

## Review of Broad Green Library

### Summary

Broad Green Library is the second smallest library in the library network and serves a catchment area with a high population but which is also largely in the catchment area of other, larger libraries. This is a standalone building on a busy residential road.

This library is one of the four that were recommended for closure at the Cabinet meeting on 31 January 2024. This proposal was then consulted on as part of a wider set of proposals and the feedback informs this evaluation.

**Table C4.5: performance, location and building data**

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
<b>Opening hours (pw)</b>	16	9	Visibility	
<b>Library visits (pa)</b>	17,023	10	Footfall	
<b>Library issues</b>	9,635	12	Public transport access	
<b>Event attendances</b>	1,963	8	<b>Building</b>	
<b>PC hours in use</b>	1,259	10	Suitability	
<b>Budget (£)</b>	101,727	12	Adaptability	
<b>Cost per visitor (£)</b>	6	8	Condition	
<b>Active users</b>	935	10	<b>Internal area (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	236

### Performance

The library is only open two days a week for 16 hours in total, a sharp reduction from the previous opening hours of 44.5 before the introduction of part-time opening in 2022. Unlike in some libraries (eg Selsdon) where the number of visits per hour have intensified during the shorter window in which the library is open, the visitors per hour at Broad Green Library have remained largely static at 20.5 in 2023-24 compared with 21 in 2019-20 and on this measure, the library ranks 9<sup>th</sup> out of the thirteen libraries in the network.

The reduction in opening hours has been associated with a sharp fall in the library's overall performance, which is generally poor. The library's number of active users at 935 is fourth lowest of the thirteen libraries. Annual visits in 2019-20 were nearly 39,000 but reached just 44% of that level at 17,000 in 2023-24. This is, though, an improvement of 15 percentage points compared with 2022-23. The budget is the second lowest and thanks to the increase in visitor numbers, the unit cost has improved from £8 per visit in 2022-23 to £6 in 2023-24, just above the median of the thirteen libraries. However, it still has the fourth lowest number of visits and the second lowest number of issues.

Attendances at events have risen from 688 in 2022-23 to 1,963 in 2023-24 reflecting the increase in events held and is at a level that is 8<sup>th</sup> highest of 13 libraries. The library is reportedly well-used by the local Tamil community.

### **Location**

Broad Green library is in a prominent location on a busy side street (Canterbury Road). The vertical white library sign is very large and visible. While the building will be familiar to those living in its immediate surroundings, it is not as visible to non-users who do not regularly use this road.

This area is mainly residential with few shops in the immediate area and numerous industrial units in the wider area. It is next to the Tender Care Day Nursery and is close to one of West Thornton Primary School's two sites and a health centre on the roundabout a few hundred metres away. There are some small rows of shops on Mitcham Road but no shopping parades in the immediate vicinity of the library that would generate footfall. Canterbury Road is not served by a bus route although the A23 and A236 roads are well-served by bus routes. The nearest bus stop is a few hundred metres from the library.

### **Building**

The building is the second smallest of the thirteen libraries. The interiors are cluttered but the building's open plan design is practical to use for a range of the library activities of a small branch library, albeit with limited ability to zone activities and the static shelving makes it difficult to adapt it for events and activities.

The glazed entrance doors and large windows at the front of the building allow visitors to see into the interior, but the design of shelving, tables and chairs are basic and unattractive. The children's library area is more colourful. The overall impression of the interior is unattractive, messy and neglected but could be remedied with investment. The exterior brickwork and aluminium windows and frames appear in reasonable condition, although there has been some interior water damage due to blocked gutters.

### **Population and need**

As the library is located in an area of high population density, its physical catchment area suggests it serves a large population, although its catchment area overlaps with several other Croydon libraries (Thornton Heath, Central and Norbury) which are larger and better used. At the margins, it also shares a catchment area with Pollards Hill Library operated by Merton Council.

