

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 st 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?)
	✓	✓	✓	
Age	✓			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.
Disability	✓			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"> • Being signposted to services/groups/classes within the local area. • access a range of activities that are of interest to people in the local

				<p>area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access face to face support around housing • 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 • Blackheath library is DDA compliant, located on the High Street and is easily accessible to customers
Gender reassignment			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of gender assignment.
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of marriage and civil partnership.
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	No impact as the Blackheath Library will be available to all regardless of pregnancy or maternity.

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

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.