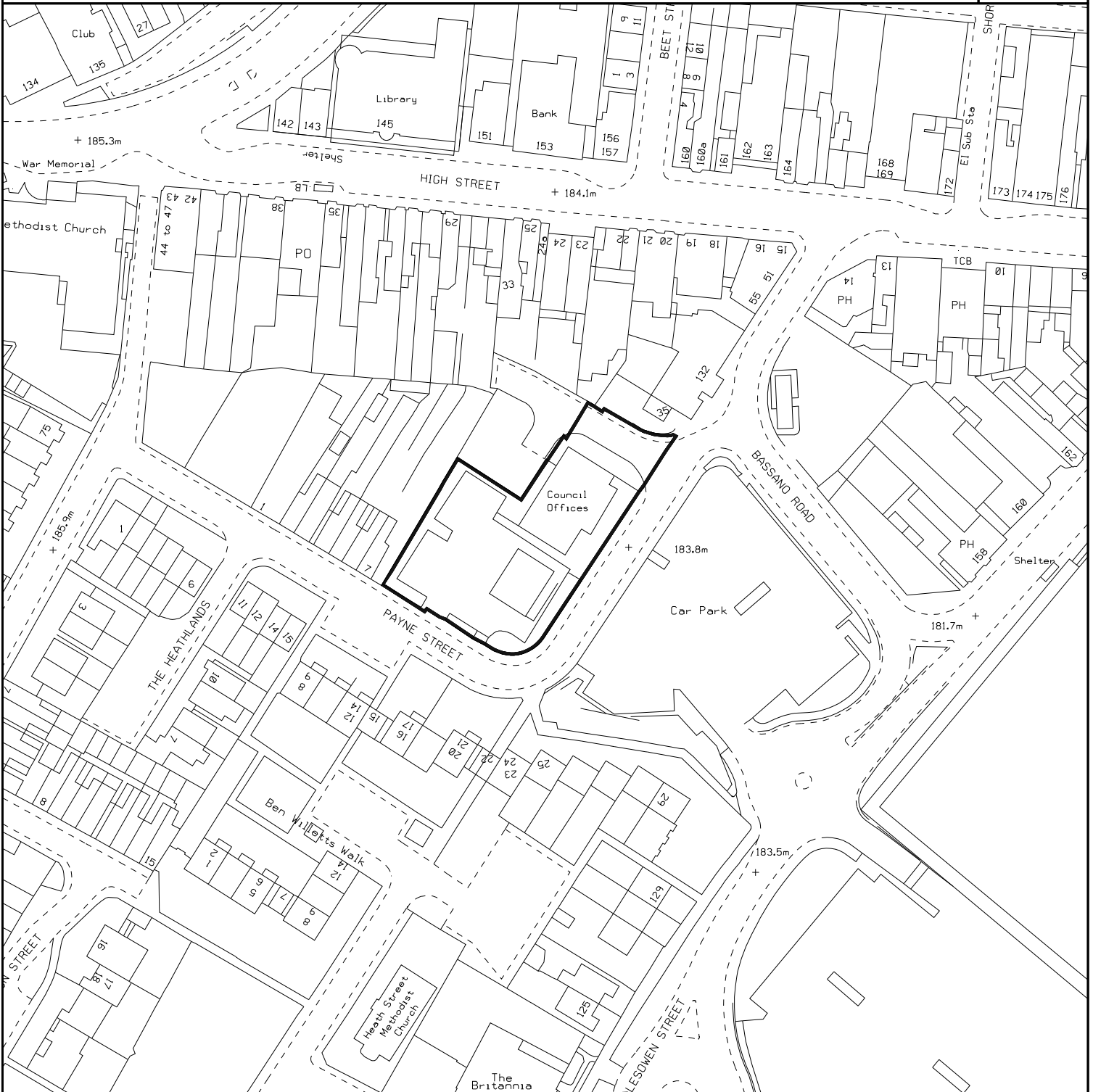



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	SHAFTESBURY HOUSE HIGH STREET WEST BROMWICH	S09991NE	180
 <b>Sandwell</b> Metropolitan Borough Council	AREA	SCALE	CENTROID
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	PLAN NUMBER	DRAWN	DATE
	SAM/24140/041	DM	16-MAR-2017
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# REGENERATION AND PLANNING

