Library Services
Infrastructure Delivery Plan Topic Paper

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This chapter of the topic paper considers Libraries, and sets out the current context, condition and delivery mechanisms for these facilities to support growth in South Gloucestershire. It refers to co-location with community centres, which are covered in a separate Topic Paper.

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) social objective is "to support the creation of strong, vibrant and healthy communities…with accessible local services that reflect community needs and support health, social and cultural well-being". Social, recreational, and cultural facilities such as libraries, meeting places and sports venues which enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments are vital to this objective. The framework makes specific reference to meeting places and public spaces and recognises the need for the built environment to facilitate social interaction and promote opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise meet each other.

1.3 Libraries are therefore essential to meet the social objectives of the NPPF, National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), National Design Guide and Local Plan Core Strategy policies CS23 supported by CS6 and CS1. They support delivery of objectives of the Council Plan 2020-2024 and those of "South Gloucestershire 2036", the Sustainable Community Strategy to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for everyone and create sustainable communities.

1.4 The Library service is a visible council presence in our communities, supporting many priorities of the People and Place departments of the Council, delivering a range of services at a local level. Nationally there has been a trend to outsource and close libraries, however South Gloucestershire Council recognises the key importance of local libraries in being ideally placed to reach our communities and provide a safe and welcoming face of the council. Our ongoing and future success is contingent on our continued ability to deliver a service as demands on it increase whilst responding to changing customer needs.

1.5 The Library Strategy (under development) outlines the services and how it aligns to the strategic objectives defined in the South Gloucestershire Council Plan 2020 – 2024:

- Creating the best start in life for our children and young people.
- Identifying and supporting those most in need and helping people to help themselves.
- Promoting sustainable inclusive communities, infrastructure, and growth.
- Realising the full potential of our people and delivering value for money.

1.6 Libraries are key to the delivery of other South Gloucestershire Council strategies including.

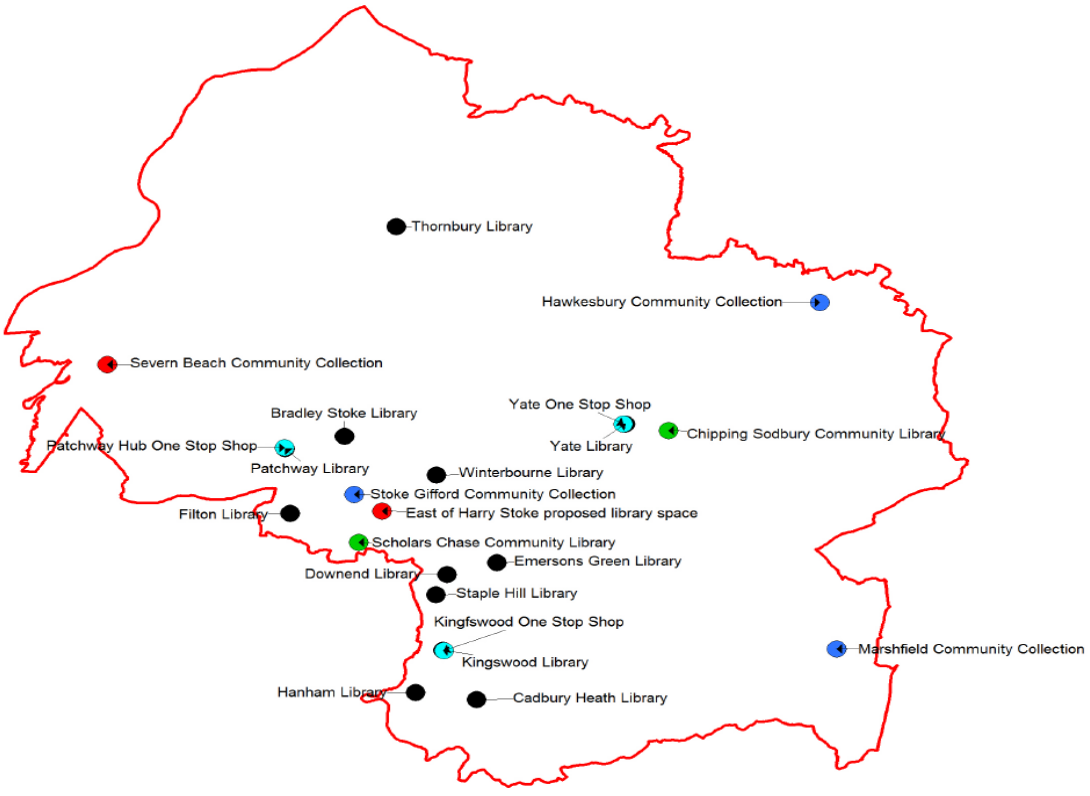
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Strategy
- Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People & Families 2019 - 2024.