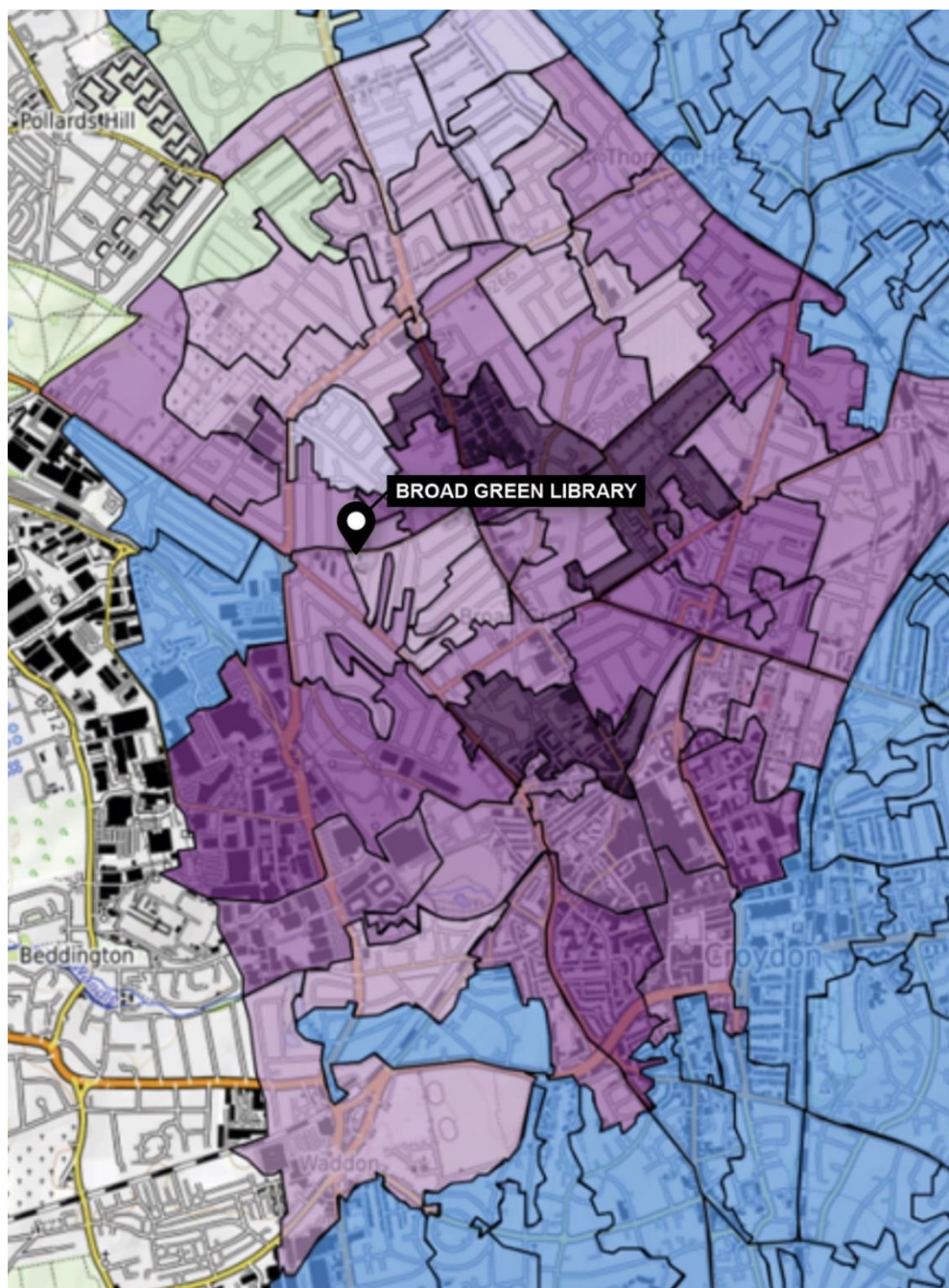
The library is situated close to areas of high deprivation with a number of LSOAs in the most deprived deciles although these are also largely in the geographic catchment areas of Thornton Heath and Central libraries. Although its overall performance is comparatively low, the addresses of current active users registered at Broad Green suggest a regular following who live close by. There is currently only one volunteer.