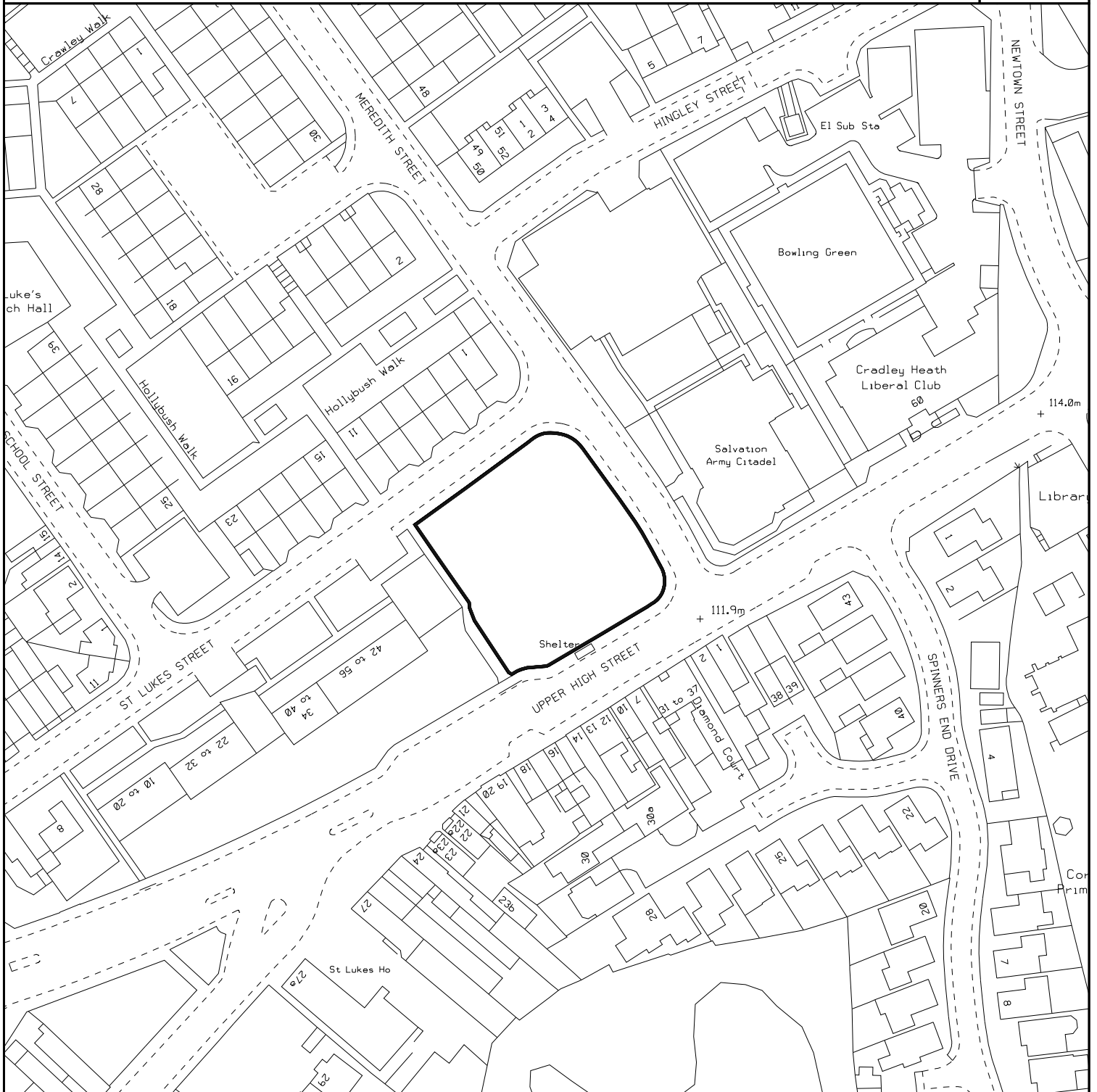
## STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT




LEGEND	DESCRIPTION	SANDWELL	TERRIER
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 <b>Sandwell</b> Metropolitan Borough Council	AREA	SCALE	CENTROID
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	PLAN NUMBER	DRAWN	DATE
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# REGENERATION AND PLANNING

## STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT



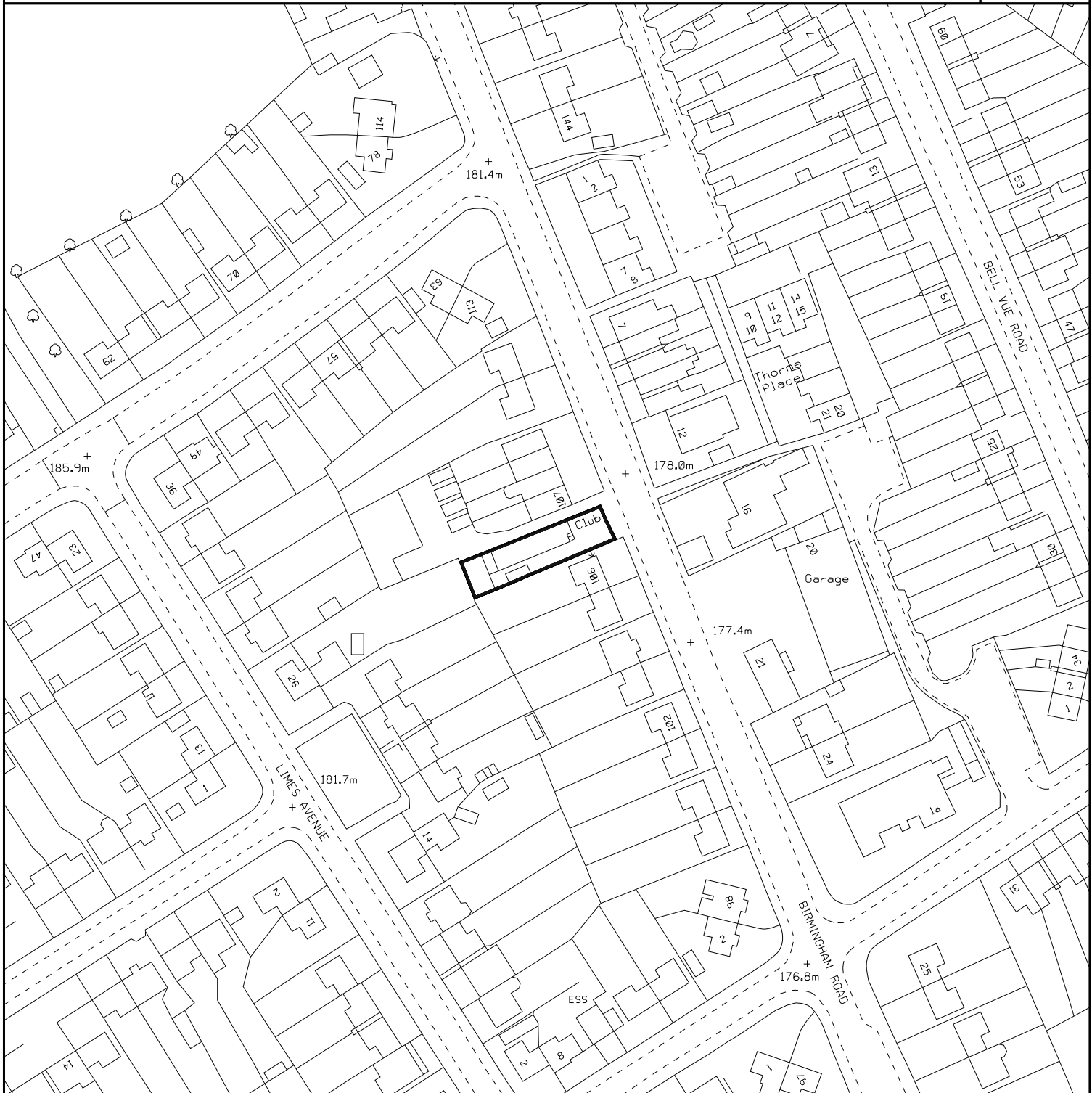
LEGEND	DESCRIPTION	SANDWELL	TERRIER
	LAND AT THE JUNCTION OF UPPER HIGH STREET AND MEREDITH STREET CRADLEY HEATH	S09486SE	357
 <b>Sandwell</b> Metropolitan Borough Council	AREA	SCALE	CENTROID
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	PLAN NUMBER	DRAWN	DATE
	SAM/49700/002	DM	10-JAN-2019
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# REGENERATION AND PLANNING

STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT



NORTH



<b>LEGEND</b>   <b>Sandwell</b> Metropolitan Borough Council	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>  106A BIRMINGHAM ROAD ROWLEY REGIS	<b>SANDWELL</b> S09786NW	<b>TERRIER</b> 344
	<b>AREA</b> 313.6 M2    375.1 Y2	<b>SCALE</b> 1:1250	<b>CENTROID</b> 397302/286782
<b>PLAN NUMBER</b> SAM/05340/007	THIS MAP IS BASED UPON ORDNANCE SURVEY MATERIAL WITH THE PERMISSION OF ORDNANCE SURVEY ON BEHALF OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE © CROWN COPYRIGHT UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES CROWN COPYRIGHT AND MAY LEAD TO PROSECUTION OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS SANDWELL MBC LICENCE NO 100032119 2019		

# Equality Impact Assessment Template

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

**Version 4: February 2019**

Title of proposal <i>(include forward plan reference if available)</i>	The Future Use of Blackheath Library: Partnership Working with Black Country Housing Group
Directorate and Service Area	Neighbourhoods,
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Sukie Virk – Service Improvement Manager
Contact Details	0121 569 3162
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	Rebecca Jenkins – Senior Lead, Service Improvement  Paul Evans - Asset Manager
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	Not applicable
Date EIA completed	21 <sup>st</sup> January 2019
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	26 February 2019
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	Dr Alison Knight
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	27 February 2019

See [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for key prompts that must be addressed for all questions

**1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required**

**(Please provide as much information as possible)**

The need for this specific project has come about out of the wider Transforming Local Services (TLS) project. This project aims to deliver high quality services in Rowley Regis that local people can easily access.

**Our mission statement: ‘Delivering the services that local people need and value’.**

It addresses several issues and problems that are likely to impact on service provision, future use and sustainability of current buildings in Blackheath. It is expected that footfall will reduce at Payne Street Local, as the council move more to digital access for services, with access to face to face services for more complex cases and for people unable to use technology. The Rowley Local is currently also uninviting for residents and does not support delivery of joined up services, single point of and easy access to services, as the site is spread over two buildings.

The library’s long-term future and sustainability is likely to be impacted by the desire of Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) to move out of the building and potentially dispose of the building. This creates uncertainty. In addition, the library is experiencing decreased footfall, and through this project, footfall to the building will increase. This project should increase the long-term viability of the library and the Rowley Regis Local.

Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) own the Blackheath Library building but would like to sell the building. SMBC leases the ground floor (library) on a 60-year lease from 2011 at peppercorn rent.

The proposal is for the Council to acquire Blackheath Library from Black Country Housing group by exchanging four council owned sites to at least the value of the Library.

The opportunity to acquire the building would mean that Council services could come together to create a thriving local services ‘hub’ or place of welcome. The proposal would involve:

1. Closure of Payne Street Local and COG/ASC building and transfer of functions to Blackheath Library
2. Creation of a shared reception / single access point from the library space (staffed jointly by Rowley Regis Local and Blackheath Library)
3. Creation of a fully co-located office accommodation environment for Rowley Regis Neighbourhoods staff (including Housing Management,

ASC, Welfare Rights), ASC Social Work Team(s), and Children's Trust COG

4. Creation of flexible space to enable customers of Neighbourhoods, Children's and ASC services to be seen privately and book an appointment within the Rowley Regis locality.
5. Replacing the current cashiers facility at Payne St, with a cash payment, or card and cash machine at Blackheath Library.

The Blackheath Library Hub will provide a range of benefits to residents. This would be a location where residents can come together to:

- access information, advice and guidance,
- access hands on support with digital inclusion, (incl. Increased opportunities and support to access on line services through access to public Wi-Fi, digital skills training and hands on support from staff; as well as signposting and promotion of services available on MySandwell portal.)
- be signposted to services/groups/classes within the local area.
- access a range of activities that are of interest to people in the local area
- access face to face support around housing

It will also be a place where:

- customers in need of an adult social care social work assessment can book an appointment and be seen by their worker, and where families accessing COG services can meet their worker.

