



# **REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**30 April 2013**

# **REPORT**

**Subject Heading:**

**P1492.12: Car park associated with Chaucer House, Junction of Western Road and Grimshaw Way, Romford**

**Construction of a new leisure centre comprising an ice rink, 25m swimming pool, training pool, multi-purpose dance studio, fitness suite and ancillary café with associated disabled car parking and cycle parking (application received 29 November 2012, revised plans received 20 March 2013).**

**Report Author and contact details:**

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**Policy context:**

**National Planning Policy Framework  
The London Plan  
Havering Corporate Plan (2011-14)  
Local Development Framework**

**Financial summary:**

**None**

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	[X]
Championing education and learning for all	[ ]
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	[X]
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	[X]
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	[X]

## SUMMARY

This application relates to a proposed new public leisure development, including a swimming pool and ice rink, on a site located in Western Road, Romford. The proposals are a culmination of long term ambitions to re-introduce a swimming pool and public leisure facilities back into the centre of Romford. The proposals have been made possible through a land swap arrangement involving other land owned by the Council at Rom Valley Way, which currently houses the existing Romford Ice Rink. The Rom Valley Way site is now subject of a separate planning application, reported separately on this agenda, for a new Morrisons food store and residential development. Whilst both applications are separate there is a strong degree of linkage between the proposals, such that each should be considered with regard to the other.

The application has been through all of the statutory consultation processes, including referral to the Mayor and Staff are satisfied that the proposed provision of a new leisure facility on this site is entirely acceptable in principle. A wide range of planning issues, including factors such as design, layout, parking and cycling provision, environmental factors and impact on amenity have been considered, as set out in the report below. Detailed consideration has also been given to other factors, such as continuity of ice rink provision and public realm improvements in Western Road which are linked with consideration of the proposals.

Staff are satisfied, having regard to all material factors, that the proposals are acceptable in principle and it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to no contrary direction from the Mayor for London and no call in from the Secretary of State under referral procedures, the prior completion of a legal agreement and conditions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the proposal is unacceptable as it stands but would be acceptable subject to

A: No direction to the contrary from the Mayor for London (under the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008);

B: No call in from the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009: and

C: Prior completion of a legal agreement under the appropriate enabling statutory powers, including Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, Section 33 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to secure the following:

\* Secure provision of the new leisure facility

- \* Provision of improvement works to Western Road subject to successful bid for funding to Transport for London
- \* Provision of a training and recruitment scheme for local people to be employed during the construction period and operation of the facility

Subject to recommendations A), B) and C) above that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

### **Condition 1: Time Limit**

The development to which this permission relates must be commenced not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

### **Condition 2: Approved Plans**

The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the plans and documents as set out on page 1 of the decision notice.

Reason: To accord with the submitted details and LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

### **Condition 3: External Materials**

Before any of the development hereby permitted is commenced, samples of all materials to be used in the external construction of the building(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter the development shall be constructed with the approved materials.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the proposed development will harmonise with the character of the surrounding area and comply with Policy DC61 of the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

### **Condition 4: Wheelwash**

Before the development hereby permitted is first commenced, wheel scrubbing/wash down facilities to prevent mud being deposited onto the public highway during construction works shall be provided in accordance with details to be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved facilities shall be provided before the development commences and used thereafter throughout the duration of construction

Reason: In order to prevent materials from the site being deposited on the adjoining public highway, in the interests of highway safety and the amenity of the

surrounding area, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policies DC61 and DC32.

### **Condition 5: Hours of Construction**

No construction works or construction related deliveries into the site shall take place other than between the hours of 08.00 to 18.00 on Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 hours on Saturdays unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. No construction works or deliveries shall take place on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect residential amenity, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

### **Condition 6: Construction Method Statement**

Before development is commenced, a scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority making provision for a Construction Method Statement to control the adverse impact of the development on the amenity of the public and nearby occupiers. The Construction Method statement shall include details of:

- a) parking of vehicles of site personnel and visitors;
- b) storage of plant and materials;
- c) dust management controls;
- d) measures for minimising the impact of noise and ,if appropriate, vibration arising from construction activities;
- e) predicted noise and, if appropriate, vibration levels for construction using methodologies and at points agreed with the Local Planning Authority;
- f) scheme for monitoring noise and if appropriate, vibration levels using methodologies and at points agreed with the Local Planning Authorities;
- g) siting and design of temporary buildings;
- h) scheme for security fencing/hoardings, depicting a readily visible 24-hour contact number for queries or emergencies;
- i) details of disposal of waste arising from the construction programme, including final disposal points. The burning of waste on the site at any time is specifically precluded.