**Table C4.6: summary of population, need and community**

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	OA population within 1 mile	63,916
	OA population within 1.25 miles	90,257
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	13
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	3
	Number of volunteers	1

The overall level of deprivation is shown below. It includes 3 LSOAs in the most deprived decile in England and the catchment area is generally in the 50% more deprived, with only two LSOAs below the median. There are sub-categories of the IMD that show even greater levels of comparative deprivation in this catchment area, with 29 LSOAs in the most deprived two deciles for crime, although there is only one LSOA in the most deprived two deciles for education, skills and training.

Figure C4.8: overall IMD deprivation by LSOA decile in 1 mile catchment area



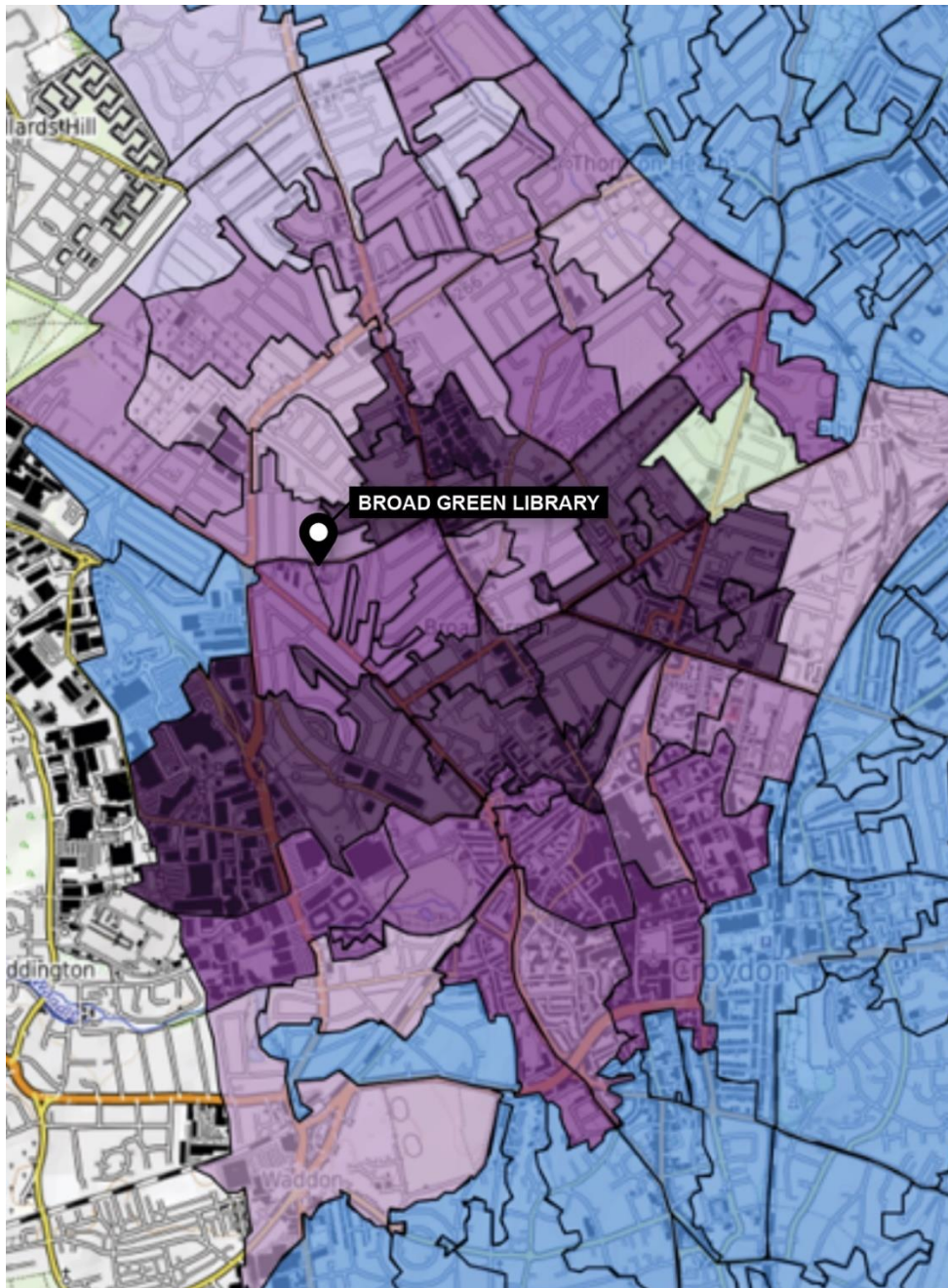
Legend for deciles (1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England)



