



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ST HELENS BOROUGH

LIBRARY STRATEGY

2023-28

The
Gamble Building



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FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce to you the St Helens Borough Library Strategy which sets out an ambitious plan for our Library Service for the next 5 years.

We are all proud of the Library Service and what it offers. Our library staff contribute to early years outcomes through read and rhyme times and the BLUSH programme, they assist adults with digital skills, host community groups, organise exhibitions and events and so much more, as well as help people to access books and other resources. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic they went above and beyond to make sure customers had access to books and resources through the Home Delivery Library Service, Schools Library Service and the provision of online activity. In many ways the pandemic accelerated changes which had been underway for some time. In recent years the way many of us use library services has changed, the digital library offer is a growth area and we need to cater for this demand in the modern world. It is widely recognised that the future financial sustainability of councils is on a cliff-edge, with a £15 billion real terms reduction (the biggest cuts of any part of the public sector) to core government funding between 2010 and 2020. Continued increases in demand for social care and other services from residents hit by the cost of living crisis, spiralling inflation, increases to the National Living Wage and higher energy costs have also added millions in extra costs to the Council's budget requirement. As a consequence, the Council has inevitably had to devote a larger proportion of its budget to statutory social care provision. The unfortunate, yet unavoidable, result is that less and less funding therefore remains for the hundreds of other services that the Council provides and which positively provide the fabric of our community.

While it may not be easy, together we can make the most of this opportunity, meeting the changing demands of residents while of course making sure we provide support to the communities most in need. In this context, our 5-year Library Strategy brings forward a vision for the future that is exciting, modern and embraces community involvement. During the development of this strategy we have consulted in 2021, with further consultation in 2023. The findings have been considered alongside the priorities for delivering a more sustainable Library Service for the benefit of future generations as outlined in our Borough Strategy. These have influenced the Library Strategy to shape a service fit for the future.

The St Helens Borough Library Strategy 2023-2028 outlines the contribution the Library Service can make to reducing inequalities within the borough and to deliver outcomes identified through the Borough Strategy. Not all the decisions we have to make will be easy. Working with residents, parish councils, community groups, businesses and others we aim to make sure we have an innovative, modern, sustainable and accessible Library Service providing support where it is needed, with opportunity and access for all.



Councillor Anthony Burns
Cabinet Member for Wellbeing,
Culture & Heritage

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

OUR STATUTORY DUTY

St Helens Borough Council is one of 151 local councils in the UK with a statutory responsibility (a legal duty) to provide a local library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Act requires each local authority to provide a library service that is 'comprehensive and efficient'. It is for local decision how the library service best meets this requirement practically, including how many libraries there are, where they are, when they are open, and what each one offers.

The Council also has an equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set in the Act to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Statutory offer

- Public Libraries - Councils must encourage both adults and children to make full use of the Library Service and lend books and other printed material free of charge.

Discretionary offer

- Digital Library Service
- St Helens Archive Service
- Home Delivery Library Service
- Schools Library Service
- The Library Service is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, funded to deliver an Arts in Libraries programme.

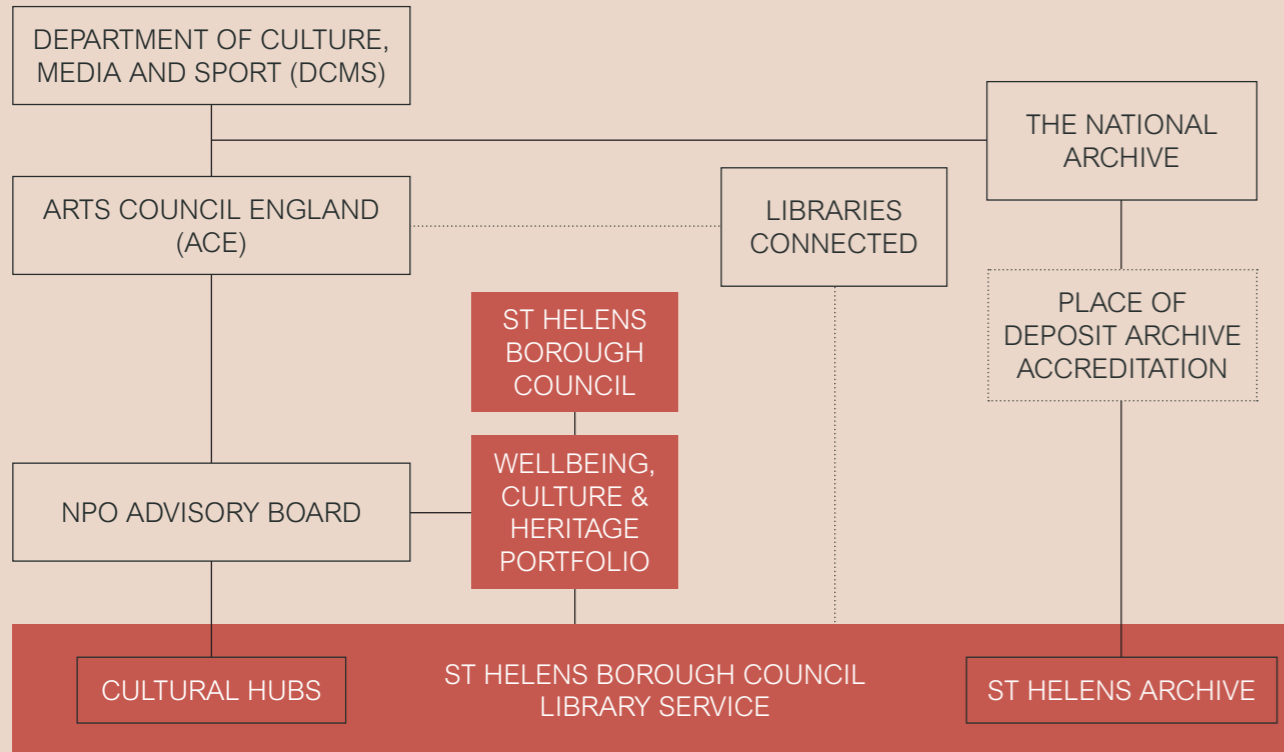
This new Library Strategy focusses on the Library Service as a whole, rather than just library buildings to ensure the library offer makes the most difference to people's lives.

The Library Strategy proposes to:

- Retain a library in St Helens, Newton-le-Willows, Chester Lane, Eccleston, Haydock, Moss Bank and Thatto Heath, best placed to serve communities with the greatest need
- Reduce the number of libraries by closing Peter Street, Parr, Rainhill, Billinge, Garswood and Rainford libraries
- Review opening hours of libraries to ensure they are open at optimal times that meet the needs of the communities they serve
- Enhance partnership working within communities.
- Increase the reach of the Home Delivery and Schools Library Service
- Continue to develop the Archive Service and retain Archive Service Accreditation
- Retain National Portfolio Organisation status and continue to provide an exciting and diverse arts in libraries programme
- Provide excellent customer service and satisfaction with the library offer
- Continue to seek opportunities to apply for external funding
- Increase opportunities and support for learning
- Widen access to digital resources and technology
- Support access to employment and education
- Provide welcoming, vibrant and modern spaces that inspire learning and creativity
- Explore commercial opportunities.

The views of stakeholders, residents, library users and library staff have been integral to the development of this Library Strategy. Engagement and consultation have been conducted using online and paper-based surveys, meetings and focus groups.

GOVERNANCE



INTERDEPENDENCIES

- The St Helens Together Approach - Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030
- Children and Young People's Plan
- St Helens Closer Together: Bridging the Inequalities gap
- Early Years Strategy
- School Readiness Strategy
- Town Deal Investment Plan
- St Helens and Earlestown Town Centre Regeneration
- Arts Strategy
- Heritage Opportunities Action Plan
- Integrated Care Partnership Priorities
- St Helens Together: Our strategy for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector 2021-2026
- St Helens Borough Commercial Strategy
- St Helens Social Value Policy
- St Helens People's Plan 2021-2026
- St Helens Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-26
- Community Asset Transfer Strategy 2023-2026

CHALLENGES AND RISKS

- Reduced funding for the Library Service
- Ability to deliver a sustainable community managed service model
- Being unable to develop suitable facilities to co-locate/align
- Not fulfilling expected outcomes
- Unable to identify and fund the necessary investment in the physical infrastructure.

VISION AND AMBITION

OUR VISION OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IS TO CREATE A MODERN LIBRARY SERVICE THAT IS INCLUSIVE, VIBRANT, VALUED, EXCELLENT, RESPONSIVE TO CUSTOMER NEEDS AND AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITIES.



NATIONAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Baroness Elizabeth Sanderson of Welton has been appointed by the Government to help develop a new national strategy to make sure public libraries are providing the best possible service for their communities. Through 2023, she will lead a number of sessions with an advisory panel of contributors who will be drawn from the library sector and beyond.

The sessions will help gather information to inspire a set of recommendations which will form part of a new government public libraries strategy, succeeding the previous strategy which came into force in 2016.

Input into the development of the recommendations will also come from the British Library, CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals), local authority library services and community-managed libraries, as well as other government departments, to bring in a wide range of views and insights. St Helens Borough Council Library Service has been asked to contribute to the national strategy.

THE ST HELENS BOROUGH LIBRARY STRATEGY 2023-2028 WILL PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERING LIBRARY SERVICES THAT WILL TARGET RESOURCES AT THOSE MOST IN NEED.

Local Authorities are held accountable for the comprehensive and efficient provision of a statutory Library Service within their boundaries, as outlined by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. They also have an equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and public authorities like the Council are required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set in the Act to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

However, the last ten years have seen substantial changes as to how libraries are commissioned and delivered around the country. The drivers for these changes have included financial austerity, localism and community empowerment, the quick pace of technological change and local needs.

THE WAY CUSTOMERS USE ST HELENS LIBRARY SERVICE HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, A CHANGE THAT WAS ACCELERATED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Books are still the mainstay of the provision, with digital loans becoming more popular alongside physical loans. Access to PCs, printing, copying and scanning is still part of the core offer, however more people are now using libraries to access Wi-Fi with their own devices.

It's important to recognise that this isn't a shift to digital away from physical loaning of books; but instead adding digital as a substantial channel. Providing digital loans is an additional cost for libraries and as digital content is more expensive than physical content, stock budgets are increasingly stretched. The pandemic clearly demonstrated that the diverse needs of local people cannot be met by digital services alone, evidenced by the return to physical libraries once lockdown restrictions eased. The statutory library offer needs to incorporate a physical, digital and outreach service.

Libraries Connected, the sector support organisation have been tracking Library Service performance on a monthly basis across England since lockdown restrictions began easing.

ST HELENS LIBRARY SERVICE PERFORMANCE 2022/23



400,000
VISITS TO
LIBRARIES



OVER
300,000
LOANS OF BOOKS



OVER
60,000
LOANS OF E-BOOKS



32,000
PEOPLE ATTENDED
750 LIBRARY EVENTS



IMPACT

ARCHIVE SERVICE

“ THE PANEL WERE IMPRESSED BY THE OUTREACH AND COLLECTING ACTIVITY AND THE SERVICE’S POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.”

The National Archive response when awarding Archive Service Accreditation in 2021

“ VERY HELPFUL AND RESPONSIVE, ALL DOCUMENTS IDENTIFIED PRIOR TO VISIT AND READY ON ARRIVAL. WILL CERTAINLY VISIT AGAIN, 100% EXCELLENT!”

“ THANK YOU TO THE ARCHIVE TEAM FOR DOING A BRILLIANT BIT OF REMOTE RESEARCH FOR ME. A GOOD ARCHIVIST IS WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD.”

Archive Service Users



ST HELENS ARCHIVE IS AWARDED NATIONAL ARCHIVE SERVICE ACCREDITATION IN 2021

LIBRARIES

" I CREDIT THE LIBRARY WITH SO MUCH OF MY DAUGHTER'S LOVE OF READING. FROM A TINY BABY TO A NEARLY 9-YEAR-OLD, WE'VE BEEN VISITING ON A WEEKLY BASIS, TO RHYME TIME, CRAFT SESSIONS AND THE SUMMER READING CHALLENGE. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT MY CHILD WOULD NOT BE AS ADVANCED A READER AS SHE IS WITHOUT IT."

" WITH EVERYTHING THAT WENT ON IN THE EARLY MONTHS, GETTING OUT WITH A NEW-BORN FELT VERY DAUNTING, BUT THE LIBRARY GAVE A SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE FOR US."