And the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and statement.

Reason: To protect residential amenity, and in order that the development accords the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

### **Condition 7 Freight Management**

Prior to the commencement of development a Delivery and Servicing Plan and a Construction Logistics Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include details of booking systems,

consolidated or re-timed trips and provision for loading and drop off facilities. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: In order to ensure the construction of the development does not have an adverse impact on the environment or road network and to accord with Policy 6.14 of the London Plan.

#### **Condition 8: Site Waste Management Plan**

Before the commencement of the development or of any phase of the development hereby permitted, as appropriate, a detailed Site Waste Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include a detailed strategy for waste management and minimising of waste, including recycling of waste and for managing the associated impacts of construction related traffic. The development shall be operated in accordance with the approved Site Waste Management Plan.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and sustainability and to reduce the impact of the construction on the local road network.

#### **Condition 9: Landscaping**

No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of hard and soft landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and shrubs on the site, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for the protection in the course of development. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised within the scheme shall be carried out in the first planting season following completion of the development and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local Planning Authority.

Reason: In accordance with Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to enhance the visual amenities of the development, and that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61

#### **Condition 10: Travel Plan**

Prior to the commencement of development a travel plan showing measures to be undertaken to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and reduce reliance on use of private cars shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To encourage more sustainable travel in accordance with LDF Core Strategy Policy CP10.

#### **Condition 11: Renewable Energy**

Prior to the commencement of development details of the proposed renewable energy system shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. It shall then be installed and operational in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of the building. Thereafter, it shall be permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of energy efficiency and sustainability in accordance with Policy DC50 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

**Condition 12: Contamination:**

Prior to the commencement of any works pursuant to this permission the developer shall submit for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority;

a) A Phase II (Site Investigation) Report if the Phase I Report, having previously been submitted by the developer, confirms the possibility of a significant risk to any sensitive receptors. This is an intrusive site investigation including factors such as chemical testing, quantitative risk assessment and a description of the sites ground conditions. An updated Site Conceptual Model should be included showing all the potential pollutant linkages and an assessment of risk to identified receptors.

b) A Phase III (Risk Management Strategy) Report if the Phase II Report confirms the presence of a significant pollutant linkage requiring remediation. The report will comprise of two parts:

Part A – Remediation Scheme which will be fully implemented before it is first occupied. Any variation to the scheme shall be agreed in writing to the Local Planning Authority in advance of works being undertaken. The Remediation Scheme is to include consideration and proposals to deal with situations where, during works on site, contamination is encountered which has not previously been identified. Any further contamination shall be fully assessed and an appropriate remediation scheme submitted to the Local Planning Authority for written approval.

Part B – Following completion of the remediation works a ‘Validation Report’ must be submitted demonstrating that the works have been carried out satisfactorily and remediation targets have been achieved.

c) If during development works any contamination should be encountered which was not previously identified and is derived from a different source and/or of a different type to those include in the contamination proposals then revised contamination proposals shall be submitted to the LPA; and

d) If during development work, site contaminants are found in areas previously expected to be clean, then their remediation shall be carried out in line with the agreed contamination proposals.

For further guidance see the leaflet titled, ‘Land Contamination and the Planning Process’.

Reason: To protect those engaged in construction and occupation of the development from potential contamination, in accordance with LDF Core Strategy Policy CP15 and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC53.

**Condition 13: Noise Standards**

Before any work commences a scheme for any new plant or machinery shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority to achieve the following standard noise levels expressed as the equivalent continuous sound level *L<sub>Aeq</sub>, 1 hour* when calculated at the boundary with the nearest noise sensitive premises shall not exceed *L<sub>A90</sub> – 10 dB (A)*. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall be maintained thereafter to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the amenities of neighbouring properties, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC55.

**Condition 14: Ecology**

No development shall commence until details have been submitted showing how the development will comply with the recommendations set out in Table 4.1 of the submitted Environmental Report. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to ensure that the proposed development has an acceptable impact on biodiversity and in order that the development accords with the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policies DC58 and DC59.

**Condition 15: Works to Public Highway**

The proposed alterations to the Public Highway shall be submitted in detail for approval prior to the commencement of the development. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of ensuring good design and ensuring public safety and to comply with policies of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies, namely CP10, CP17 and DC61.