It is notable that, although the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the catchment area is significantly lower at 9% than the borough average of 14%, the IMD index for income deprivation among older people is notable with 22 LSOAs in the most deprived two deciles (with nine of those LSOAs in the most deprived decile). These LSOAs are concentrated in the vicinity of the library.



Figure C4.9: Income Deprivation Affecting Older People by LSOA decile in 1 mile catchment area



Legend for deciles (1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England)

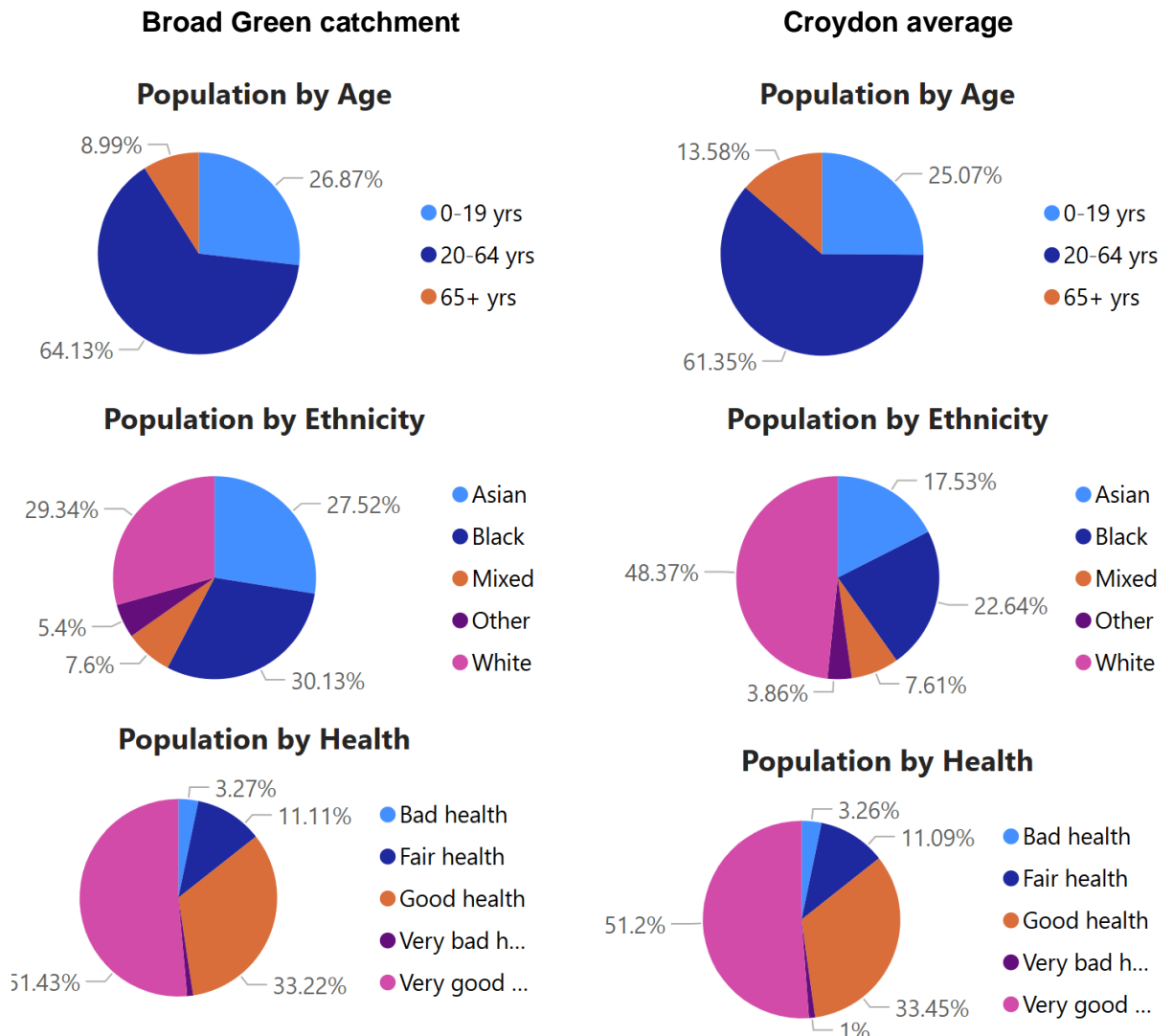


The catchment areas are predominantly Asian, Black, Mixed and Other, with Asian ethnic origin at 28% significantly higher than the borough