" I HAVE BECOME VERY DISABLED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. THANKS TO YOU I HAVE MANAGED TO ACCESS BORROWBOX. I AM UNABLE TO HOLD A BOOK NOW. I HAVE LOVED GOING TO THE LIBRARY OVER THE YEARS AND I AM VERY SAD NOT TO BE ABLE TO GO NOW, HOWEVER I THINK BORROWBOX WILL HELP LIFT ME."

HOME DELIVERY LIBRARY SERVICE

" MASSIVE THANKS FOR YOUR ESSENTIAL 'TALKING BOOKS' HOME-DELIVERY SERVICE. MY MOTHER-IN-LAW, WHO IS REGISTERED BLIND, LOOKS FORWARD TO THE MONTHLY VISIT, BOTH FOR THE NEW BATCH OF LISTENING MATERIAL AND A WARM DOORSTEP CHAT. SUPERB CUSTOMER SERVICE."

Family member of Service User

CULTURAL HUBS ARTS IN LIBRARIES

" THE EXPERIENCE WAS REFRESHING; IN THAT IT WAS A MIXTURE OF DEEP CONTEMPLATION AND EMOTIONS FILLED IN WITH LAUGHTER AND LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS."

" ABSOLUTELY STUNNING! SO WONDERFUL TO SEE SUCH DIVERSITY REPRESENTED IN SPACES SUCH AS LIBRARIES."

Audience members, Queer Art of Survival 2021

SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE

" I WOULD HONESTLY SAY THAT THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST SERVICES THAT WE HAVE; I COULDN'T RECOMMEND THIS SERVICE STRONGLY ENOUGH - COMPLETE VALUE FOR MONEY!"

Tony McCoy, Head Teacher, Sherdley Primary School

" AS A SCHOOL WE HAVE USED THE SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE FOR MANY YEARS AND HAVE ALWAYS VALUED THEIR SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE. THEY HAVE HELPED US TO RE-STOCK OUR SCHOOL LIBRARY AND HAVE ALWAYS PROVIDED HIGH QUALITY RESOURCES TO ENHANCE OUR SCHOOL CURRICULUM. IF WE HAVE EVER WANTED TO SOURCE A TEXT, THEY HAVE TAKEN THIS ON AND PROVIDED CLASS SETS. WE HAVE MADE USE OF BLUSH RESOURCES WHICH ARE AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES. WE HAVE ALSO USED THEIR OTHER RESOURCES SUCH AS STORY SACKS AND TOPIC BOXES TO SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF OUR SCHOOL CURRICULUM OFFER. THEIR STAFF HAVE VISITED SCHOOL TO PROMOTE A LOVE OF READING AND HAVE FACILITATED CLASS VISITS TO OUR LOCAL LIBRARY. I CANNOT RECOMMEND THEM HIGHLY ENOUGH."

Melanie Lockley, Head Teacher, St Bartholomew's Primary School

ST HELENS LIBRARY SERVICE IS:

A SOCIAL ENABLER

- Libraries are warm hubs, offering a safe, warm space to work in, meet or just spend time
- Libraries are designated as baby, young person and special educational needs (SEND) friendly
- Library Staff are Dementia Friends, trained as Help Around the Local Offer (HALO) supporting the SEND agenda and have been trained to Make Every Contact Count (MECC) connecting people to the wider services they need
- Libraries reduce social isolation and support the prevention agenda through a programme of events and activities
- Libraries work in partnership to offer Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) events, light exercise classes and Story Walks
- Books can be delivered direct to people's homes. The Home Delivery Library Service is essential for children and adults who are unable to access a library due to disabilities that prevent them from leaving their home.

A LEARNING ENABLER

- The Schools Library Service, offers fiction, project loans and curriculum resources to 75% of the borough's schools. The service is also offered to schools outside the borough boundary
- The Schools Library Service has become essential in supporting schools to address literacy and language skills lost during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Read and Rhyme time sessions for babies, children and their parents and pre-birth sessions for parents help to develop essential communication skills and a love of literacy from an early age
- Targeted support to improve speech, language and communication in young children through BLUSH (Books and Language Unite St Helens) and the Summer Reading Challenge
- Collaboration with partners on the Early Years and School Readiness strategies, demonstrating how the Library Service contributes to outcomes that improve children's lives
- Libraries help parents provide stimulating home learning environments through borrowing a wide variety of books, helping them get their child school ready
- Libraries provide access to PCs, Wi-Fi, printing, scanning and copying
- Libraries offer agile and study spaces for home working, school and learning opportunities.

A DIGITAL AND ECONOMIC ENABLER

- Digital eBooks, eAudio, eComics eNewspapers and eMagazines for adults, children and young people available to borrow 24/7 and free of charge
- Library staff provide help to residents to get online and assist with developing digital skills
- Library staff promote services through podcasts, social media, online book reviews and organising digital events
- Extensive social media interaction (the largest of any Library service in the Liverpool City region) through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram. Twitter is the most successful, with over 6,800 followers.

PROTECTING HERITAGE

- St Helens Archive achieved Archive Service Accreditation, the UK standard for Archive Services in 2021
- The archives are among the most important historical and cultural resources belonging to the people of the borough and the collections include documents of local and national significance. These unique, irreplaceable records offer insight into the diverse heritage and history of the borough
- The Archive is supported by a dedicated team of volunteers who assist the Archive team in the preservation and organisation of the collections.

A CULTURE ENABLER

- The Library Service is a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). This status was granted again for the second time by Arts Council England in 2022
- The Cultural Hubs mission is to provide rich and diverse arts opportunities for audiences and participants within library spaces and to support artists to inspire, challenge and enrich the lives of residents
- Libraries provide opportunities to meet authors, illustrators, artists and poets and to excite and inspire new generations of readers
- Libraries provide space for exhibitions, workshops and events
- The Arts in Libraries programme served as the cultural example in the Libraries Taskforce: Ambition for Public Libraries Document.

WHY DO WE NEED A NEW STRATEGY?

“THE WAY PEOPLE USE LIBRARIES, AND THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICES ARE CHANGING. FINANCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES ARE INCREASING. STANDING STILL IS NOT AN OPTION.”

LIBRARIES DELIVER: AMBITION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ENGLAND, 2016-2021.
DEPARTMENT FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT.



CURIOUS INVESTIGATORS AT CHESTER LANE LIBRARY

On top of the massive savings in previous years, the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy projects that the council will need to deliver an additional £25.6m in savings in the period from 23/24 to 25/26. It is expected that the costs to maintain and refurbish the aging estate of library buildings will increase over the next five years. Investment must be targeted to improve libraries and ensure the service is delivered in the most accessible places possible. Doing nothing is not an option.

The Library Service remains a valued part of the communities it serves. St Helens Borough Council has continued to invest in the Library Service, including opening the new St Helens Library in The World of Glass in 2020. There are significant budget pressures facing the Library Service and as such, the council must consider all options to deliver library provision in new and more efficient and innovative ways to create an active and sustainable service.

The resident population of St Helens Borough (183,200: Source Census 2021) is expected to grow steadily, albeit at a slower rate than for the North-West and for England as a whole. The borough has an ageing population with a higher proportion of people aged 65 years and over and proportionally fewer people of working age between 16 to 64 years old. Public sector services in St Helens are working together to manage services for all communities and focus where possible on the areas of greatest need. St Helens Borough Council recently agreed to review its delivery of services to ensure that it is tackling inequalities within the borough. Recognising that one size does not fit all, a Locality Delivery Model was agreed in March 2021.

The aim of the locality model is to establish the right service mix and standards in each agreed locality to suit the needs of the area. Locality management ensures that services are relevant and addresses local need, as well as offering the opportunity to collaborate with partners at a local level, explore alternative delivery methods and target resources to where they are needed most. Where there is more than one library in a locality the service has analysed socioeconomic, health inequality, equality, diversity and inclusion factors to focus, where possible on the areas of greatest need; and identify which libraries will remain open and which will close.

The Library Service reaches and supports the whole community regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, or educational attainment. This is reflected in what people want from their library, be that access to books to encourage a love of reading from early years to old age, a quiet place to study or a shared space for cultural events.

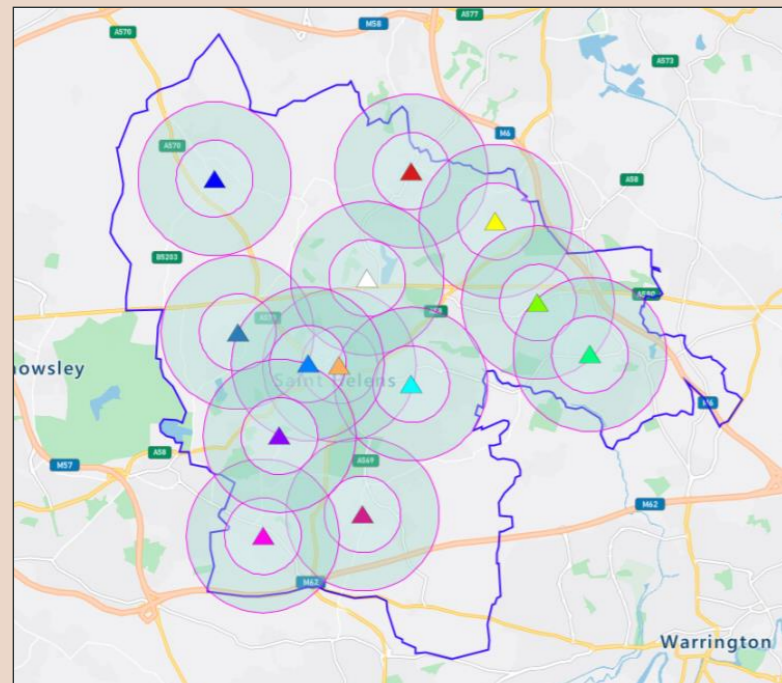
St Helens Library Service is currently delivered in-house and managed by the council. There are alternative delivery models that some other authorities use. The council intends where appropriate, to keep the service in-house but will also explore and support the development of community managed libraries in the ethos of St Helens Together. Options will continue to be reviewed over the life of the Library Strategy.



FAMILY VOGUE BALL AT ST HELENS LIBRARY

The table below shows that St Helens has one library per 14,000 population whereas Halton for example, has one per 32,000.

Borough	Halton	Sefton	Warrington	Wirral	Wigan	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	St Helens
Number of Libraries	4	6	12	14	15	17	23	13
Population	129,410	274,600	209,547	323,900	320,000	380,694	340,000	183,200
Population divided by number of libraries	32,353	45,767	17,462	23,136	21,333	22,394	14,783	14,092
Area (km2)	79.07	155	180.6	157	188.2	1,165	916.7	135
Area divided by number of libraries	19.77	25.83	15.05	6.82	12.54	68.53	39.85	10.38



The map shows the location of each library and its one and two-kilometre catchments. Many of the libraries are relatively close to at least one other. The Library Service needs to continue to evolve to meet changing community needs, respond to the different ways customers want to access services and deliver in partnership at a community level. To meet the council's priority of being a modern, efficient and effective council it is essential to ensure service delivery is as efficient and effective as possible.



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

We know that our customers are diverse. They are of all ages, backgrounds and abilities and have different aspirations. Equally each has their own preference for how and when to access library services. We will continue to provide the Library Service in a way that has regard to our duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

The development of the Library Strategy has been influenced by the findings of detailed Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), which have been completed to identify the impact of proposed changes on people who share different protected characteristics. There are separate EIA for:

- all libraries which assess the implications of both the proposed closures and the proposed changes in delivery including operating hours,
- Digital Library Service
- Home Delivery Library Service.

Using library membership and local demographic data, the impact assessments have identified that library closures will impact on all local residents and users.

The EIA identified that people who share the protected characteristics of age, disability and sex (women and girls) and those from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities were most likely to be disadvantaged by the proposed Library Strategy:

- Greater numbers of library membership in children and young people and older people in the libraries that are proposed to close (age).
- Groups that meet in the libraries that are proposed to close are predominantly attended by children, older people and women (age; sex).
- More female library members than male use libraries that are proposed to close (sex)
- Disabled and/or older people using libraries that are proposed to close may find it more difficult to travel to alternative library provision and may need to request the Home Delivery Library Service (age; disability).
- Those from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities are less likely to travel to an alternative library but will instead choose to download books/magazines online

There will be low impact on the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

The data used to assess the impact of the closures on the protected characteristics includes library group attendance, library membership data and library performance data as well as census and ONS data. The impact of the library closures on individuals with protected characteristics includes difficulty travelling to other libraries, lack of access to books and other resources, lack of access to library digital

provision, potential loss of social interaction and the impact on mental health and wellbeing from the loss of a safe, neutral space within the community.