**Condition 16: Community Safety**

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of the measures to be incorporated into the development demonstrating how the principles and practices of the 'Secured by Design' scheme have been included shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, and

shall not be occupied or used until written confirmation of compliance with the agreed details has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

Reason: In the interest of creating safer, sustainable communities, reflecting guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy 7.3 of the London Plan, and Policies CP17, DC33 and DC63 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

#### **Condition 17: CCTV**

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted a scheme showing the details of a CCTV system to be installed for the safety of users and to support the prevention of crime, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Crime Prevention Design Advisor. No part of the development shall be occupied or used before the scheme is implemented as agreed.

Reason: In the interest of creating safer, sustainable communities, reflecting guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy 7.3 of the London Plan, and Policies CP17, DC33 and DC63 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

#### **Condition 18: Vehicle Charging Point**

Prior to the occupation of the building, details of the installation (including the location and type) of the proposed electric vehicle charger point within the disabled car park area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the approved electric vehicle charger point shall be installed and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To encourage more sustainable travel in accordance with LDF Core Strategy Policy CP10 and in order that the development accords with London Plan Policy 6.13.

#### **Condition 19: Car Parking**

Prior to first occupation of the development 5 disabled parking spaces shall be provided within the development.

Reason: To ensure that car parking accommodation is made available for disabled users of the development and to accord with the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC33.

#### **Condition 20: Parking Management Plan**

Prior to the occupation of the building, a management plan covering the proposed coach drop off, off site coach parking and on site disabled parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the details of the approved plan implemented prior to first occupation of the



development and thereafter shall be permanently retained and managed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that car parking accommodation is made permanently available to the standards adopted by the Local Planning Authority in the interest of highway safety and in order that the development accords with the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC33.

### **Condition 21: Coach Drop-off**

The coach/vehicle drop-off facility shall be provided and available for use, in accordance with details which shall previously be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the building is occupied. The approved facility provided shall be retained permanently thereafter and shall not be used for any other purpose.

Reason: To ensure that the drop-off facility is made permanently available to the standards adopted by the Local Planning Authority in the interest of highway safety and in order that the development accords with the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC33.

### **Condition 22: Energy Efficiency**

Prior to occupation of the building, a copy of the Interim Code Certificate shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority confirming that the development design achieves BREEAM Very Good.

Reason: In the interests of energy efficiency and sustainability in accordance with Policy DC49 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

### **Condition 23: Flood Risk**

The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) dated August 2012, reference number 10862 (Rev. D1 Draft) compiled by Campbell Reith Hill LLP and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

- Limiting the surface water runoff generated in all events up to the 1 in 100 year event, with an allowance for climate change to a maximum of 5 litres per second (section 10.1.6, page 24);
- Finished ground floor levels are set no lower than 16.5 metres above Ordnance Datum (section 7.2.3, page 19).

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

Reason: To reduce flood risk to the proposed development and its future occupants and to ensure compliance with Policy 5.13 of the London Plan.

**Condition 24: Plant and Machinery**

Prior to the occupation of the building, suitable equipment to remove and/or disperse odours and odorous material shall be fitted to the extract ventilation system required for associated food and drink uses in accordance with a scheme to be designed and certified by a competent engineer and after installation the certification of compliance with the design shall be lodged with the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the equipment shall be properly maintained and operated within design specifications.

Reason: To protect the amenities of neighbouring properties, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

**Condition 25: External Lighting**

Details of the external lighting scheme shall be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of the building. The lighting shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first bringing into use of the development and maintained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of safety and amenity and in order that the development accords with Policy DC61 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

**Condition 26: Noise Insulation**

Before the use commences, the building shall be insulated in accordance with a scheme which shall previously have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in order to secure a reduction in the level of noise emanating from the building.

Reason: To protect the amenity of occupiers of nearby properties, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC55.

**Condition 27: Refuse Storage**

The refuse storage arrangements shown on the approved drawings ALP (9) 100 Rev C, unless otherwise submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, shall be provided and available for use before the building is occupied. The facilities provided shall thereafter be permanently retained and shall not be used for any other purpose.

Reason: To ensure that refuse will be appropriately stored within the site thereby protecting the amenity of the site and the area in general from litter, odour and

potential vermin/pest nuisance in accordance with Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC40.