Libraries are part of the cultural infrastructure of South Gloucestershire and support the West of England Cultural Plan [West of England Cultural Plan (westofengland-ca.gov.uk)](#) which includes an objective of supporting libraries to deliver cultural experience.

The Service

2.1 As a Library Authority, South Gloucestershire Council has a statutory duty to provide a public library service that is "comprehensive and efficient" under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Anyone who lives, works, or studies in South Gloucestershire is allowed free access to each of the libraries in South Gloucestershire.

Figure 1: Library locations showing Static / Community Libraries / Community Library collections



2.2 The Library service is delivered from branch libraries, volunteer run community libraries and community collections, digitally, and through partnerships. Libraries are located in most key communities in South Gloucestershire.

2.3 Our Libraries provide access to books, information and learning for people to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence and encourage lifelong reading enjoyment.

Materials are provided in a variety of formats and technologies, physical and virtual, that respond to the needs of local people. Our libraries also provide access to computers, printing, and the internet.

2.4 Libraries therefore play a key role in raising aspirations, helping people of all ages learn, develop new skills, make friends, and connect to their communities. They give access to a range of resources to give everyone the best start in life and to live independently and are consequently particularly important in places that experience multiple deprivation across social-economic factors.

2.5 The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) publication Public Libraries, Archives and New Development (May 2010) states that, modern and attractive public library facilities should have the following characteristics:

- Be in highly accessible locations, such as town and neighbourhood centres.
- Be near, or jointly with, other community facilities, retail centres and services such as, health or education.
- Be integrated with the design of an overall development, in mixed-use schemes. providing an active frontage to public areas, and clearly defined and attractive entrances, accessible to all users including those with a disability, and
- Be of a suitable size and standard for intended users.

Arts Council England (ACE) replaced the MLA in 2012 and have ratified this policy.

2.6 Libraries are now also an important element of multi-use community buildings, in the heart of the neighbourhoods they serve, thereby benefiting from and encouraging customers to undertake dual purpose trips. For instance, Bradley Stoke Library is located within Bradley Stoke Leisure Centre, in Patchway the library is situated within the Patchway Hub and Kingswood Library is in the Civic Centre.

2.7 Libraries are complemented by One-Stop Shops in Kingswood, Yate and Patchway. While the areas in which libraries are situated cover all major parts of the district and most of the buildings themselves are well located there are some libraries which would benefit from being relocated within their locality to ensure continuity of service, modern facilities and to raise their profile and accessibility for residents.

Standards

3.1 The MLA carried out a national survey which suggested that approved space standards tend to vary between 25 and 35 sqm per 1,000 population. MLA recommended a figure of 30sqm per 1,000 population as a benchmark for local authorities and for the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Building Cost Information Service data (construction and fit out). Our space standards are therefore based on the MLA recommended space standard of 30sq.m. per 1,000 population.

3.2 To assess capacity we measure provision against these standards. Compared to this, library services in South Gloucestershire fall substantially below – see table 1.

3.3 The library strategy which is being developed identifies actions the service is taking to address this shortfall to provide additional capacity in libraries. It also reviews the priorities for further growth and enhancement at each service point. A summary is provided in table 1 below of emerging actions.

3.4 Improvements delivered in the last 10 years (or so):

- A new library was built in 2018 as part of the Extra Care Village at Stoke Gifford (Scholars Chase) which serves both the village and the surrounding community.
- In 2009 three libraries were extended at Bradley Stoke, Hanham and Winterbourne.
- A Big Lottery grant of £1.5 million enabled Yate Library to be remodelled and expanded in 2009.
- A new library was built in Patchway in 2011 and an additional external door added in 2021 to enable people to use the library when the hub was closed.
- Open Access was introduced in 12 libraries in 2017. This enables borrowers to access libraries for borrowing and returning books, PC use, studying and meetings during unstaffed hours. This means there is access to libraries from 0830 –1930 every day.
- The library at Kingswood was relocated to the Civic Centre in 2019 to provide a single point of access to council services.
- In 2023 a public toilet was added in Downend Library to meet the needs of older people and young families.
- In 2024 Emersons Green Library will be remodelled to create a larger children's area.

3.5 To meet changing needs the council has also moved funding into e-stock which reduces the pressure on hard copies and space within buildings. However, despite the major increase in usage, e-stock is still a relatively small proportion of loans, accounting for 4% of total book loans. The e-audio book and e-magazines are very popular, with e-audio accounting for 84% of issues of spoken word.