The identified mitigations include signposting to alternative library provision both within and outside the borough, providing travel planning information to other libraries (bus routes etc.), promotion of digital services and access to the Home Delivery Library Service where appropriate.

It is acknowledged that despite these mitigations, it is probable that a negative impact of a library closing will be experienced by some people who share protected characteristics, reducing their opportunity to engage in public life through a safe, library space.



POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACT	ACTION REQUIRED TO MITIGATE THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACT
<p>The closure of libraries will impact on groups with protected characteristics who are current users, and any person who wishes to access its library provision, whether they live in the community or elsewhere within the Borough. The groups most likely to be affected are disabled people, older people, and families with young children and disabled children.</p>	<p>The library website has been updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light: Library Light means any customer with a library card can access libraries across the Liverpool City Region.</p> <p>Digital support: This will be targeted at those who most need it, including older people, users with a disability (e.g., visual impairment). Better marketing and promotion of the e-library service offer is needed, as some people may be able to download books, audio, newspapers, magazines and comics to their own devices.</p> <p>Familiarisation visits: The Library Service will offer familiarisation visits to other libraries for older people and families with young children who may feel anxious about visiting new libraries. This could help them to feel welcome to visit other libraries, encourage them to continue to attend groups and activities that promote social, emotional, and wellbeing support, and to help with the adjustment to the loss of their familiar library space.</p> <p>Home Delivery Library Service: The consultation results will be analysed to assist with the referrals process onto the Home Delivery Library Service, providing people meet the referral criteria as a reasonable adjustment to mitigate any barrier to library service access that they might experience as a direct result of the proposed closures.</p> <p>The consultation exercise has reinforced the importance and need for this service and consequently it is now proposed to double its capacity.</p> <p>Click and Collect: The consultation exercise has identified an opportunity to develop a further reasonable adjustment, a click and collect service where residents can call or email the service requesting books which can then be collected by a friend, relative or neighbours.</p>

POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACT	ACTION REQUIRED TO MITIGATE THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACT
<p>Changes to Library opening hours may impact on people who share different protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Signposting: As a mitigation to age impact, alternative library provision will be signposted to service users to inform them that both St Helens and Newton Libraries will be open 10am to 7pm on Mondays and 10am to 1pm on Saturdays and that library provision is available after school/work and at weekends. The digital library service is also available 24/7, with access to e-books/audio/newspapers/magazines</p>
<p>Some disabled people, older people and families with young children and those from the BAME Community may find it difficult to travel to other libraries. There is a potential impact for people who share these protected characteristics where their local library will close. Some may find it difficult to travel to other libraries if they are required to walk certain distances, travel lengthy routes, or take a journey which requires them to change bus or train to get to a library. There may also be a financial barrier to accessing alternative travel methods.</p>	<p>Signposting to alternative library provision: The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and disabled parking bays for each library. The Home Delivery Library Service will be offered to people as a reasonable adjustment to mitigate any barrier to library service access that they might experience as a direct result of the proposed closures, providing they meet the referral criteria.</p> <p>Digital support will be targeted at those who most need it. Better marketing and promotion of the e-library service offer is needed, as some people may be able to download books, audio, newspapers, magazines and comics to their own devices.</p>
<p>Some disabled people, older people, children and people from the BAME community rely on regular visits to their library to socialise and establish friendships and experience social and emotional support. User feedback suggests that many people who share different protected characteristics feel the library is a safe, familiar place in which they are comfortable, included and respected. There is a potential impact for people who share these protected characteristics where their local library will close.</p>	<p>Familiarisation visits to other libraries: These will be offered to disabled people, older people and people with young families who may feel upset and angry that their library is closing and/or anxious about visiting other libraries. This will help them to feel welcome to visit other libraries, encourage them to continue to attend groups that promote social, emotional and wellbeing support and to help with the adjustment to the loss of their familiar library space.</p> <p>Staff will signpost vulnerable residents to additional support agencies.</p>

POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACT	ACTION REQUIRED TO MITIGATE THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACT
<p>The Library Service currently only collects data related to the protected characteristics of age, disability and race when someone joins the library, providing they complete the membership form fully. Therefore, there may be users visiting the library who are not library members but have one of the protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Library Membership Form: The Library Membership form will be updated to ensure it captures all protected characteristics to allow the service to better monitor use.</p>
<p>Local schools and nurseries who visit libraries that are proposed to close to look at books and find out about the services on offer.</p>	<p>Outreach: Provide an outreach offer targeting schools and community settings which serve communities affected by Library closures, to ensure the continued engagement of young people in initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge.</p> <p>Seek to identify community locations where the service can deliver Library activities such as Read and Rhyme, Digital and Information Literacy, Book Clubs etc.</p>
<p>Local groups which use a library that is proposed to close to meet will be negatively impacted.</p>	<p>Tailored Support: Specific engagement with groups in each library to support, if necessary, with the relocation of their exhibitions and displays.</p>
<p>The closure of libraries may result in an increase in referrals from disabled people onto the Home Delivery Library Service.</p>	<p>Improve the Home Delivery Referral Process: Develop a reasonable adjustment checklist to determine eligibility to the service for future self-referrals from disabled people. The consultation exercise has reinforced the importance and need for this service and consequently it is now proposed to double its capacity.</p> <p>Click and Collect: The consultation exercise has identified an opportunity to develop a further reasonable adjustment, a click and collect service where residents can call or email the service requesting books which can then be collected by a friend, relative or neighbours.</p>
<p>The closure of libraries may result in an increase in usage of the Digital Library Service if the Strategy is adopted.</p>	<p>Promote the Digital Library Service: Better promotion/ awareness of the Digital Library Strategy. Providing training for customers so they can access the digital library offer at any time of the day. Supporting customers to download books and offering tablet/device loan to access on-line provision. Seek to identify community locations in communities served by libraries that will close where the service can deliver Digital and Information Literacy.</p>



HOW HAS CONSULTATION SHAPED THE STRATEGY?

YOU SAID...	WE PROPOSE TO...
The closure of Central Library was the reason you no longer use libraries	Re-open Central Library in the Gamble during the life of the Library Strategy
Grouping libraries with other support services in a shared space was a popular idea	Co-locate libraries with other services where practical
Opening hours: Libraries should be accessible outside of school and work hours	Review Library opening hours regularly, ensuring they continue to meet need
Expand the Home Delivery Library Service to deliver and collect from people's homes	Ensure those residents with disabilities that create a barrier to leaving their home will continue to receive a library service should the proposals to close libraries be adopted. The capacity of the service will also be doubled.
Participants said they would be unable to travel to another library should their library close	Introduce Click and Collect to allow friends and family to collect books for library users unable to travel to a library in person. Explore the viability of delivering a book loan service to care settings within the borough
Children and Young People would not be able to access books should their local library close	Provide an outreach offer targeting schools and community settings which serve communities affected by Library closures, to ensure the continued engagement of young people in initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge
There was a noted preference for partnership working with a charity/social enterprise or a community group	Establish a dedicated library outreach team to work in partnership and deliver library activities within the community

YOU SAID...	WE PROPOSE TO...
Participants thought retaining libraries in areas where there are digitally excluded communities is key. Access to computers and the internet is an essential service for some people	Focus service delivery on the communities of greatest need and deliver training and support to those who are digitally excluded. Identify community locations in communities served by libraries that will close where the service can deliver Digital and Information Literacy workshops and training. Review the digital offer to improve accessibility and focus on demand. Increase the range of IT devices, particularly touch screen, available to the public within Libraries. Work with city region partners to deliver the LCR Digital Inclusion Plan.
For each library building, it is essential to ensure there is enough parking provision and good public transport links	Re-locate libraries to locations which are more accessible by both car and public transport
Training and support would be needed in order to take on a Community Managed Library offer	Work with Halton and St Helens VCA to provide training

Although the 2021 consultation asked if people were in favour of St Helens Borough Council reducing the number of libraries it runs, it did not specifically ask about the impact on people with protected characteristics should their library close, nor did it consult over changes to opening hours. Further consultation was undertaken in 2023 which invited everyone, including individuals and groups with protected characteristics to have their say on the Library Strategy and the specific proposals contained within, before any final decision on the review of library provision was considered by the council.

2023 CONSULTATION

Further consultation will be undertaken in 2023 which will invite everyone, including individuals and groups with protected characteristics to have their say on the Library Strategy and Delivery Plan and the specific proposals contained within, before any final decision on the review of library provision is considered by the council.

Consultation objective

- To raise awareness of the draft Library Strategy and the approach for a modern, effective and accessible library service
 - To encourage customers, residents and communities to have their say on the proposals for the future of the library service including the specific proposal around library closures
 - To communicate to stakeholders about developing outreach library services and opportunities to promote the digital library service
 - To communicate to stakeholders which libraries will be retained and which ones are proposed to close and why
 - To encourage existing customers of the library service to consider new ways to access services differently
 - To involve a wide range of users and non-users in the decision-making process to shape the new Library Strategy and service
- To ensure that those with protected characteristics that currently access library services are informed and encouraged to respond to the consultation to ensure their needs and the impacts of the draft Library Strategy proposals on them have been robustly considered

The methods of engagement, awareness raising, and consultation are summarised as follows:

- **Social media advertising:** To notify all residents, businesses, and stakeholders within the Borough of the consultation
- **Stakeholder social media posts:** Stakeholders will be encouraged to publish their own social media posts, advertising the consultation
- **Press activity:** Press releases shall be issued to key local publications, with references to the consultation and an invitation to respond
- **St Helens Library Strategy webpage and online survey:** will include a summary of the draft strategy and a survey link, for residents to respond
- **Paper Based surveys:** paper questionnaires will be available in all libraries and the main council buildings including the Town Hall and customer contact centre. Questionnaires will be available in other languages and formats on request

- **Street Survey:** a Market Research Company will engage with a proposed representative sample of residents and users, (circa 2,200).
- **Membership survey:** All library members where contact details exist will be sent a notification of the consultation and a link to the online survey. They will also be informed of where they can access the Paper version of the survey
- **Drop in/roadshow information sessions:** in libraries for people to find out more. The dates and times of these will be placed in each library and added to the council's website. All group users of the libraries will be contacted direct to inform them of the drop ins
- **Specific target group engagement to include:** engagement with individuals and groups with protected characteristics who currently use libraries to meet. This will be led by the Libraries Management and Equalities Teams who will proactively seek support and encourage them to respond to the consultation
- **Summary fact sheets** will be made available for each local library providing information on the range of services currently on offer in individual libraries, insight into trends in usage and current costs. In addition, information will be made available on alternative models and how communities in other parts of the country are helping to deliver the service.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT IN FIVE YEARS TIME?

We will consider this strategy to have achieved our ambitions for the Library Service if by 2028:

- There are more people using libraries; loans of both physical and digital books increase, visits increase, attendances at events increase
- There is a targeted outreach programme, working in partnership to ensure access to library provision is where it is most needed
- More people use the Digital Library Service, with increased opportunities for library staff to offer training and support to people to download e-books and access digital technology
- Library buildings have been improved and co-located where possible and are open at optimal times
- Central Library and the Archive Service will have returned to the Gamble building following refurbishment
- Haydock Library will be the first fully sensory library for children and young people with SEND in the borough
- Archive Service Accreditation is retained and the number of visits to the Archive is increased
- National Portfolio Organisation status has been retained and there is an increased number of arts and cultural activities and events across the Borough

- The Schools Library Service continues to operate with schools accessing resources
- The Home Delivery Library Service extends its customer base using a reasonable adjustment checklist to determine eligibility for future self-referrals
- St Helens residents and community groups are much more involved, with libraries run by or run jointly with community groups/partners and volunteers
- Customer feedback and insight will continue to be used to improve and develop the service offer
- Funding and investment is secured that improves and diversifies the services offered
- Commercial opportunities will continue to be explored and the Library Service operates at lower cost
- The service continues to contribute to reducing inequalities and increasing aspiration and ambition.