average of 18%; Black ethnic origin at 30% significantly higher than the borough average of 23%; and White ethnic origin at 29% significantly lower than the borough average of 48%. This library is close to a Tamil community who make regular use of the library and it is used by a

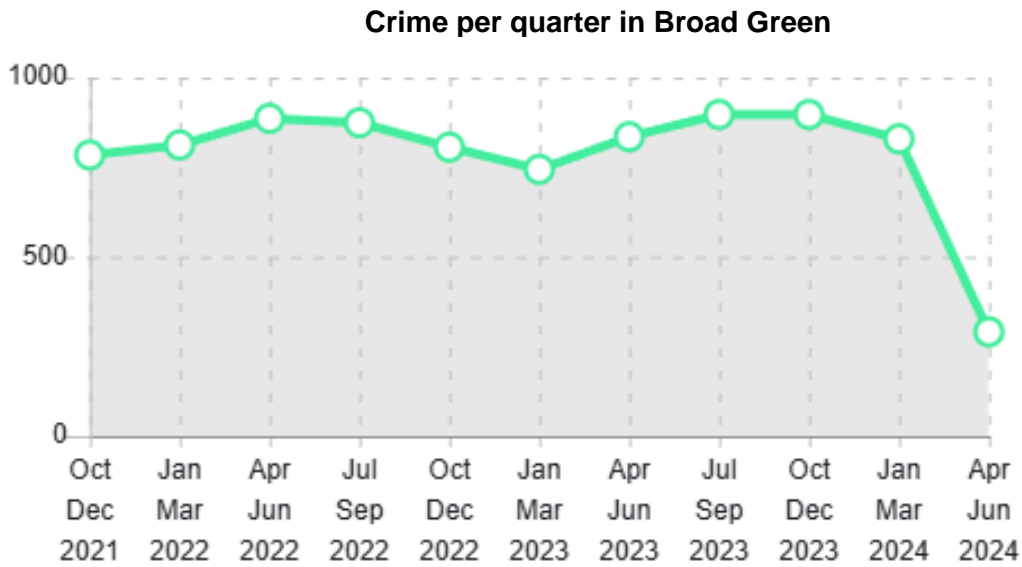
Tamil community group. The ethnicity of active users suggest<sup>1</sup> that over 80% are of Asian and Black ethnic origin.

Older people are under-represented among active users of Broad Green Library who have provided information on their age (at 3%, compared with the average in the catchment area of 9%).

**Figure C4.10: population data for catchment area (LSOA)**



<sup>1</sup> Only 23.7% of active users have provided ethnicity data.