**Condition 28: Cycle Storage**

Prior to completion of the works hereby permitted, 41 cycle storage spaces (of which 10 shall be for staff use) of a type and in a location previously submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority shall be provided and permanently retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of providing a wide range of facilities for non-motor car residents, in the interests of sustainability and to accord with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC35.

**Condition 29: Archaeology**

- A) No demolition or development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority.
- B) No development or demolition shall take place other than in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (A).
- C) The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (A), and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason: Heritage assets of archaeological interest survive on the site. The planning authority wishes to secure the provision of archaeological investigation and historic buildings assessment followed by the subsequent recording of significant remains prior to development (including preservation of important remains), in accordance with recommendations given by the borough and in PPS 5/NAPPY.

**Condition 30: Hours of Use**

No public sporting or entertainment events shall be held at the premises outside the hours of hours 07.00 to 24.00h Mondays to Thursdays, 07:00 to 01:00 the following morning on Fridays and Saturdays and 07:00 to 23:00 hours on Sundays, unless those days fall on Bank or Public Holidays in which case no sporting or entertainment events at the premises shall be held outside the hours of 07:00 to 23:00 hours.

Reason: To protect the amenities of neighbouring properties, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

**Condition 31: Hours of Use – Ground floor café**

The ground floor café hereby approved shall not provide food for takeaway or consumption off the premises outside the hours of 07:00 to 22:00

Reason: To protect the amenities of neighbouring properties, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

**INFORMATIVES:**

1. In aiming to satisfy condition 16 the applicant should seek the advice of the Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor. The services of the local Police CPDA are available free of charge through Havering Development and Building Control. It is the policy of the local planning authority to consult with the Borough CPDA in the discharging of community safety condition(s).

2. The Highway Authority requires the Planning Authority to advise the applicant that planning approval does not constitute approval for changes to the public highway. Highway Authority approval will only be given after suitable details have been submitted, considered and agreed. The Highway Authority requests that these comments are passed to the applicant. Any proposals which involve building over the public highway as managed by the London Borough of Havering, will require a licence and the applicant must contact StreetCare, Traffic & Engineering on 01708 433750 to commence the Submission/ Licence Approval process.

3. Should this application be granted planning permission, the developer, their representatives and contractors are advised that this does not discharge the requirements under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and the Traffic Management Act 2004. Formal notifications and approval will be needed for any highway works (including temporary works) required during the construction of the development.

4. Thames Water recommend the installation of a properly maintained fat trap on all catering establishments. Further information can be requested by telephoning 0203 577 9963. With regard to the swimming pool, the pool shall be emptied overnight and in dry periods and the discharge rate shall not exceed a flow rate of 5 litres/second into the public sewer network. The developer is also advised to contact Thames Water Development Services on 0845 850 2777 to obtain the necessary consents for discharge of surface water drainage from the site.

5. The development of this site is likely to damage heritage assets of archaeological and historical interest. The applicant should therefore submit detailed proposals in the form of an archaeological project design. The design should be in accordance with the appropriate English Heritage guidelines.

6. The proposal is liable for the Mayor of London Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Based upon the information supplied with the application, the CIL payable would be £133,920. CIL is payable within 60 days of commencement of development. A Liability Notice will be sent to the applicant (or anyone else who has assumed liability) shortly. Further details with regard to CIL are available from the Council's website.

7. Statement Required by Article 31 (cc) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management) Order 2010: No significant problems were identified during the consideration of the application, although some revisions have been made to the proposal during the course of the application in response to issues raised by statutory consultees. The application has been determined in accordance with paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

### **Reason for Approval**

This decision to grant planning permission has been taken:

(i) having regard to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, specifically Sections 1, 2, 4, 7, 8 and 10; Policies 2.6-2.8, 2.15, 3.19, 4.2, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1-5.3, 5.7-5.9, 5.12, 5.13, 5.18, 5.21, 6.1, 6.9, 6.10, 6.13, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.13, 7.14, 7.15, 7.19, 7.21 and 8.2 of the London Plan; Policies CP4, CP5, CP7, CP9, CP10, CP15, DC15, DC19, DC20, DC32-36, DC40, DC48, DC49, DC50, DC52, DC53, DC55, DC58, DC60, DC61, DC62, DC63, DC66, DC70 and DC72 of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) and Policies ROM9, ROM13, ROM17, ROM19, ROM20 and ROM21 of the Romford Area Action Plan ;

(ii) for the following reasons:

The proposed development will enable the provision of a major new leisure facility within the Borough, which is considered to suitably mitigate the loss of the existing Romford ice rink and to accord with the provisions of Policy CP7. The proposed location of the new development, within the town centre, accords with national and local planning policies. The detailed design of the proposed development is of an exemplary high standard, both internally and externally, which is considered to positively contribute to the visual character and the economy of the town centre, as well as providing a high quality sporting environment of inclusive design suitable for use by all members of the community.