There is the potential to bringing partners e.g. VCS group/s into the building in the longer term, that could bring additional benefits for customers through concentrating footfall and immediate signposting into support.

Consolidating hubs of community activity as places of welcome and shared space to come together and support each other is a foundation stone for our vision and will support the development of resilient communities.

## 2. Evidence used/considered

Various data streams have been used to formulate the above proposals:

- Demographic town information
- Workshop data from the Town Working Groups (held with front line employees to look at how services are currently delivered and future delivery model)
- Feedback from the Town Plan/Vision 2030 sessions
- Analysis of footfall at the Rowley Local and Blackheath Library
- Analysis from the customer access strategies for each service area
- Workshop feedback with key partners from the Voluntary Sector
- Feedback from the Asset Challenge Boards
- Analysis of data collection from Sandwell Local and Blackheath Library for the period of January 2019
- Feedback from the job swap exercise involving Sandwell Local and Library front line employees and managers undertaken in January 2019.
- Property condition analysis
- Redevelopment costs
- Availability of council venues in the area

## 3. Consultation

Our frontline managers have been consulted through workshops and team briefs to ensure their contribution.

Cabinet members and Ward members have been consulted.

Workshops have been held with partners from the voluntary sector and the response has been positive.

Consultation (which is yet to commence) with our residents and community through community networks and face to face dialogue will remain an ongoing process to ensure our proposals remain current and relevant.

A detailed Communication and Consultation strategy has been developed alongside the project.



#### 4. Assess likely impact

Please give an outline of the overall impact if possible.

It is assessed that the proposals in this report, overall, have no adverse impact on any individuals or groups with protected characteristics. It is assessed that the proposals will have a positive impact on a number of groups in terms of having the provision of and access to a range of services under one roof and support that will be available.

The removal of the facility to make cash payments face to face might impact on a small number of people. Currently an average of 138 transactions are undertaken each day at Blackheath cashiers. A suitable alternative will be offered through either a card only payment machine or a cash and card machine at Blackheath Library. This is in line with the council's approach to increase access via digital inclusion and reducing cash transactions. The proposal in this report is to replace face to face cash payments with a card only or card and cash payment machine. Either option is considered to be a proportionate approach in achieving the council's objective and aim to reduce face to face cash transactions.

In addition, welfare and unemployment and other benefits are increasingly being paid into bank accounts and it is the view that the overwhelming majority of people will be able to make cashless payments. Where this becomes an issue for an individual, support and advice will be available in advance at Payne Street Local, and after the transfer of the service to Blackheath Library, support will continue to be available. We will offer proactive support to help people make the change.

**Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics**

#### 4a. Use the table to show:

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Age</b>	✓			The Blackheath Library proposal opens opportunities for all age groups to enjoy the social, cultural, economic and educational benefits by having co-located and accessible services available for all. We have not identified any negative impacts.
<b>Disability</b>	✓			This will deliver an enhanced service delivery model for the whole community. Residents will have access to greater information, advice/guidance in a single visit; and have access to services provided by the voluntary sector. Other benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being signposted to services/groups/classes within the local area.</li> <li>• access a range of activities that are of interest to people in the local</li> </ul>

				<p>area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access face to face support around housing</li> <li>• customers in need of an adult social care social work assessment can book an appointment and be seen by their worker, and where families accessing COG services can meet their worker</li> <li>• Blackheath library is DDA compliant, located on the High Street and is easily accessible to customers</li> </ul>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of gender assignment.
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of marriage and civil partnership.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of pregnancy or maternity.

<b>Race</b>			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of race.
<b>Religion or belief</b>			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of religion or belief.
<b>Sex</b>			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of sex.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of sexual orientation.
<b>Other</b>				

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes  No

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

**5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?**

Not applicable

**6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?**

Not applicable

**7. Monitoring arrangements**

Service delivery will be reviewed on a regular basis.

**8. Action planning**

Not applicable



## **9. Publish the EIA**

This EIA screening will be included with the papers for the Cabinet Decision relating to the Blackheath Library Project (scheduled March 2019) and therefore available via CMIS.