BESTSELLING AUTHOR MILLY JOHNSON VISITS ST HELENS LIBRARY SERVICE
DURING BOROUGH OF CULTURE 2023

FOCUSSING RESOURCES AT AREAS OF GREATEST NEED

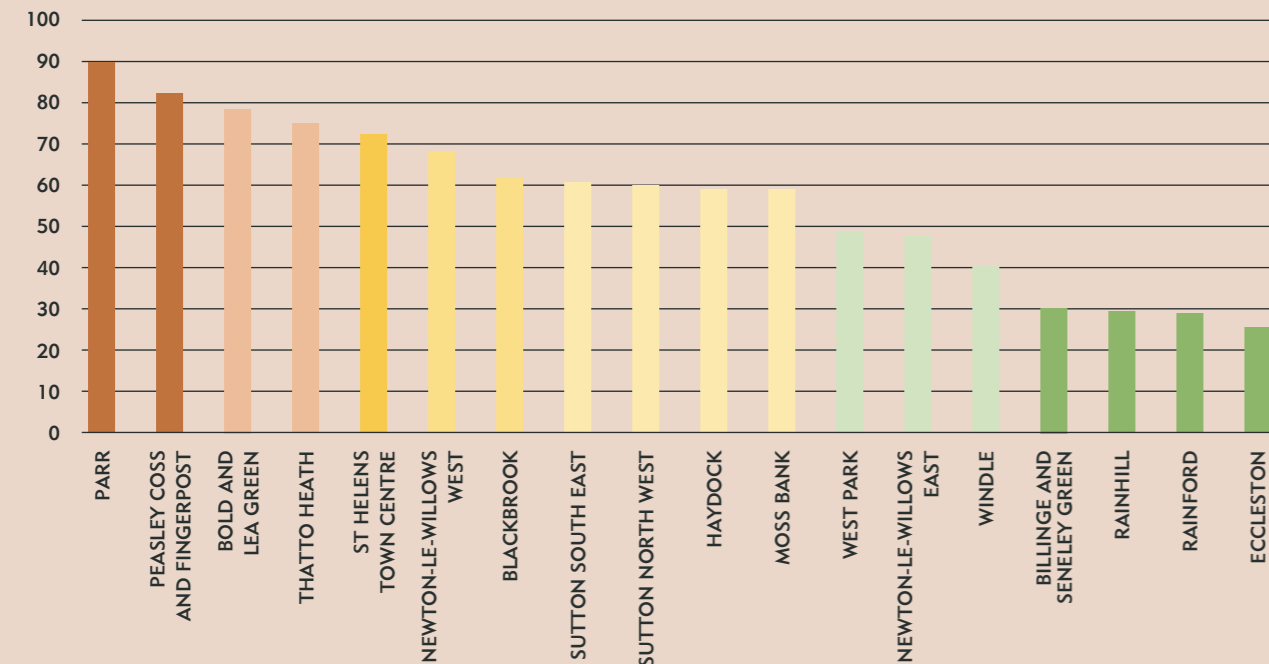
As part of the development of the Library Strategy we have looked at a series of measures to determine where need is greatest.

These measures are set out below:

The graph below shows each wards rankings totalled for the following:

- Educational Attainment
- Health Inequalities
- Deprivation
- Community Safety
- Proportion of young people
- Proportion of older people

OVERALL RANKING TOTAL



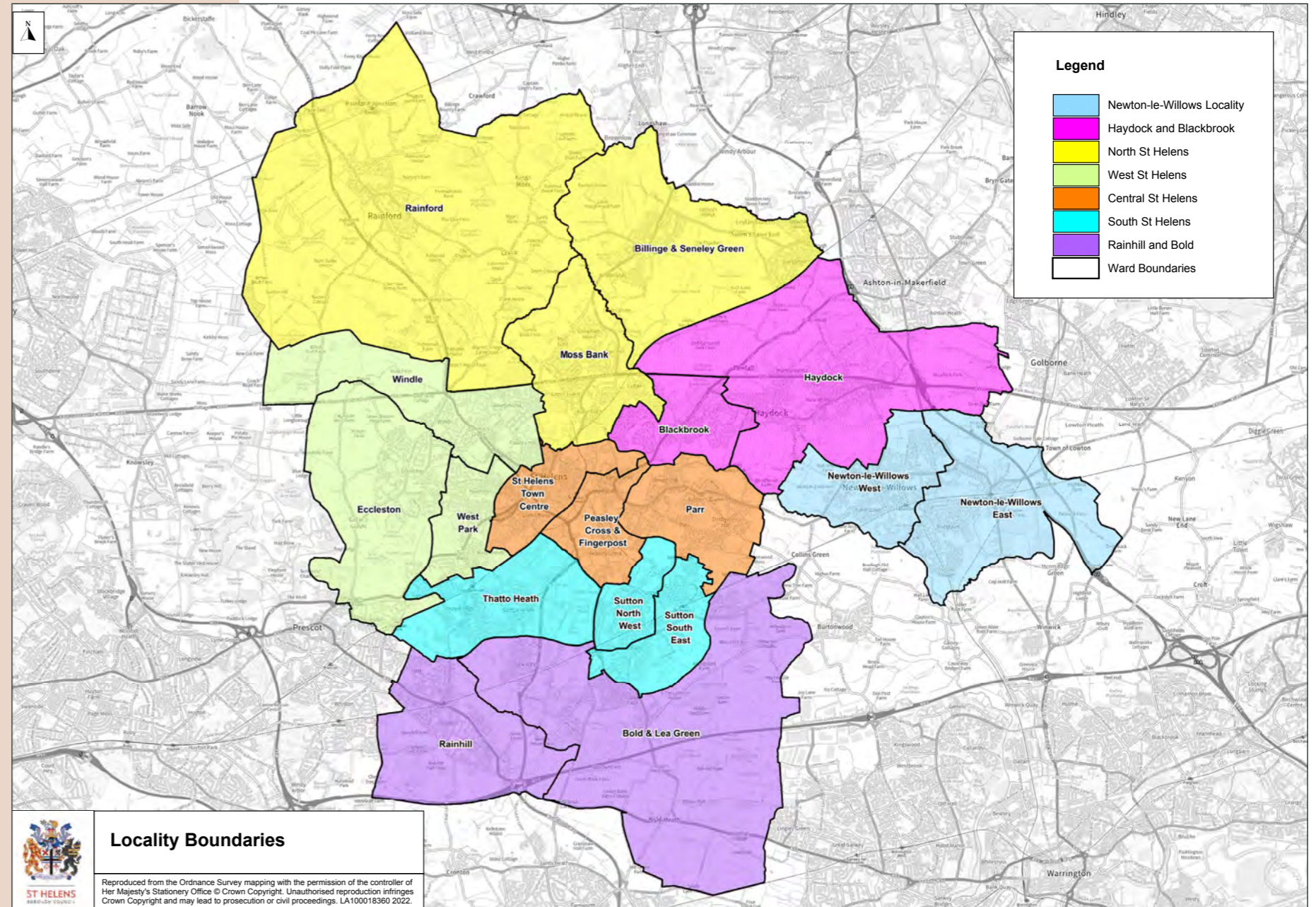
WARD	LIBRARY	EDUCATION RANKING	HEALTH INEQUALITIES RANKING	DEPRIVATION RANKING	COMMUNITY SAFETY RANKING	YOUNG PEOPLE RANKING	OLDER PEOPLE RANKING	OVERALL RANKING TOTAL
PARR	PARR LIBRARY	17	18	18	18	18	1	90
PEASLEY CROSS AND FINGERPOST	N/A	17	16	17	15	17	2	84
BOLD AND LEA GREEN	CHESTER LANE LIBRARY	16	11	15	15	15	6	78
THATTO HEATH	THATTO HEATH LIBRARY	12	14	14	14	13	8	75
ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE	ST HELENS & PETER ST. LIBRARIES	13	17	16	17	7	4	74
NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS WEST	NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS LIBRARY	14	12	12	10	16	3	67
BLACKBROOK	N/A	15	10	8	9	7	14	63
SUTTON SOUTH EAST	N/A	10	15	11	10	5	10	61
SUTTON NORTH WEST	N/A	9	13	10	12	5	11	60
HAYDOCK	HAYDOCK LIBRARY	11	7	5	13	10	12	58
MOSS BANK	MOSS BANK LIBRARY	7	8	13	6	11	13	58
WEST PARK	N/A	6	9	9	8	9	7	48
NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS EAST	N/A	8	6	7	7	13	5	46
WINDLE	N/A	4	5	6	5	12	9	41
BILLINGE & SENELEY GREEN	BILLINGE & GARSWOOD LIBRARIES	2	4	4	3	1	17	31
RAINHILL	RAINHILL LIBRARY	2	3	3	4	2	16	30
RAINFORD	RAINFORD LIBRARY	5	1	2	1	2	18	29
ECCLESTON	ECCLESTON LIBRARY	1	2	1	2	4	15	25

LOCALITY DELIVERY

At a time when the Council's funding from Central Government is reducing, the Locality model will enable the council to target its resources at those areas with the greatest needs, whilst empowering and enabling residents to manage and deliver services in areas where there is capacity and community support to do so.

The ambition of the Library Strategy is to establish a network of 7 libraries and restructure the existing resource to tackle inequalities. Each of the 7 localities will have statutory library provision and where there is currently more than one library in a locality, the one best placed to serve the areas of greatest need will be retained.

- Service efficiencies through combined service delivery models resulting in cost avoidance through multi-purpose teams and multi-functional buildings
- Focus on outcomes and offers not just services and buildings
- Staff to make every contact count with visitors
- Continuity of support and consistency of customer experience
- A skilled workforce responsive to need and focused on strengths, assets and outcomes
- A digital and agile offer by default
- Solutions tailored to need in local communities
- The offer to be adapted using robust data and intelligence.



CENTRAL ST HELENS

ST HELENS LIBRARY

It is proposed that St Helens Library will serve this locality.

The library will remain in the World of Glass until the refurbishment of the Gamble building is complete, at which time it will move back to be accommodated with St Helens Archive.

PARR LIBRARY

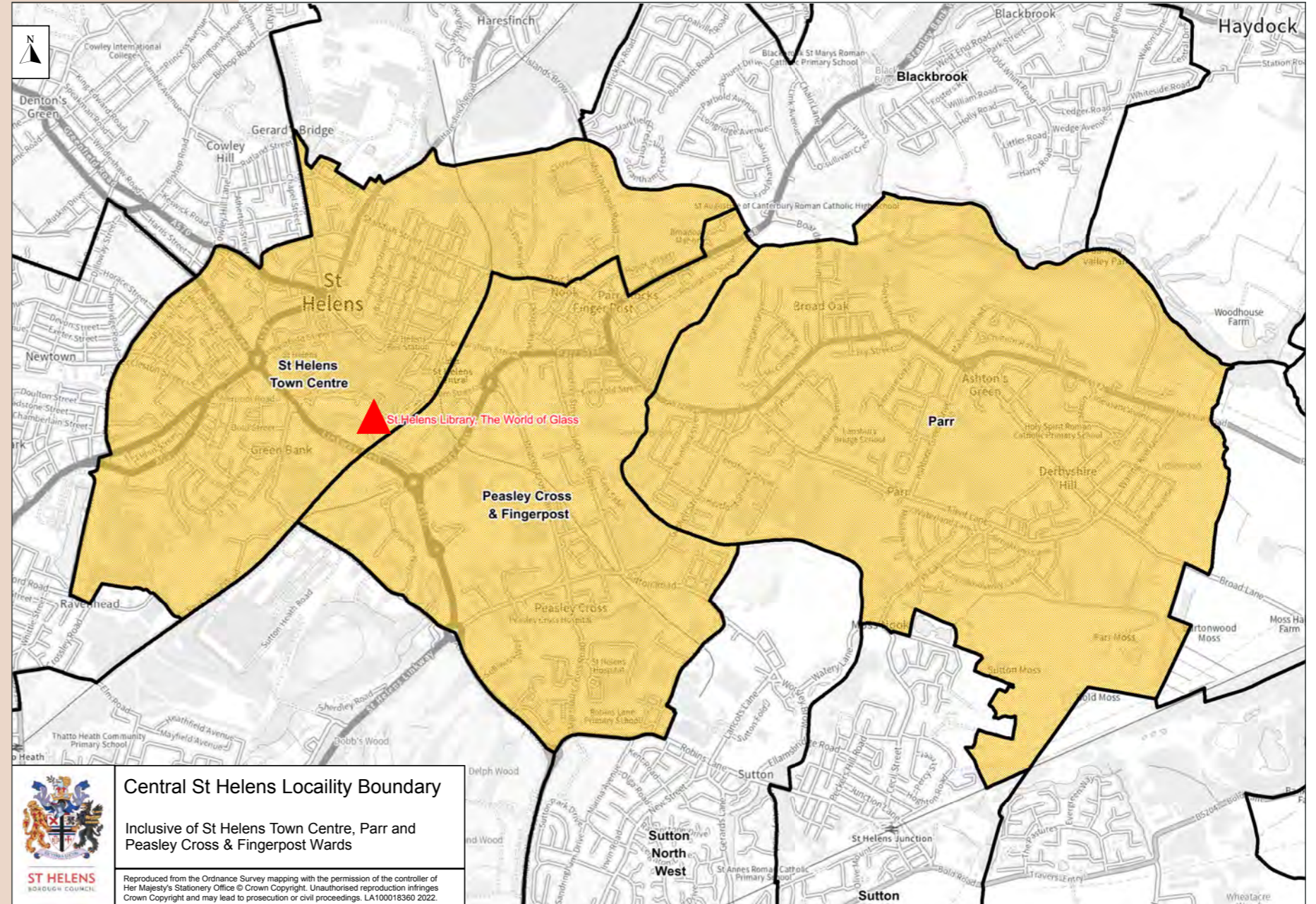
It is proposed to close this library.

