

Review of Bradmore Green Library

Summary

Bradmore Green Library is the borough's smallest branch library which serves the smallest population in its catchment area of the thirteen libraries. This is a stand-alone building on a residential road behind a primary school.

This library is one of the four that was 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 C4.3: performance, location and building data

Performance	Total	Rank	Location	Rating
Opening hours (pw)	16	9	Visibility	
Library visits (pa)	25,878	7	Footfall	
Library issues	17,324	10	Public transport access	
Event attendances	788	13	Building	
PC hours in use	202	13	Suitability	
Budget (£)	96,185	13	Adaptability	
Cost per visitor (£)	4	11	Condition	
Active users	584	13	Internal area (m ²)	180

Performance

The library is only open two days a week limiting its overall performance which is the lowest in the network for three of the five main indicators. However, its visits are at the median and visits per hour the third highest and so, given its lower running costs, its cost per visit is third lowest.

However, there may be reasons to doubt the accuracy of the visitor numbers, due to the location of the visitor counter. If users leave via the 'entrance' rather than what used to be the 'exit', they will trigger the counter a second time. The extent of double-counting (if any) is not known but may explain the relatively high number of visits given that three of the other usage indicators are very low.

Due to its small size and inflexibility it does not lend itself to events and so it has the fewest attendances. PC usage is much lower than any other library. There are some volunteers and although it is not used regularly by community groups, there are good relations with the next-door school and regular school visits.

Location

The library has limited visibility as it is located on Bradmore Way which is a residential road and is behind Coulsdon Church of England Primary School. It is not visible from the

busier main roads, Marlpit Lane and Coulsdon Road. Signage is very limited with one small sign directly outside the building.

The library is a short walk from the nearest shopping parade and so does not benefit from significant footfall apart from the adjacent primary school, whose children, their parents and carers reportedly use it well.

The library is close to nearby bus routes and allows for safe walking and cycling. There is free off-street and on-street parking on Bradmore Way.

Building

The library is a small single-storey building and is an unusual, roundish shape (reportedly a polygon). The main library space is cramped which makes it difficult to navigate when busy. There is no community or meeting room.

There is no separate children's library space and insufficient space for the range of activities that a modern and well-designed library would provide. The library occupies just a small part of the plot on which it sits.

The exterior of the building is in mixed condition and the entrance to the building is not inviting. The interior is unattractive. As a result of the high level windows the interior is dark and cold in winter. The building is difficult to adapt given its unusual shape. It was argued during consultation that there has not been investment in the library in years and the condition and appearance of the building seems to bear that out.