The proposed development is in a highly accessible location and complies fully with sustainable transport objectives. It is considered there would be no material harm to the safe and free flow of traffic within the locality. The development includes provision for drop off and coach parking facilities and, through a legal agreement, will include provision for improved pedestrian facilities in the vicinity of the site in Western Road. The proposed development has an acceptable environmental impact and is judged not to result in any significant adverse impact on local amenity.

There is judged to be no material conflict with any national, regional or local planning policies.

## REPORT DETAIL

### 1. Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is within Romford Town Centre and is located to the south side of Western Road, to the eastern side of its junction with Grimshaw Way. The site is generally flat, although there is a gentle slope towards the southern end of the site and has an area of 0.39 hectares. It comprises the rear section of the northern wing of Chaucer House, which is a 4/5 storey office building, together with an associated car park comprising 125 spaces.
- 1.2 To the north of the site lies Western Road, with a multi-storey car park on the opposite side of the road and beyond that the Liberty shopping centre. There are bus stops directly in front of the application site. To the immediate east of the site is the remainder of Chaucer House, Hexagon House and an associated 72 space car park, beyond which is Mercury Gardens. West of the site is Grimshaw Way, which is bordered on the other side by the 5 storey Sovereign House and 4 storey Scimitar House beyond. A narrow private access road lies to the south with the 4 storey St James House and 2 storey Romford & District Synagogue beyond.
- 1.3 The wider area is characterised by town centre activities and includes a number of shopping centres, including the Liberty and Brewery, reflective of the status of Romford as a Metropolitan Town Centre (as identified in the London Plan). The site also lies within the Romford Office Quarter as identified in the Romford Area Action Plan.

### 2. Description of Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal is for redevelopment of the site to provide a public leisure facility. The development will include the provision of a 25m (8 lane) swimming pool, suitable for leisure and competitive swimming, together with a 15m by 8m teaching pool and poolside sauna and steam rooms. The pool will have 206 spectator seats and 4 wheelchair spaces. The upper floors of the building will provide a new ice rink (56m by 26m), together with 855 spectator seats and 8 wheelchair spaces, together with a fitness suite with 100 stations, studio and spa treatment rooms and a gym. The development will also include ancillary café facilities.
- 2.2 The proposed facilities will all be housed within a single building supported by a largely glazed plinth. The building has a ground floor footprint of some 39.5m wide by 72.4m deep and provides a gross internal floorspace area (GIA) of some 8,081 square metres. The front elevation of the building has a ground to parapet height of 24m.
- 2.3 The ground floor of the building is designed largely as a glazed structure. It will be constructed of an aluminium curtain walling system, grey framed and

predominantly clear glazed. The public entrance to the building will be from the Western Road frontage and will consist of rotating sliding doors together with a separate entrance door. There will be a bi-folding screen to part of the ground floor frontage where the ground floor café facility is proposed to be located. The glazing runs along the western elevation of the building at ground floor, eventually giving way to a white painted render section. The eastern elevation will also largely be finished with white painted render at ground floor level. To the southern end of the building at ground floor level the glazing will give way to a louvred wall system, finished grey, which will serve to screen the internal plant and machinery to be located at the rear of the building.