The Parr ward has the highest level of deprivation, scoring 90, however the current low usage and footfall demonstrates that the existing library service provision is failing to reach the community in this area. It is therefore proposed to replace this provision with outreach work with partners, directly taking the library service into the heart of the community. The closest library is St Helens (because of its proximity within the locality and relative ease of access via public transport). St Helens Library is accessible to disabled people and the wider community, has a car park and is on bus routes.

The building will be declared surplus to requirements and referred to the Strategic Property Group for consideration as to its future use, which may include its use as a community managed library. This would be determined if suitable under the Community Asset Transfer Policy.

PETER STREET LIBRARY

Due to the termination of the lease this library closed on 31st March 2023. There are three other libraries within two miles of Peter Street library with St Helens Library due to its strong transport links being the best placed to continue to serve the community.



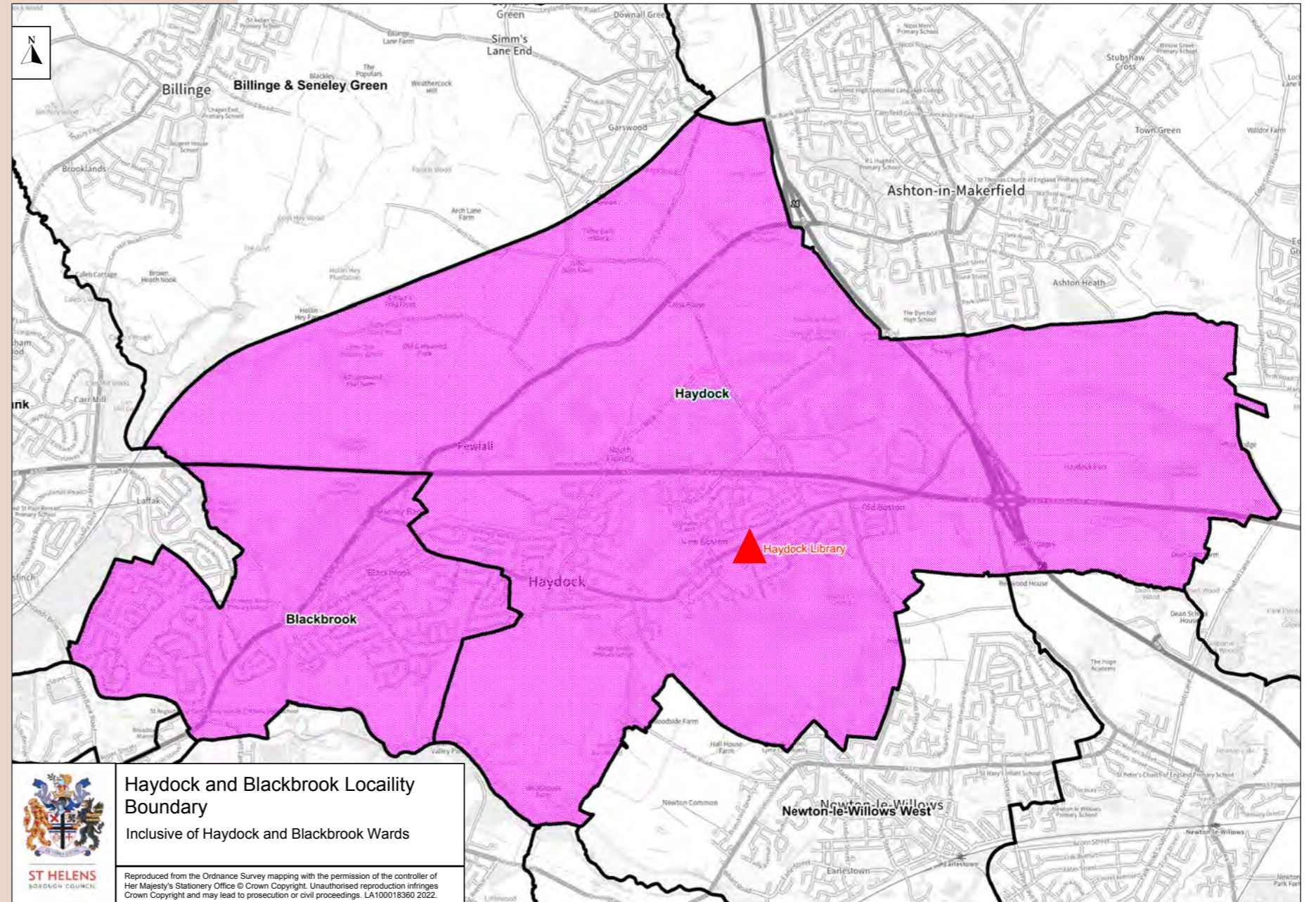
HAYDOCK AND BLACKBROOK

HAYDOCK LIBRARY

It is proposed that Haydock Library will serve this locality.

The library will remain in its current location, opening hours will be adjusted to reflect customer usage.

By 2025, Haydock Library will be the first fully sensory library for children and young people with SEND in the borough following a successful application to the Libraries Improvement Fund.



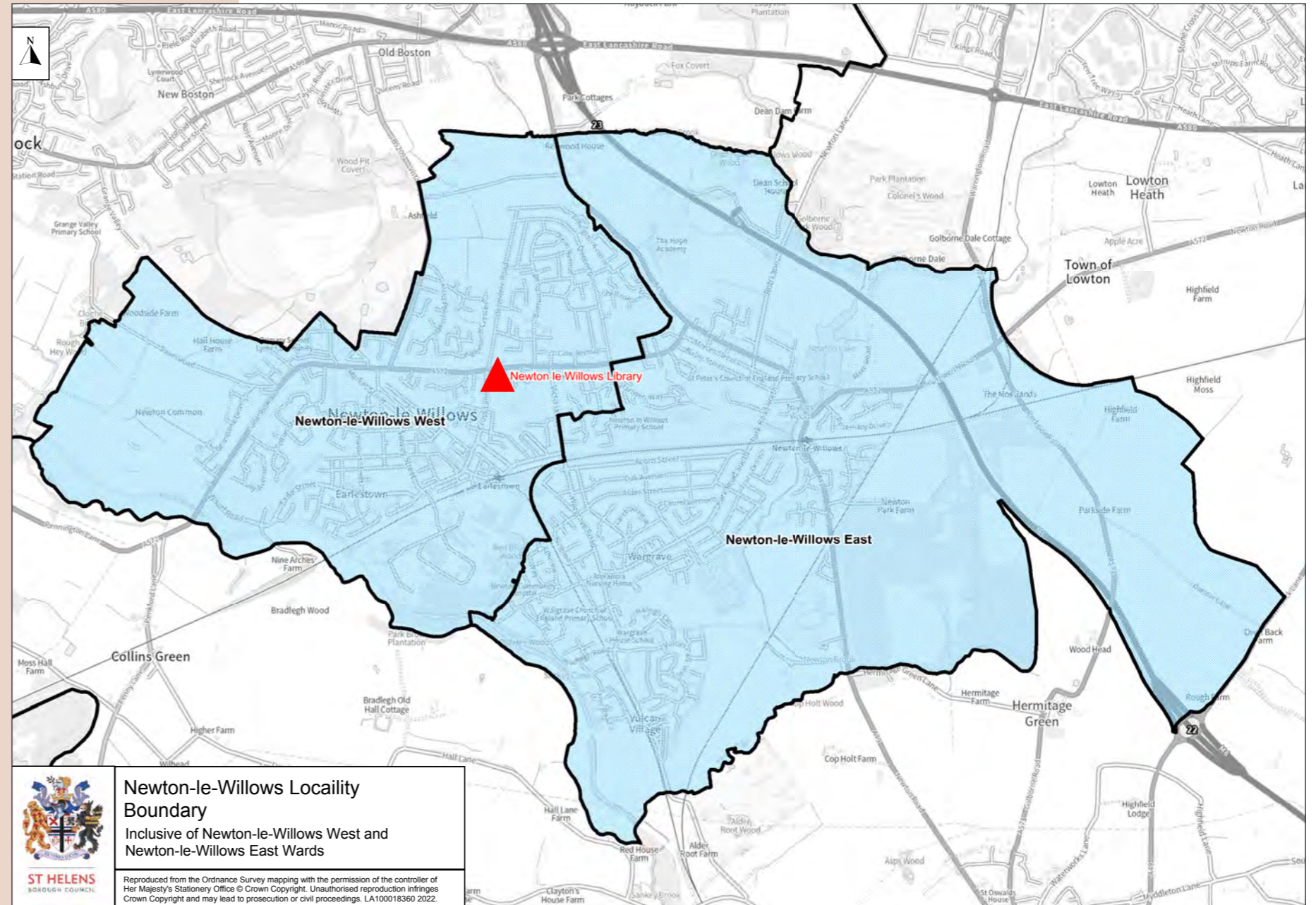
NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS

NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS LIBRARY

It is proposed that Newton Le Willows Library will serve this locality.

The library will remain in its current location and opening hours will be adjusted to reflect customer usage.

Options will be explored to relocate the service as part of the Earlestown Town Centre regeneration plans. Any options will be explored in consultation with the community.



NORTH ST HELENS

BILLINGE LIBRARY

The current library building is closed and requires significant investment, and this coupled with the low need score for the ward means that the library is identified for closure.

The closest libraries are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). Both libraries are accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.

Billinge Parish Council have expressed an interest in pursuing a Community Managed Library approach and has engaged an architect to explore the possibility of extending and adapting their premises in the community to accommodate a new Community Managed Library. Billinge Parish Council have indicated that it may require capital assistance to facilitate the changes. Further work will be done to seek to develop this alternative service provision. The building will be declared surplus to requirements.