Trends in lending of stock (note 3/2020 – 9/2022 was a period of lockdown with limited services)

Book issues	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
Children	424,170	92,093	292,199	487,000
Adult	438,602	123,346	368,737	349,000
Total	862,772	215,439	660,936	836,000
Online e-stock	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
e-Books	17,000	31,000	27,000	34,000
e-Audio	24,000	41,000	58,000	80,000
e-Magazines/ newspapers	67,000	101,000	94,000	96,000

Table 1: Existing library provision in South Gloucestershire

	Library Catchment population (2023)	**Gross Library floor space** sq m	**Current sq m of public space in each library per 1,000 population**	**Gross library floor space required 30sq m per 1,000 population**	**Surplus or shortfall sq m**	**Work completed**	**Future plans**
Bradley Stoke Library	39,794	582	15	1,194	-612	Extended in 2009	There is no further scope for expansion
Cadbury Heath Library	16,488	204	12	495	-291	Extended in 2003	There are plans to remodel the building using existing s106
Chipping Sodbury library	3,200	70	22	96	-26	Leased from Townlands Charity	No current plans
Downend Library	17,963	365	20	539	-174	Public toilets were added in 2023	The current site is not in an ideal location and the service would like to relocate to a High St location
Emersons Green Library	23,968	450	19	719	-269	Built in 2003	The library will be internally remodelled in 2024 to create additional public space
Filton Library	15,171	218	14	455	-237	Built in 1999	No scope for further expansion
Hanham Library	23,682	363	15	710	-347	Extended in 2009	No scope for further expansion
Kingswood Library	24,351	180	7	731	-551	New library created within Kingswood Civic Centre in 2019	The library is not large enough for the population and needs additional floor space for the activities and the display of stock
Patchway Library	14,316	310	22	429	-119	Built in 2011	No room for further expansion
Scholars Chase	5,289	?	?	159	-159	Built within an Extra Care Village in 2018	No room for further expansion
Staple Hill Library	14,165	359	25	425	-66	Built in 2009	No room for further expansion
Thornbury Library	24,910	421	17	747	-326	The building is in poor state of repair	There are ongoing discussions to replace this library. No decisions yet on a final plan.
Winterbourne Library	7,892	276	35	237	39	Extension 2015	No room for further expansion

Yate Library	57,567	759	13	1,727	-968	Refurbished 2009 with a £1.5 million lottery grant	As part of the Yate Masterplan there are plans to extend and remodel the library

Library funding

4.1 South Gloucestershire directly funds the library service. In 2023/24 the total revenue budget was £2,013,660. Capital and revenue funding has however been severely reduced in recent years due to pressure on Council budgets.

4.2 The Council will continue to identify funding options to help increase space in libraries to discharge the range of functions modern libraries have to perform effectively. For example, in recent years the development of library buildings has been funded from a range of sources including:

- South Gloucestershire Council capital funding (extensions, refurbishments)
- Big Lottery Fund (Yate Library),
- Growth point funding (Patchway Library),
- Partnership with Housing Associations (Staple Hill Library), and
- Developer contributions (Emersons Green Library and other library projects).

4.3 Strategic scale new developments are under construction in a number of locations in the district and these will also provide the following via s106 agreements:

- CPNN: 315m2 of space in a Dedicated Community Building on the airfield site
- EoHSNN: 75m2 of space in the Community Hub Building
- NYNN: Index linked offsite contribution of £520,776

Growth elsewhere in the district will be provided for in the form of enhancements to branch libraries and community collections as budgets and funding allows in the coming years.

Moving Forward

5.1 It is intended that requirements to support future growth identified through the nLP will follow the same approach, i.e. strategic sites will be expected to fund & provide onsite facilities as part of new community meeting spaces, unless there is a nearby branch library with capacity to expand within convenient walking distance of the new development. Arts Council England, in partnership with The National Archives, has recently published guidance on Seeking and Securing Developer Contributions for Library and Archive Provision in England. This report explores how libraries and archives can engage with the local planning process and officials to secure funding through Section 106 legal agreements (S106) and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It is aimed at Heads of Service and local authority leadership teams with responsibility for the strategic planning, development and delivery of library and archive services across England. The Council will also take account of this guidance

when negotiating developer contributions for library services. In terms of the Strategic Urban and Village Extensions (SUaVEs) library provision would be expected to be accommodated in new community buildings on the largest strategic developments at Woodlands, North Lyde and Carsons Green/Rockhouse Farm, and offsite contributions towards existing services would be expected elsewhere. Approximate £amounts are set out in the SUaVEs matrix (APPENDIX X).