

## **Contested heritage: rebuilding a cultural offer for the London Borough of Brent**

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### **Abstract**

Willesden Green Library reopened its doors in July 2015 after a £11 million redevelopment by the London Borough of Brent Council. This has now created a landmark community building, while adding to the economic, social and cultural regeneration of the area.

With the decision by the council to close six of their twelve libraries across the London Borough of Brent; restructure the libraries, arts and heritage department; demolish and rebuild a new library in Willesden Green; it was within this context that I was employed as a Museum Project Developer to redesign and develop a new museum that would be placed within the new library.

Libraries today are very much hubs in local urban communities. The newly opened library now offers a variety of cultural services for the local community in Willesden and Brent, which includes; improved library facilities, a museum, archives, exhibition and performance space. The new building also scored an 'excellent' rating for sustainability under the BREEAM system.

This paper will examine the development of this specific urban regeneration and planning project, while focusing on how local authorities are adapting to internal pressures such as budget cuts and restructures, while aiming to survive and thrive. It will also set out to examine how local heritage services are at risk and make a case for Brent's Museum and Archive services in the interim of the recent changes and developments.