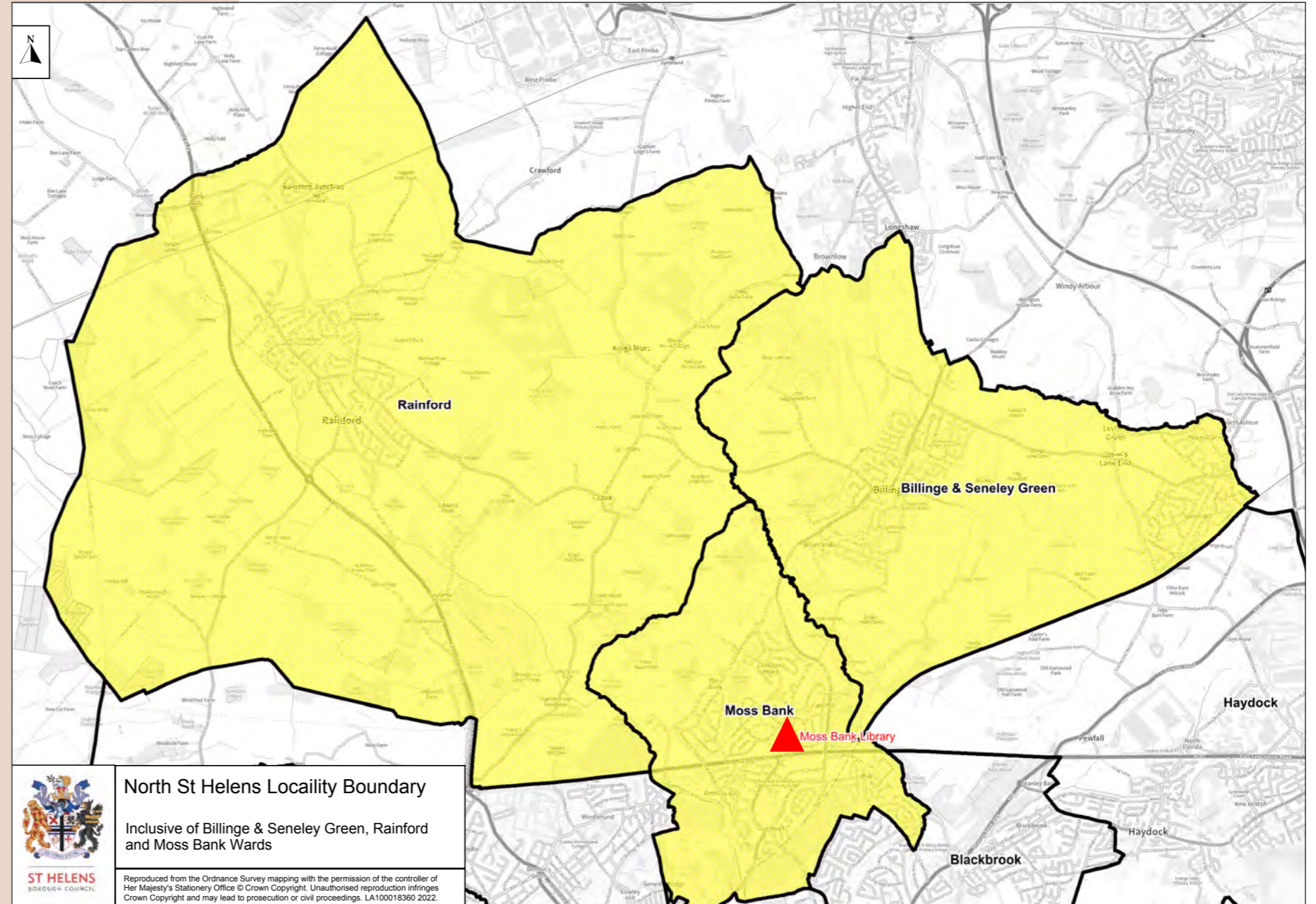
GARSWOOD LIBRARY

It is proposed to close this library.

The current lease from the Liverpool Diocese will be surrendered.

Council welcomes contact from any organisation or volunteers interested in operating a Community Managed Library. Council Officers are currently in discussion with Community Health Partnerships (CHP) to consider opportunities to have a book loan facility within the Garswood Medical Centre.

The closest libraries are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). Both libraries are accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.



NORTH ST HELENS (CONTINUED)

MOSS BANK LIBRARY

It is proposed that Moss Bank Library will serve this locality.

The library will remain in its current location until a co-location plan is developed. Opening hours will be adjusted to reflect customer usage.

The viability of co-locating within Moss Bank Children's Centre is being explored. The current building is leased from Torus. Once a new location is identified the lease will be surrendered.

RAINFORD LIBRARY

It is proposed to close this library.

This area has the second lowest need score and therefore it is proposed that the library will close. Rainford Parish Council and the community have expressed an interest in pursuing a Community Managed Library approach. It is proposed to work with Rainford community members and the Rainford Parish Council to explore how a Community-Managed Library could be developed in the existing building with the potential for a community asset transfer.

The closest libraries are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). Both libraries are accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.

The building will be declared surplus to requirements.



RAINHILL AND BOLD

CHESTER LANE LIBRARY

It is proposed that Chester Lane Library will serve this locality.

This is where the Library Support Unit, Home Delivery and Schools Library Services are located as well as the public library.

Opening hours will be adjusted to reflect customer usage. Work has commenced to investigate the refurbishment or replacement of the building to create a Locality Hub for a range of co-located services.

RAINHILL LIBRARY

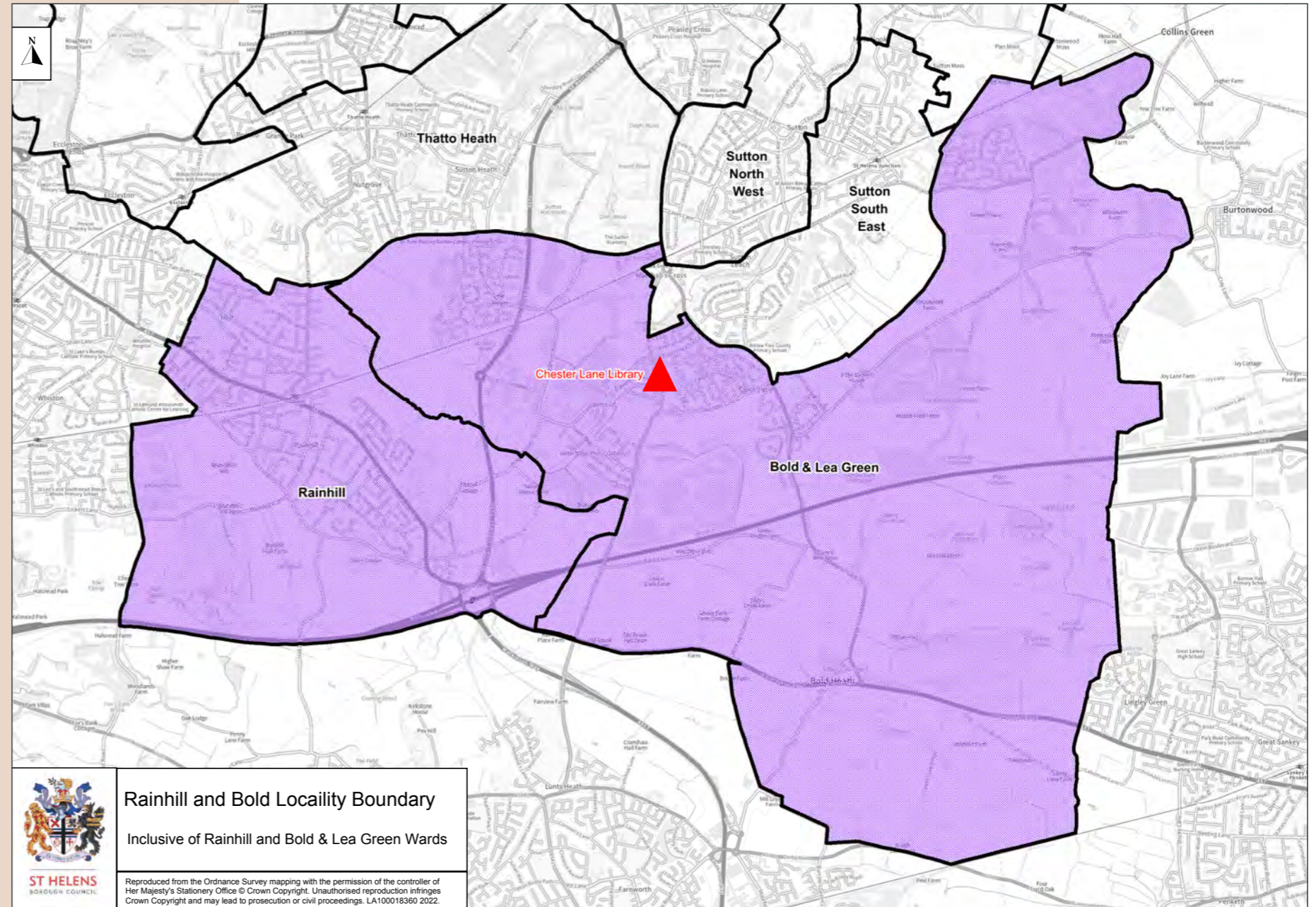
It is proposed to close this library.

There are two libraries within the Rainhill and Bold locality. On the index of need, the Rainhill ward scores 30 whereas the Bold and Lea Green ward scores 78, for this reason it is recommended that the Chester Lane Library is retained as it serves the area of greatest need in this locality.

The closest libraries are Thatto Heath (because of its proximity to the Rainhill ward) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.

The Rainhill library site accommodates the Rainhill Trials exhibition, which does not belong to the Council and is not part of the statutory library offer. Should an organisation not be willing to take on a lease for the site, the Rainhill Trials exhibition will need to be relocated. Officer support will be provided to the Rainhill Railway and Heritage Society to assist with this exercise.

The building will be declared surplus to requirements.

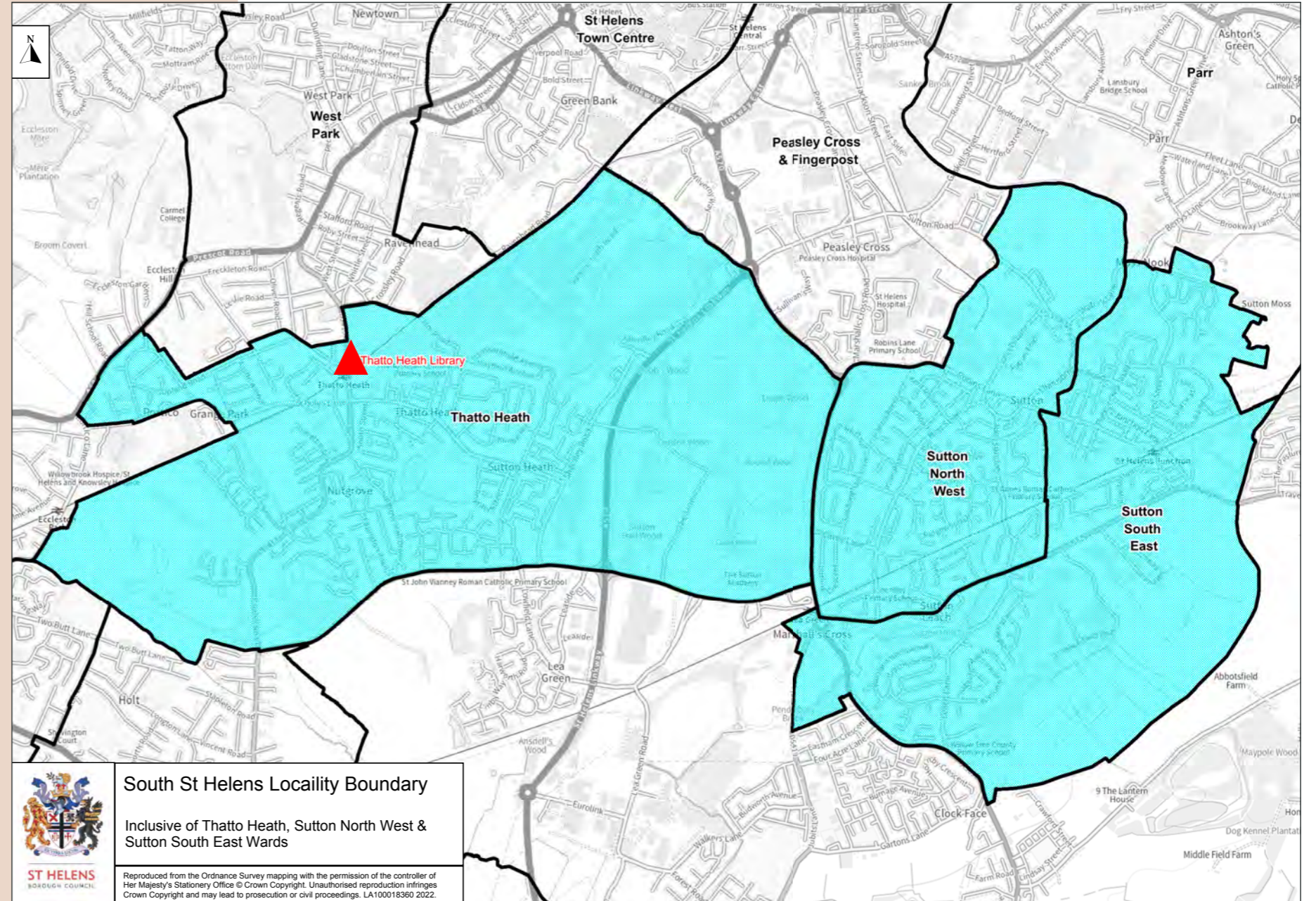


SOUTH ST HELENS

THATTO HEATH LIBRARY

It is proposed that Thatto Heath Library will serve this locality.

The library will remain in the current building, opening hours will be adjusted to reflect customer usage. The building condition will be reviewed and improved.