Population and need

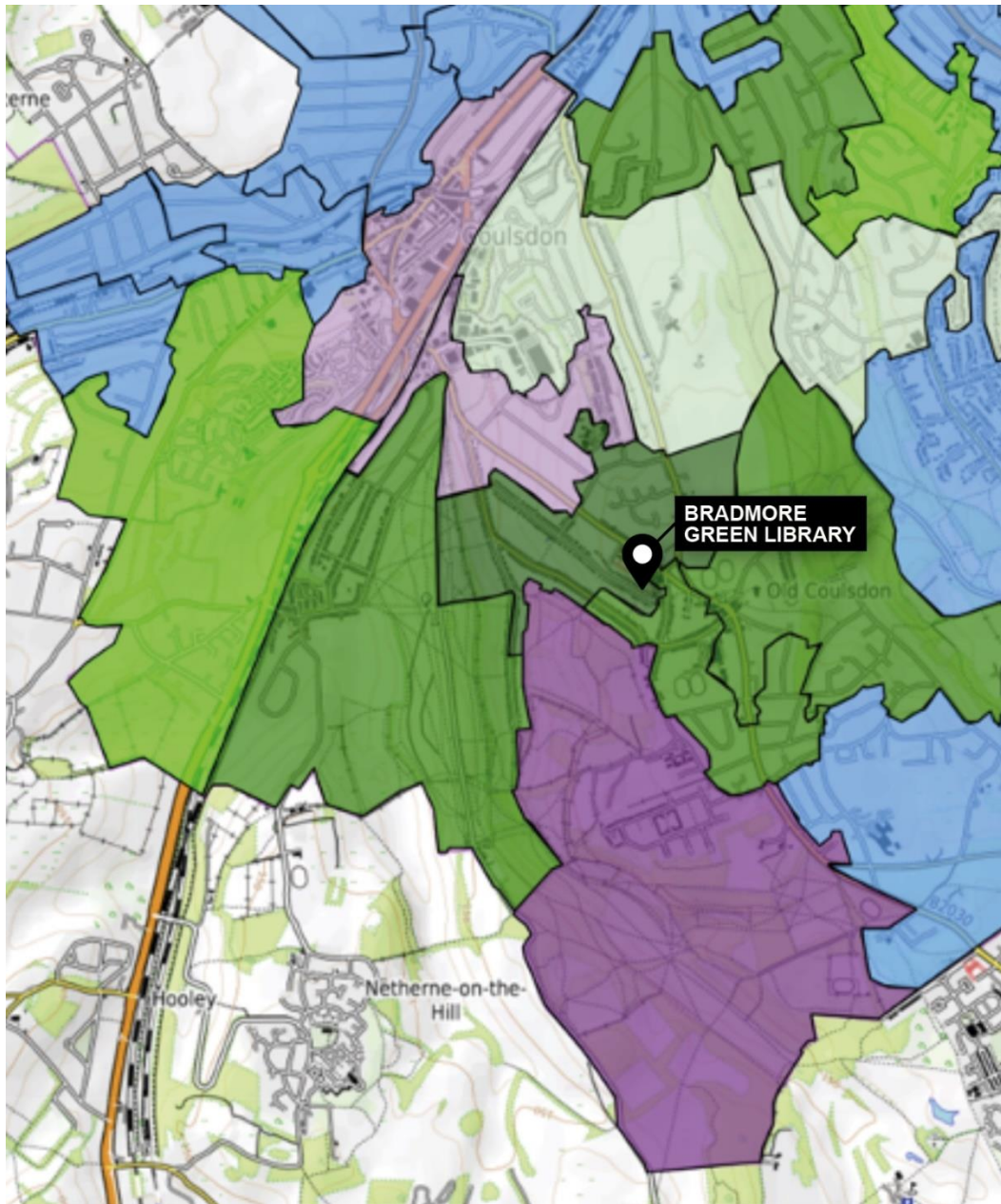
This is Croydon's smallest neighbourhood library serving a comparatively small population in an area of low population density. The catchment area includes one LSOA which is in the second decile (ie the 10 to 20%) most deprived in England. This LSOA includes the Tollers Estate which has high levels of need.

Table C4.4: summary of population, need and community

Criterion	Sub-criterion	Level
Catchment	OA population within 1 mile	14,432
	OA population within 1.25 miles	22,148
	LSOAs in 20% most deprived	1
Alternative provision	Nearest libraries (miles)	Coulsdon (1.2)
	Schools within 1km	3
Community use	Existing community group uses	1
	Number of volunteers	2

The catchment area also has 6 LSOAs which are in the 20% least deprived in England. Although the library itself is located just inside the one LSOA which is in the 10% least deprived in England, it also borders the LSOA which is home to the Tollers Estate.