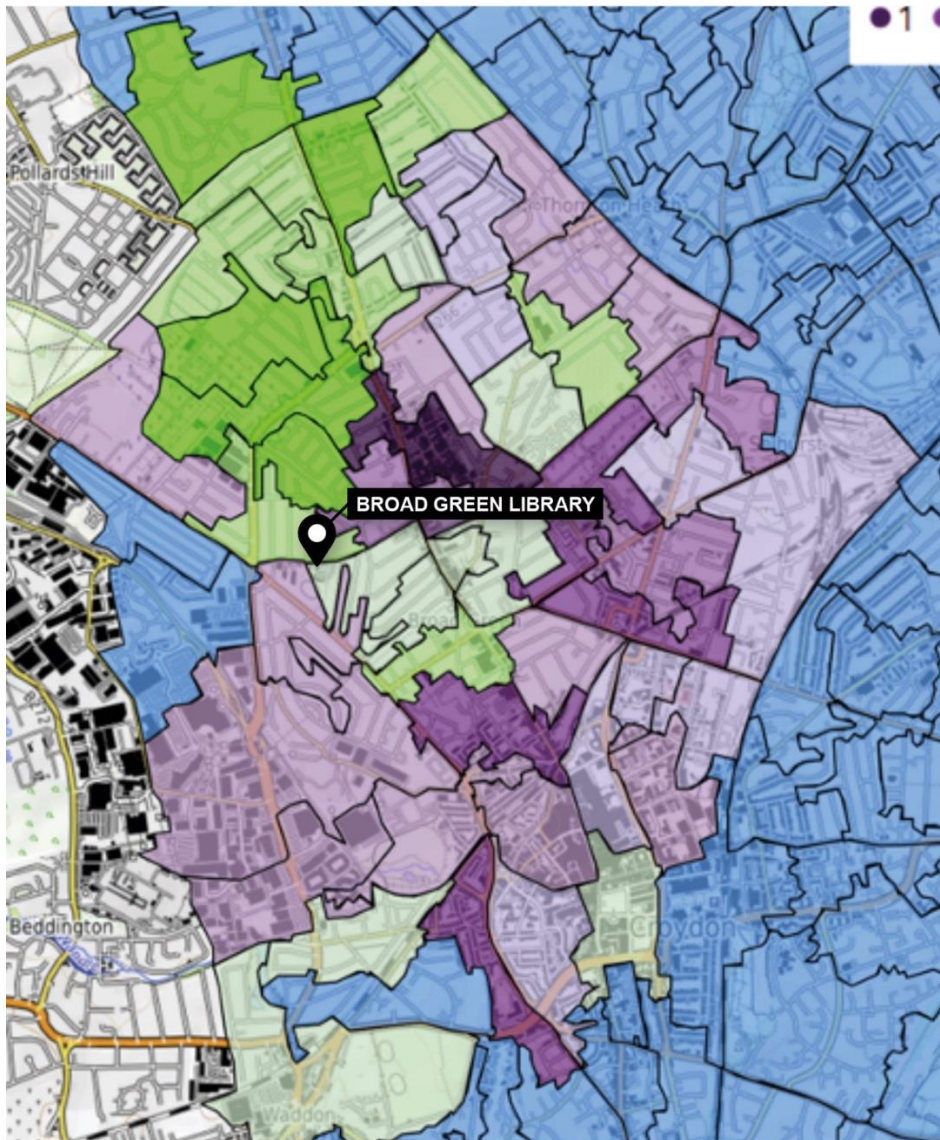


In contrast with the overall IMD deprivation ranking and most of its sub-categories, the Broad Green Library catchment areas has fewer LSOAs (five) in the two most deprived areas for 'Health Deprivation and Disability' as illustrated in the map below. Nearly half of the LSOAs for this sub-category are below the median in England.

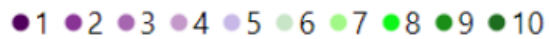
This population level information identifies overall levels of concentrations in local areas, but within each area, there will be individual active users who may suffer from physical and mental health challenges. Work would be needed to communicate with all active users and other regular individual and community group users to ensure that the right communication and support is provided for those affected by the potential closure.



Figure C4.14: Health Deprivation and Disability by LSOA decile in 1 mile catchment area



Legend for deciles (1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England)



Excerpt from Cabinet Report (25 September 2024), Appendix C Library service review  
Review of closure proposals compiled by Activist Consultants for Croydon Libraries.  
<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/g3920/Public%20reports%20pack%2025th-Sep-2024%2018.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>