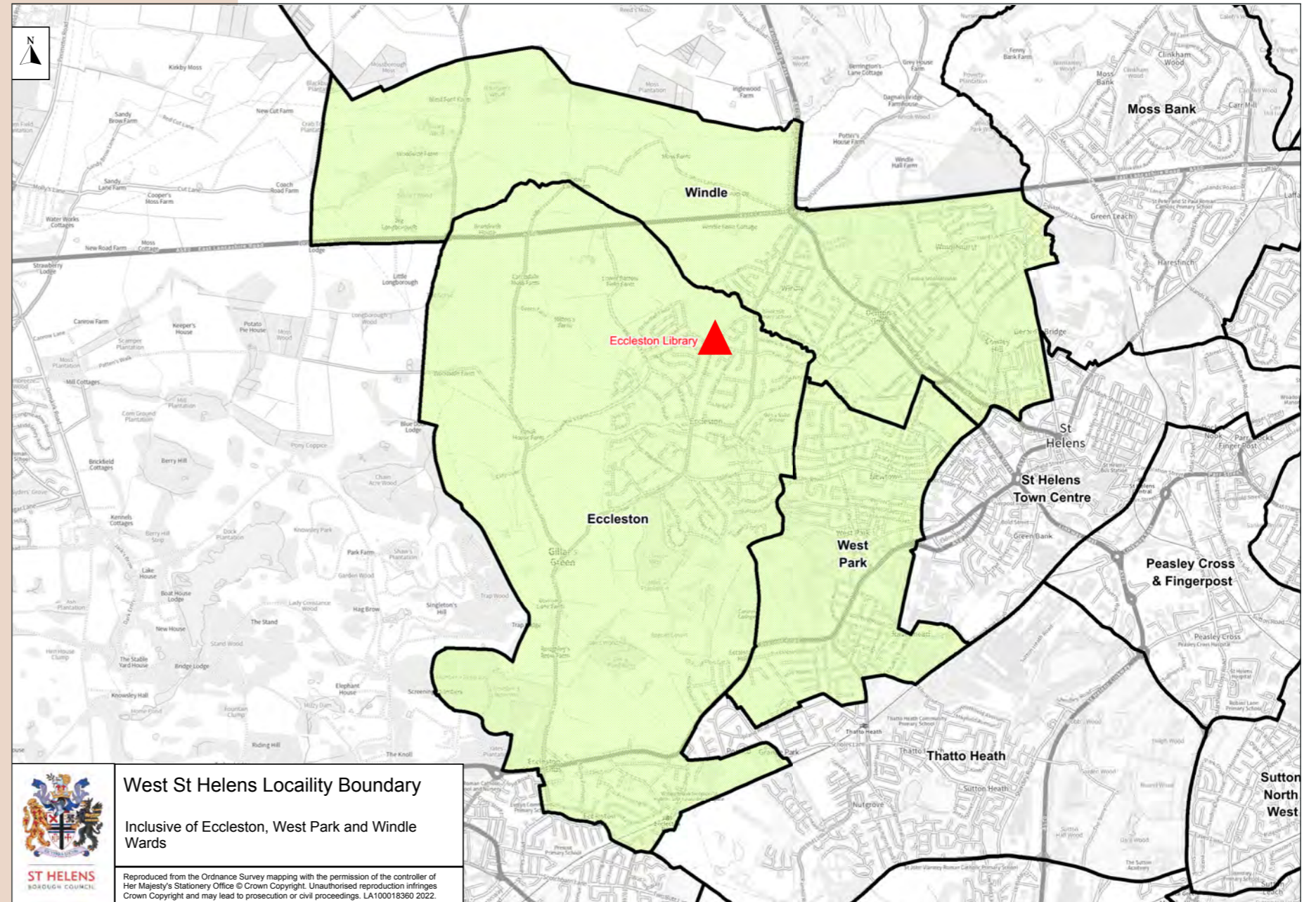


WEST ST HELENS

ECCLESTON LIBRARY

It is proposed that Eccleston Library will serve this locality.

The library will remain in its current location, opening hours will be adjusted to reflect customer usage. As part of the council estates review, options for co-locating other council partners together in a new locality hub building in this locality will be explored.



LIBRARY BUILDINGS

This strategy is about the Library Service as a whole, not just its buildings, but library buildings are often seen as valuable community assets and many people will be concerned about their future use. The council will make the most efficient use of library buildings, whether owned by the council, other public bodies or community organisations.

With the introduction of the council's Locality Management model, it is hoped that most libraries will be in shared spaces by 2028. Running costs and the current condition of the buildings will be reviewed, with a view to bringing all libraries up to a consistent standard, refurbishing where possible and providing self-serve kiosks/ upgraded IT provision.

This includes considering the most appropriate location for libraries. In the future, library

services could be provided from a range of outlets, such as shared locations with others, new spaces provided as part of housing or retail developments or co-located in community centres, Family Hubs and Children's Centres, shops, leisure centres or other locations.

IN MOST CASES, IT IS EXPECTED THAT LIBRARIES WILL BE PROVIDED IN ALTERNATIVE, IMPROVED LOCATIONS DURING THE LIFE OF THE STRATEGY, INCLUDING CENTRAL LIBRARY RETURNING TO THE GAMBLE BUILDING.

The buildings will be declared surplus to requirements.

THE GAMBLE BUILDING



RESOURCES AND INVESTMENT

In the context of significant budget pressure over the coming years, the council needs to do more than simply identify savings each year. It must transform services to make them sustainable and fit for the future. St Helens Borough Council needs to think very differently about how it will operate its Library Service to be more innovative, entrepreneurial and commercially minded.

Current investment includes:

- £708,927 Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation funding from 2023/24 to 2025/26 to continue to deliver the arts in libraries programme
- £249,742 National Lottery Heritage Funding to deliver the Creative Underground programme in 2023/24
- £275,960 Arts Council England Libraries Improvement Funding to modernise Haydock Library making it fully sensory for children and young people with SEND by 2025.

As plans develop, additional investment through funding will be sought to modernise and enhance library spaces.

Additional sources of funding for the Library Service will be considered including:

- Funding for the redevelopment of the Gamble Building
- Heritage Lottery Funding to redevelop and modernise the Borough Archives

- Libraries Improvement Fund to modernise library spaces.
- LibraryOn digital grants funding to modernise online presences.
- Encouraging local fundraising to support the delivery of library services.
- Reviewing fees and charges and exploring the introduction of the sale of complementary products
- Further developing digital delivery channels
- Seeking contributions from developers such as planning gain, where appropriate.

During the life of the strategy, investment in innovative technology and library spaces where opportunities present themselves will take place and will include:

- Upskilling staff to improve the service to users.
- Continuing to implement innovative technology to expand access.
- The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy approved several pipeline schemes in February 2023 subject to detailed design and feasibility. These schemes will support the delivery of the locality model of working and will include capital investment to develop and modernise the statutory libraries retained.





LIBRARY SERVICE STAFF

Our library, archive and arts staff are at the heart of the Library Service offer. Feedback from both customers and partners shows they are hugely valued and trusted. Over the course of this strategy and beyond, it is an ambition to attract, retain, and develop talent and to continue to deliver positive and inclusive work linked to Borough Strategy outcomes:

Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life

Library staff are essential in supporting literacy and learning, by providing read and rhyme times, class visits and reading sessions for young children, instruction sessions to access online services, author led events, school readiness programmes, cultural and arts events and access to heritage and local history information. Our Schools Library Service is essential in supporting schools in teaching and empowering children.

Promote good health independence and care across communities

Library staff contribute to fighting isolation and promoting wellbeing. Libraries keep communities connected and support the most vulnerable by offering a range of resources and activities to support good mental health and that increase social networks. The Home Delivery Library Service is essential in supporting vulnerable and isolated residents who cannot get to a library.

Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all

Library staff offer excellent customer service putting customers' needs at the centre of what they do and providing expertise and digital knowledge to support customers in accessing trusted information. Libraries are safe, trusted spaces available to anyone, with staff working in partnership to ensure residents have access to the variety of offers, information and advice the service provides.

Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy

Library staff have the skills and abilities to be able to support people from students to entrepreneurs by accessing information and resources, supporting the creation of jobs and improving life chances. They can assist people to get online and help them to improve their own skills and abilities.

Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture

Library staff are experts in providing access to heritage and culture by providing a wide range of experiences for old and young, such as heritage talks, performances, workshops and exhibitions.

VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

St Helens Library Service offers opportunities for people to volunteer, recognising that volunteering can support residents to gain vital workplace experience which is essential for those looking to get back into employment or develop new skills.

Digital Champions - helping others to improve their basic computer skills, searching for books, learning how to borrow an e-book. Digital Champions are trained to assist people with their online claims for Universal Credit and other benefits. The training is free and is carried out by Torus Foundation.

Archive Service volunteers - assisting the Archive team in the preservation and organisation of the archive collections.

Young Volunteers - Young people aged 13 -24 can help library staff organise events, inspire other young people to read, support the Summer Reading Challenge and so much more.

Home Delivery and Schools Library Service Volunteers - helping library staff in the organisation and delivery of both the Home Delivery and Schools Library Services to St Helens residents and schools.

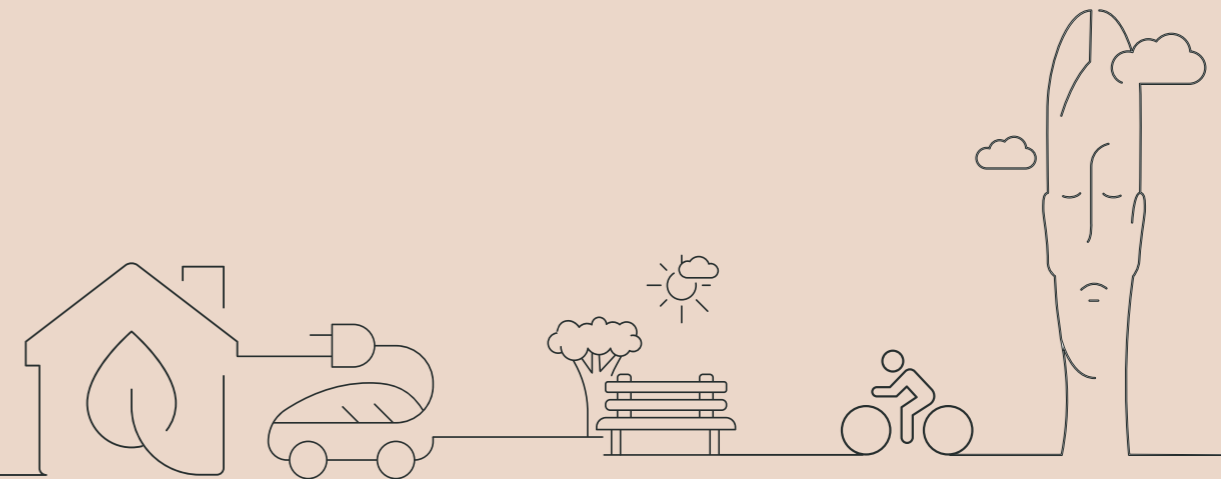
Volunteers can play a vital role in supporting and enhancing the Library Service. It is important that volunteers complement the work delivered by library staff. Volunteering opportunities assists with developing and improving the experience of our customers whilst helping to meet budgetary challenges.

Volunteers will be supported to ensure that customers experience a consistent level of service and will be recognised and celebrated for the contribution they make to the Library Service.

PROPOSALS FOR COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES

St Helens Borough Council will maintain a comprehensive and efficient statutory Library Service across St Helens through a network of council run libraries. Where there is evidence that there is community interest in managing libraries, work will take place with parish councils, community/voluntary groups and/or partners to transition libraries to community management. In line with the objectives in the St Helens Together Strategy for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector and with support, community managed libraries will have been

established or will be in the process of being established in many locations over the life of this strategy. It may be that early adopters will encourage others to come forward. Training and guidance will be offered to any organisation who wishes to consider operating a community managed library. The training will include how to recruit, train and support volunteers, who will be crucial to the sustainability of a community managed library.