- 2.4 The upper floors of the building are all housed within a single, rectangular structure. It will be constructed of polycarbonate panels, which are in four varying, muted shades of blue to give a textured appearance to the elevations. A system of vertical LED lighting is proposed to be fixed to the face of the cladding, which would enable the building to be externally lit.
- 2.5 The proposal provides 5 no. parking spaces for disabled users, located to the rear of the proposed building. There is no other on site parking provision for users of the development. A service yard is provided at the rear of the building, as well as provision for refuse storage. Resurfacing works would need to be carried out within the site boundaries. This would involve the provision of new block paving surfaces to the side of the development (to Grimshaw Way) and to the site frontage. There will also be opportunity for soft landscaping to the flank of the development. No other off site works are directly proposed as part of this application but the Council is exploring the scope for public realm improvements in this part of the town centre as part of its wider streetscene improvements works.
- 2.6 Internally, the public entrance from Western Road leads into a foyer and café area, beyond which is the ground floor swimming pool and changing room facilities, including 26 changing cubicles, 6 no. 3 person family changing rooms, baby change facilities, w.c's and group changing rooms. The changing facilities include changing cubicles for the ambulant disabled, as well as wheelchair sized changing cubicles. Provision is made for dedicated combined shower and change (i.e. wet and dry changing rooms) for disabled users. There are 206 spectator seats on the ground floor and 4 wheelchair accessible spaces. Plant is located to the rear of the ground floor of the facility. The first floor of the building is largely occupied by the proposed fitness suite, studio and changing facilities.
- 2.7 The proposed new ice rink is located on the second floor of the building, together with changing facilities for teams and a skate changing area for the public. There is additional spectator seating on the upper floors comprising 166 seats and 4 accessible spaces on the second floor, as well as refreshment facilities, and 689 seats and 4 accessible spaces on the third floor. There is lift access to all floors of the building.

2.8 The application is accompanied by a suite of supporting documents including a Design & Access statement, Environmental report, Statement of Community Engagement, Sustainability and Energy Statement, Transport Assessment and Travel Plan and a Ventilation and Extract Statement.

### **3. Relevant History**

3.1 Z0008.12 Screening opinion for current car park to be developed for Leisure Centre to include swimming pool and ice rink. – EIA not required.

3.2 P1537.12 Part demolition and installation of Chaucer House and Hexagon House, construction of 2 new fire escapes, relocation of air handling plant, reconfiguration of existing car parking – not yet determined (reported separately on this agenda).

3.3 The Council is also considering an application for redevelopment of the existing Romford Ice Rink site to provide a supermarket and residential development (P1468.12). This application is also reported separately on this agenda.

### **4. Consultations/Representations**

4.1 A public exhibition of the development was held over a three day period in Romford Central Library during July 2012. Over 300 people attended the exhibition and over 100 feedback forms were received. The Council has also received a petition with over 7,000 signatories. This primarily raises issues relating to the loss of the existing ice rink and interim skating provision and is judged therefore to relate more closely to planning application P1468.12, which is reported separately on this agenda.

4.2 The planning application has been advertised on site and in the local press as a major development and a departure from the LDF. Neighbour notification letters have also been sent to 452 local addresses. 9 letters of representation have been received raising objections on the following grounds:

- No need for a new swimming pool, already in Central Park and Harrow Lodge Park
- Should be individual showers/cubicles for the gym rather than communal
- Should have low entrance fee for over 65's
- The building is considered to be grotesque
- What's wrong with the existing ice rink?
- Why was the Dolphin not kept and refurbished if this is necessary?
- This is a fait accompli, no real consultation
- There should be a 50m pool for Romford, should build it on Homebase site
- The location near South Street is dangerous for youngsters
- Proposal too dense for the local area
- Part of existing office expected to form part of development but does not, only the car park



- Lack of parking facilities for cars and coaches
- Ice pad should be bigger
- Extra traffic
- Development is just 'sandwiched in';
- Impact of construction work on neighbouring businesses
- Noise pollution
- Parking and traffic congestion
- Will encourage anti-social behaviour in locality

4.3 Councillor Curtin, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns and Communities, has written in support of the proposals as he considers they meet the Council's planning policies and the aims of the Borough's culture strategy. He considers the proposal to benefit the town centre and enhance the range of sporting opportunities and to guarantee the future of ice sport provision within the Borough. He is supportive of the design of the proposals, including the proposed materials and the 'green' credentials of the development, and the way in which it positively promotes access for disabled users.

4.4 The Greater London Authority (GLA) have advised that the proposals are considered to be generally acceptable in strategic planning terms. The provision of a new leisure facility is strongly supported although the Council is encouraged to continue discussions regarding interim provision of ice rink facilities. The GLA are supportive of the design of the proposals as submitted to them at the time of their Stage I report.

The GLA have however requested that further work be done in respect of climate change mitigation and in respect of the transport related issues raised by TfL (see paragraph 4.5 below).