Figure C4.3: overall IMD deprivation by LSOA decile in 1 mile catchment area



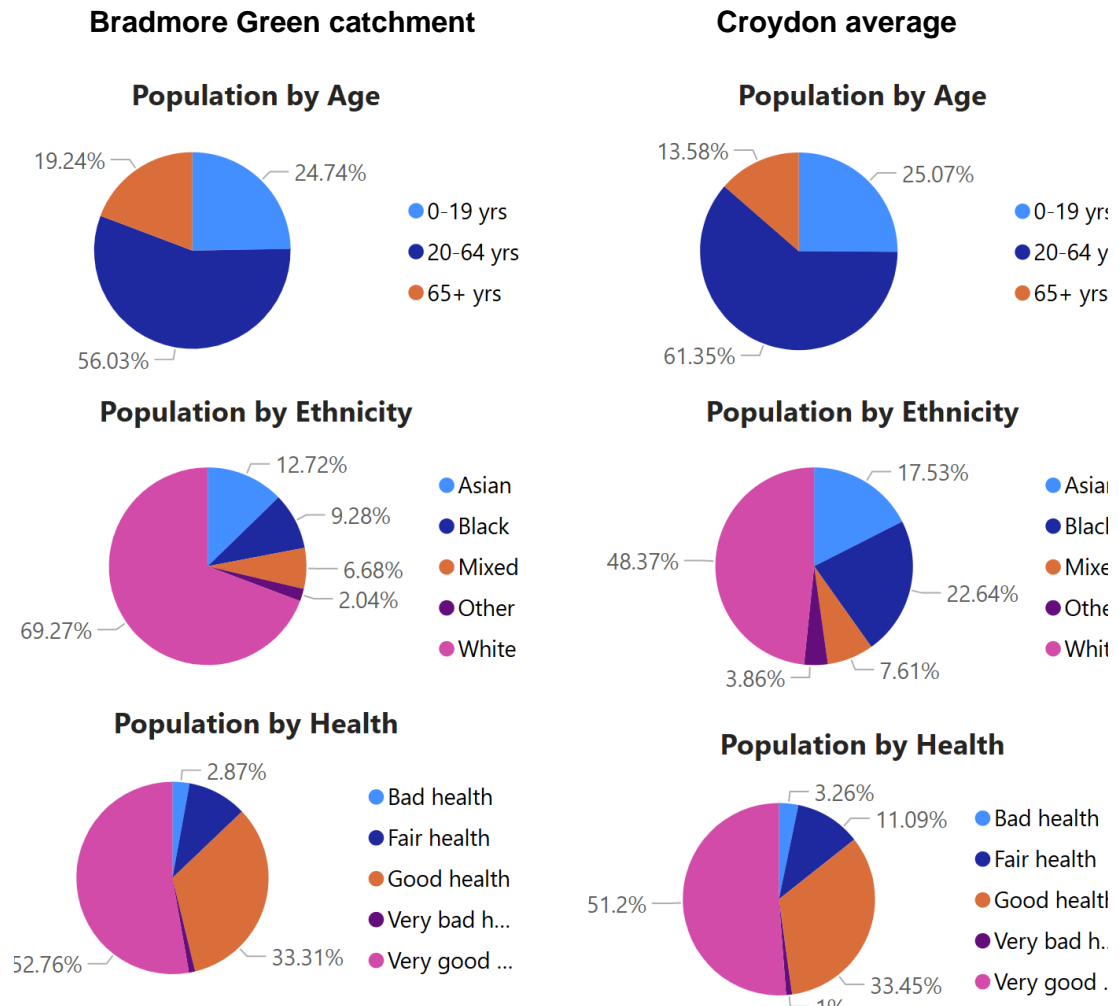
Legend for deciles (1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England)



The catchment area has a significantly higher proportion of residents over 65 (at 19%) than the Croydon average of 14%. At 69%, its population of White origin is significantly higher than the Croydon average of 48%.