LIBRARY SERVICE STANDARDS

A series of standards for St Helens Library Service have been developed to influence future design considerations. These are set out in the table below:

	TOWN CENTRE LIBRARIES	BRANCH LIBRARIES	BOROUGH ARCHIVE
LOCATION	St Helens and Earlestown	Located within areas of need, visible and with high levels of footfall. Possibly co-located with relevant partners	Housed in Gamble Building with library offer
FLOOR AREA (M2)	350/400	200	450
OPENING HOURS	Minimum of 30 per week	Minimum of 25 per week	Minimum of 15 hours per week
FREE PUBLIC IT AND WIFI/WIFI PRINTING, SCANNING, COPYING	10 - 20 pcs	5 - 10 pcs	5 pcs
SELF SERVE/WIFI KIOSKS	1 kiosk	1 kiosk	N/A
STOCK/COLLECTION LEVELS	30 - 35,000	10 - 15,000	Circa 2 million items

	TOWN CENTRE LIBRARIES	BRANCH LIBRARIES	BOROUGH ARCHIVE
FREE UNIVERSAL ACTIVITIES	Minimum of: per year across the service 250 events for children 100 events for adults 50 digital events		
NPO CULTURAL HUBS ARTS IN LIBRARIES EVENTS	Minimum of (per year): 12 events for diverse audiences and 100 creative arts workshops 10 Communities Group and 6 Youth Advisory Board meetings 5 local artists supported to create new work 12 Artists Together workshops 8 opportunities for local young people, artists and arts groups to improve skills and knowledge Facilitation of two online National Arts in Libraries Networks in collaboration with Libraries Connected & ACE		Will offer heritage events such as Meet the Archivist in libraries
GAMING ZONE/ MAKER SPACE	Within new offer in Gamble	No	N/A
MEETING SPACE/ AGILE WORK/STUDY SPACES	Minimum of one meeting room and 20 agile/ study spaces	Minimum of one meeting room and 5 agile/study spaces	Yes
CAR PARKING	Minimum of 20 public spaces	Minimum of 5 public spaces	Minimum of 20 public spaces
PUBLIC TOILETS	Yes	Yes	Yes
REFRESHMENTS	Café	Vending	Café
PUBLIC TRANSPORT WITHIN 50M	Yes	Yes	Yes

DELIVERY PLAN 2023-28



KEY: BOROUGH STRATEGY PRIORITIES

PRIORITY ONE

ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE
A POSITIVE START IN LIFE

PRIORITY TWO

PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH INDEPENDENCE AND CARE
ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES

PRIORITY THREE

CREATE SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR ALL

PRIORITY FOUR

SUPPORT A STRONG, THRIVING, INCLUSIVE AND
WELL-CONNECTED LOCAL ECONOMY

PRIORITY FIVE

CREATE GREEN AND VIBRANT PLACES THAT REFLECT
OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE

PRIORITY SIX

BE A RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL

A - Ensure a Customer Focused Service

Action	Supporting Activity	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes	Dependencies	Timescales	Borough Priorities
A1.Ensure the Library Service is meeting customer needs, making sure library staff have the right skills and training	Undertake monthly satisfaction surveys at all service points Collect feedback after events and activities Ensure customer care training and development opportunities for library staff are undertaken	Library Operations and Archive Manager/ Library Support Manager	Event feedback is used to determine future provision Customer care training implemented for all staff	Increased customer satisfaction/ increased visits to libraries Trained staff who can respond to customer needs	Resident survey to take place and results shared Support from the Organisation Development Team	Monthly Training provided by December 2024	1 2 3 4 5
A2.Adjust library opening hours to better reflect need and demand	Use library performance data to determine pattern and align with need Use results from 2023 public consultation to determine pattern	Library Services Manager	Revised library opening hours implemented 2024	Opening hours match need and demand and consider impact on protected characteristics	Library Strategy review	By March 2024	1 3 4
A3.Offer the Home Delivery Library Service as a reasonable adjustment to disabled children and adults who cannot leave their homes to access a library	A reasonable adjustment checklist will be used to determine eligibility for future self-referrals from disabled people	Library Services Manager/Library Operations and Archive Manager/ Equalities Officer	Reasonable adjustment checklist available from autumn 2023	Those residents with disabilities that create a barrier to leaving their home will continue to receive a library service should the proposals to close libraries be adopted	Library Strategy review	By March 2024	2
A4.Support community and voluntary organisations to deliver Community Managed Libraries	Develop suitable training course in partnership with Halton and St Helens VCA that covers issues such as accessing funding, recruiting volunteers, asset transfer etc. Recommend community asset transfers of former Library buildings where appropriate	Library Services Manager	First Community Managed Library open by 2025	Community Managed Libraries established	Community asset transfer agreement Commitment from community and voluntary organisations	By March 2025	3 4 5 6
A5.Develop and implement an annual Library Services marketing plan	Promote Archive, Home Delivery and Schools Library Services Promote physical/digital library offer and membership benefits Focus on the enabling role of the Library Service, not just a focus on library buildings		Plan agreed by December 2023	Residents updated about library services Customer retention and recruitment	Library Service budget	By April 2024	6

B - Ensure library buildings are in the best location and fit for purpose, including returning Central Library to the Gamble

Action	Supporting Activity	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes	Dependencies	Timescales	Borough Priorities
B1. Return Central Library and Archive to the Gamble Building following internal refurbishment works	<p>Work with Gamble project leads to relocate Archive Service whilst internal refurbishment takes place</p> <p>Work with Gamble project leads to ensure library/archive is accommodated within remodelled Gamble offer</p> <p>Increase archival capacity to future proof archival collections and if necessary to relocate the Borough Art Collection currently stored at The World of Glass should it be required</p>	<p>Director of Communities/ Head of Culture and Wellbeing/ Library Services Manager/ Library Operations and Archive Manager</p>	<p>Relocated Archive Service</p> <p>New Access Agreement with TWOG September 2023</p>	<p>Archive Service is relocated to ensure continuity of offer whilst Gamble works take place.</p> <p>Central Library and Archive re-opens in the Gamble</p>	<p>Extension to access agreement at TWOG</p> <p>Capital investment through funding bids</p>	By 2028	1 2 3 4 5 6
B2. Deliver the first SEND Friendly Library at Haydock	<p>A re-designed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Friendly library in Haydock, co-created with children, young people, partners and a lead artist that will realise a vision that is child-led.</p> <p>Sensory resources will develop social, emotional, language, communication skills, strengthen digital skills and assist in preparation for adulthood</p>	<p>Library Services Manager/ Designated Clinical Officer</p>	<p>Steering group of children established May 2024</p>	<p>An ambitious redesign of Haydock library will meet the Library Strategy vision of developing modern, inspiring libraries that increase/ improve digital access within communities, connect libraries to their communities and increase library use</p>	<p>Capital investment from Libraries Improvement Fund confirmed</p> <p>Capital investment from CCG confirmed</p>	By autumn 2025	1 2 3 4 5 6
B3. Explore opportunities to improve library buildings	<p>Consider relocating with partners to improve access, bringing all libraries up to a consistent standard, refurbishing where possible and providing self-serve kiosks and finding the most effective ways to respond to local needs</p>	<p>Library Services Manager</p>	<p>Haydock Library refurbishment by 2025</p>	<p>Most libraries will either be in shared spaces and/or refurbished by 2028</p>	<p>Further applications to Libraries Improvement Fund/other capital funding needed</p>	By 2028	1 2 3 4 5 6
B4. Ensure the Library Service contributes to the Council's ambition of being carbon neutral by 2040	<p>Explore the provision of electric vehicles for service provision</p>	<p>Library Operations and Archive Manager</p>	<p>HDS, SLS and courier vans replaced</p>	<p>Reduce carbon emissions</p>	<p>Replacement of diesel fleet with electric vehicles</p>	By 2025	6

C - Increase opportunities for learning by supporting reading and literacy

Action	Supporting Activity	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes	Dependencies	Timescales	Borough Priorities
C1. Develop and promote literacy and reading for pleasure for all ages	Continue to offer modern, relevant stock, both physical books and e-resources, alongside a wide ranging events programme that will enable children and adults to be inspired, develops reading skills and introduces audiences to new authors, genres and subjects	Library Support Manager	Marketing plan agreed by December 2023	Increased literacy levels for children and young people. More adults accessing library services, events and activities. Loans of items increase/visits increase	Library Service budget	From January 2024	1 2
C2. Retain, develop and promote the Schools Library Service	Continue to offer the Schools Library Service as a traded service to primary and secondary schools both in the Borough and in other areas	Library Support Manager	Schools Library Service continues to trade post April 2023	Increased literacy levels for children and young people	Primary and Secondary schools continue to buy into the Schools Library Service	From September 2023	1 3 6
C3. Work in partnership with Early Years, Early Help, schools/ voluntary/ community sector to ensure every child and young person has an opportunity to learn and improve educational attainment	Formalisation of integration of partnership with Family Hubs Provision of outreach services in Central Link, Parr and Sutton Children's Centres Support children to have access to books from birth that develop speech, language and communication skills in early years Provide an outreach offer targeting schools and community settings which serve communities affected by Library closures, to ensure the continued engagement of young people in initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge	Library Services Manager	Library staff attending sessions in Children's Centres to promote library membership	Collation and sharing of impact information. Ensure direct, explicit links are identified and communicated between what families need and what libraries offer	Library Strategy review	By September 2024	1 3 6
C4. Work in partnership to improve adult literacy, encouraging adults to borrow books and develop a love of reading	Support adults to have access to both physical and e-books. Develop library services in partnership to improve adult literacy skills	Library Services Manager	Collections are refreshed annually	Sight and hearing loss needs accommodated Increased literacy levels for adults Refugees and asylum seekers needs accommodated	Library Budget	From September 2023	2 4 5
C5. Retain, develop and promote the Archive Service	Deliver the National Heritage Lottery Funded (NHLF) Creative Underground project Relocate the Archive Service from the Gamble whilst internal refurbishment takes place Reapply for Archive Service Accreditation in 2024	Library Operations and Archive Manager	Archive Service is relocated	Archive Service Accreditation is retained The number of visits to the Archive is increased	NHLF funding confirmed	From September 2023	1 2 3 4 5 6

D - Address Digital Exclusion

Action	Supporting Activity	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes	Dependencies	Timescales	Borough Priorities
D1. Provide access to the latest technology and digital reading material and events	Self-serve kiosks and Wi Fi printing, scanning and copying solutions standard in all libraries Access to online reading, audio and events To increase the range of IT devices, particularly touch screen, available to the public within Libraries Work with city region partners to deliver the LCR Digital Inclusion Plan	Library Services Manager/ Library Support Manager	Roll-out of self-serve kiosks in libraries	Develop and expand how customers interact with the library service online	Capital investment	April 2025	3 4 5
D2. Continue to embed and promote the digital Library Service	Develop and promote e-book services Marketing Plan to promote digital Library Service	Library Support Manager	e-book support given in libraries and community venues	More people accessing digital offer	Library budget	From January 2024	3 4 5
D3. Provide a digital gateway to council and partner services	Work in partnership to enable information to be provided through libraries Libraries used as venues for partner networking	Library Support Manager	Quarterly networking events to begin 2024	More partners using libraries to engage with residents	Partnership working continues	From January 2024	3 4 5

E - Contribute to local economic prosperity by promoting learning and access to information

Action	Supporting Activity	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes	Dependencies	Timescales	Borough Priorities
E1. Provide support to help people back into employment or education	Skills training to be offered in libraries by Adult and Community Learning team Learning sessions and demonstrations to enable residents to use digital services from home Introduction of tablet loaning scheme Seek to identify community locations in communities served by libraries that will close where the service can deliver Digital and Information Literacy	Library Services Manager	Establish first library session in partnership	More people gaining employment and/or training	Capital funding	From September 2024	2 3 4
E2. Provide a wide range of volunteering opportunities	Library Service volunteering offer to be developed and promoted through Halton and St Helens VCA Volunteers for Community Managed Libraries to be recruited through VCA	Library Services Manager	Volunteering Opportunities advertised	More volunteers supporting Library Service functions	VCA support	From March 2024	2 3 4

F - Support improved health and wellbeing

Action	Supporting Activity	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes	Dependencies	Timescales	Borough Priorities
F1. Provide access to and develop Arts and Cultural opportunities	Develop an exciting, diverse and relevant Cultural Hubs, Arts in Libraries programme Programme of visiting & touring work presented in Libraries as part of St Helens Borough of Culture 2023	Library Services Manager/Arts Development Manager	NPO programme development in progress	Broad-ranging programme of activities, building on existing work and partnerships	NPO funding confirmed for 2023-2026	From June 2023	2 3 5
F2. Work in partnership with Public health colleagues to provide health promotion information and social prescribing programmes	Continue to offer Reading Well programmes Libraries used as venues for partner networking, with a focus on health and wellbeing Work in partnership with Liverpool City Region Library Services/NHS on a Women's Health offer	Library Services Manager	Minimum of two networking events each year to be established	Health Inequalities Reduced	Library budget Partnership working continues	From September 2023	2 3 5
F3. Reduce social isolation and inequalities	Provide specific programmes including digital and arts in libraries activities that combat isolation, reduce mental health problems and improve health and wellbeing	Library Services Manager	Cultural Hubs events and universal offer targeted to reduce inequalities	Social isolation reduced Health inequalities reduced	NPO funding confirmed for 2023-2026 Library Service/Arts Budgets	From September 2023	2 3 5



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