4.5 Transport for London (TfL) have commented that no adverse impact on the Strategic Road Network is anticipated. However, further information is sought regarding likely trip generation and modal split. The limited level of parking provision is welcomed although further justification for the number of disabled car parking spaces should be provided. One electric vehicle charging point is required and should be secured by condition. The pick up and drop off facility to Grimshaw Way is welcomed but further information is needed to assess the adequacy of the facility. A management plan is recommended, to be secured by condition, to cover the proposed pick up and drop off facility, the off site coach park and on site disabled car parking. TfL are satisfied with cycle parking facilities for staff but that it should be increased for visitors. TfL notes the proposed alterations to Western Road (which are outside of the site) and will respond separately on this point. A Construction Logistics Plan (CLP) should be secured via appropriate planning conditions/ obligations, as should a Delivery and Servicing Plan. A full Framework Travel Plan should be secured through a Section 106 planning obligation.

4.6 Sport England have considered this as a non-statutory consultation. They note the new leisure centre proposed represents a sizeable investment in

sports facilities in the locality and are supportive of the proposals in principle. However, they note the loss of the existing Romford Ice Rink (through a separate but related application) and therefore would like assurance that the new leisure facilities will be delivered, preferably through S106 agreement. Sport England would like to be consulted on the draft legal agreement. A condition for phasing of the development is also requested

- 4.7 Environmental Health raise no objections subject to conditions relating to construction work, noise emission, land contamination and air quality.
- 4.8 Essex & Suffolk Water raise no objection to the development.
- 4.9 Thames Water does not object but requests conditions with regard to the emptying of swimming pools into a public sewer. It also advises a properly maintained fat trap will be required and the applicant must make proper provision for surface water drainage.
- 4.10 The Fire Brigade (water) advise one additional private fire hydrant will be required.
- 4.11 The Environment Agency advise that the proposal is acceptable if the measures set out in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment are adhered to. This should be secured by condition.
- 4.12 The Borough Crime Prevention Design Advisor is satisfied that the proposals have been developed with sufficient regard to crime prevention and community safety. Conditions are requested relating to community safety, including provision of CCTV, if permission is granted.

## **5. Relevant Policies**

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework, specifically Sections 1 (Building a strong, competitive economy), 2 (ensuring the vitality of town centres), 4 (promoting sustainable transport), 7 (requiring good design), 8 (promoting healthy communities) and 10 (meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change) are relevant to these proposals.
- 5.2 Policies 2.6-2.8 (Outer London: Vision and strategy, economy and transport), 2.15 (town centres), 3.19 (sports facilities), 4.2 (offices), 4.6 (support for and enhancement of culture and sport provision), , 4.7 (retail and town centre development), 5.1-5.3 (climate change), 5.7-5.9 (renewable energy/energy efficiency, 5.12 (flood risk management), 5.13 (sustainable drainage), 5.18 (development waste management), 5.21 (contaminated land), 6.1 (transport), 6.9 (cycling), 6.10 (walking), 6.13 (parking), 7.2 (inclusive environment), 7.3 (designing out crime), 7.4 (local character), 7.5 (public realm), 7.6 (architecture), 7.7 (tall buildings), 7.13 (emergency), 7.14 (improving air quality), 7.15 (reducing noise), 7.19 (bio diversity), 7.21 (trees) and 8.2 (planning obligations) of the London Plan are material planning considerations.

- 5.3 Policies CP4 (town centres) , CP5 (culture), CP7 (recreation and leisure), CP9 (reducing the need to travel), CP10 (sustainable transport), CP15 (environmental management) CP16 (bio diversity), CP17 (design), DC15 (town centres), DC19 (location of cultural facilities), DC20 (access to recreation and leisure), DC32-36 (transport), DC40 (waste recycling), DC48 (flood risk), DC49-50 (sustainability), DC52 (air quality), DC53 (contaminated land), DC55 (noise), DC58 (biodiversity), DC60 (trees), DC61 (urban design), DC62 (access), DC63 (safer places), DC66 (tall buildings), DC70 (archaeology) and DC72 (planning obligations) of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document are material considerations.
- 5.4 Policies Rom 9 (Metropolitan Shopping Centre), ROM13 (Romford Office Quarter), ROM17 (greening Romford), ROM19 (tall buildings), ROM20 (urban design) and ROM21 (urban design) of the Romford Area Action Plan are material to this application.
- 5.5 The Havering Landscape SPD, Designing Safer Places SPD, Protecting and Enhancing Diversity SPD, Sustainable Design and Construction SPD and Protection of Trees during Development SPD are also supplementary planning documents that are relevant to consideration of this application. Regard should also be had to the Council's Local Implementation Plan which set out the Council's transport policies and programmes and the Havering Culture Strategy (2012-2014).