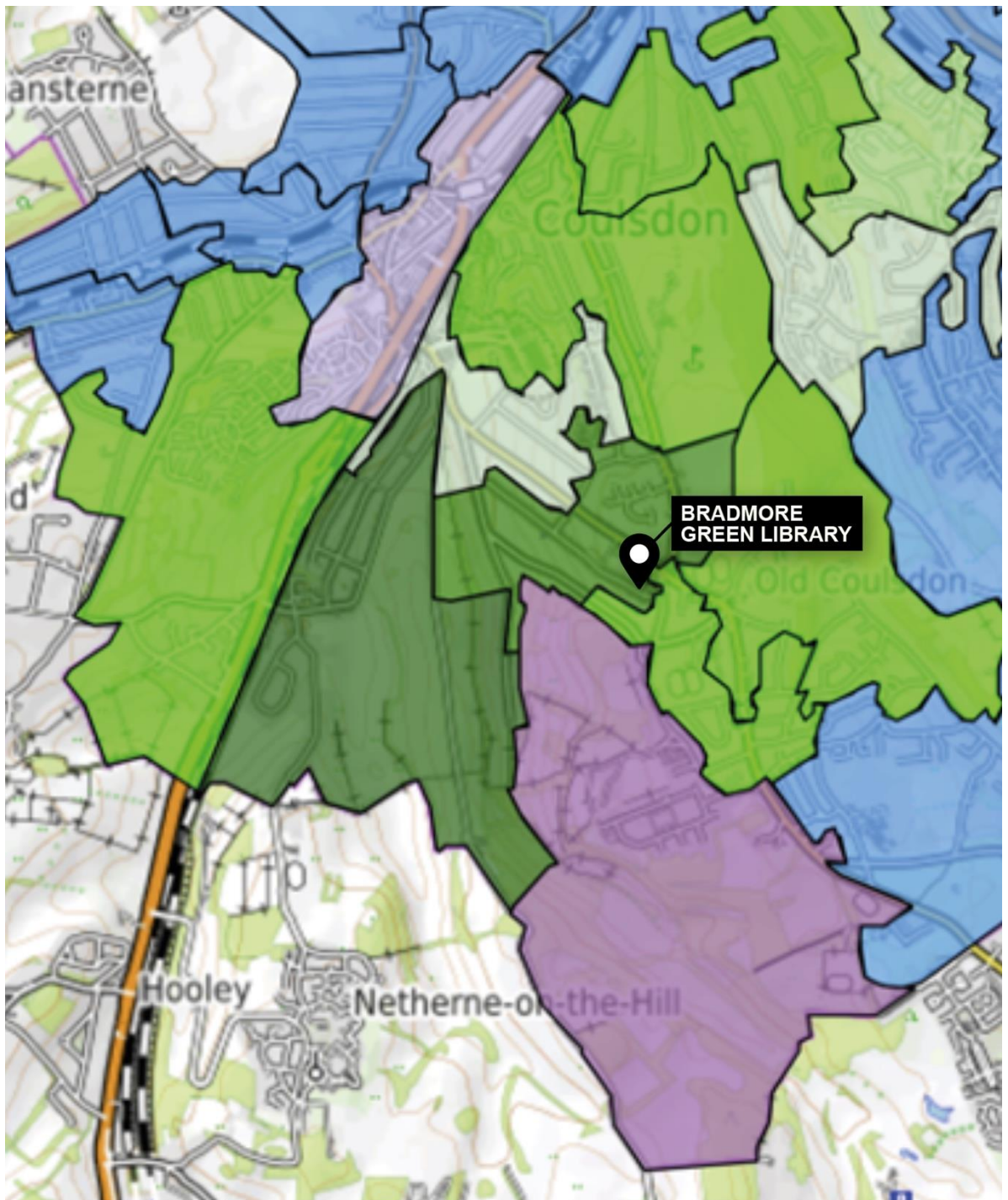
A number of points were raised during consultation that people suffering from ill health or with mobility problems depend on this library in this location. The Census data on the overall catchment area suggests that health is largely in line with the Croydon average, if marginally better. The proportion of people reporting they are disabled is also in line with the Croydon average (see Table C3.6).

Figure C4.4: population data for catchment area (LSOA)



However, there are significant variations within the catchment area. As illustrated below, there are areas within the catchment area that suffer least in England from 'health deprivation and disability' (as measured by that domain within the IMD). The LSOA that is home to the Tollers Estate is again home to some of the worst deprivation, being in the second decile for health deprivation and disability.

Figure C4.5: health deprivation and disability within 1 mile catchment area



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



That same LSOA is also in the second highest decile of deprivation for the subset of the IMD focused on education, skills and training. This domain is particularly important for the library service as libraries can play such an important role in improving literacy and providing learning support.

Overall, the catchment area for Bradmore Green is characterised by low levels of deprivation. However, there is a significant pocket of deprivation concentrated in one LSOA which is home to the Tollers Estate. This LSOA which is home to approximately 1,355 people and is more geographically remote will need to be addressed.

*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>