## **6. Background**

- 6.1 This planning application has been submitted on behalf of the London Borough of Havering in order to fulfil a long term ambition of the Authority to provide a new public leisure facility within Romford. The Council's Corporate Plan 2011-2014 includes a specific objective under the Towns and Communities Goal for the Council to work with the private sector to deliver a new leisure facility in Romford. Such a facility will be in line with the strategic outcome of culture and leisure playing a key part in community life (3.6). A new facility of this type will also assist in achieving the strategic outcome of lower levels of preventable ill-health and people leading healthier lives (4.5).
- 6.2 The land now forming the application site was purchased in 2010, the purchaser's intention then being to develop a new food store, the Council saw this as an opportunity to establish a partnership approach and entered into negotiations with that party whereby an alternative site for a food store was identified, where the existing Romford Ice Rink is currently located, and the Council would be able to purchase the land subject of this application for a proposed new leisure development in the heart of the town centre in line with the Council's objectives and wider planning objectives.
- 6.3 A separate planning application has been received for the proposed new food store development at the existing Ice Rink site in Rom Valley Way. Whilst the respective applications are separate, in view of the background set out above, there are clear linkages between the proposals and in how

they provide a unique opportunity at this stage in the town centre's development for important town centre regeneration objectives to be secured. It is important for the policy issues raised by both proposals to be considered within that context. Staff have therefore sought to ensure that both applications are considered in parallel.

## **7. Staff Comments**

7.1 The issues arising from this application are the acceptability, in principle, of a leisure use in this part of the town centre and the loss of existing uses; the justification for the proposed development and its linkage to the proposed redevelopment of the Ice Rink site at Rom Valley Way; issues of design, appearance and visual impact; environmental issues including bio diversity, flood risk, waste management, land contamination, sustainability, air quality and noise; impact on amenity; transport and servicing.

### **7.2 Principle of Development**

7.2.1 The site is located within Romford Town Centre, which is identified in the London Plan as a Metropolitan Town Centre. It would accord with the Core Planning Principles in the NPPF of promoting the vitality of urban areas, managing patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focussing development in locations which are or can be made sustainable. The proposal would also accord with the sequential test set out in the Government's NPPF. As the application site lies within the town centre boundaries it is the preferred location for such a development under the provisions of Policy 2.7 of the London Plan and would also accord with the provisions of the NPPF. In principle the development would also meet the requirements of Policy 3.19 of the London Plan, which encourages the provision of new leisure and recreation facilities, as well as Policies 2.15 and 4.6 of the London Plan, which support such facilities in town centres with good public transport, where they are of a scale which supports the vitality and viability of the centre.

7.2.2 In terms of local policy requirements, the proposed establishment of a new public leisure facility within Romford satisfies the Council's Corporate Plan 2011-2014 which provides the Havering 2020 Vision with a more formal basis. Alongside other objectives, these seek to create a thriving, successful and healthy community. The proposal is consistent with the themes of better health and welfare and increased community participation, which underpin the Vision. The LDF Core Strategy looks to focus development in its town centres and seeks to promote and diversify Romford Town Centre. It is committed to making strong and well-developed cultural provision, including opportunities for sport and leisure activities. These form part of the strategic objectives of the LDF and are strongly linked to the Council's high level objectives to regenerate parts of Romford Town Centre in the light of the significant investment that has been made in other existing, and new, centres in the wider region.

- 7.2.3 Work undertaken by GVA for the Council in 2012 linked to the LDF review concluded that despite current performance, Romford will have to face significant challenges in the years ahead. These issues are not exclusive to Romford and include such topics as reduced consumer spending, increased competition from the internet and other prominent 'lifestyle' or discretionary shopping destinations such as Bluewater and Westfield Stratford City. GVA also highlighted that Romford's strong presence from nationally recognised multiple – retailers (which can be a strength in good times) means that Romford is likely to be vulnerable in difficult times as retailers continue to rationalise their outlets and stock. GVA said that even without these closures, Romford may be regarded as lacking a distinct offering and this means that it has little to differentiate itself from other high-profile centres. GVA suggested that Romford needs to develop a 'unique selling point'. Staff suggest that it may be considered that the provision of a modern, state of the art leisure facility in the heart of the town centre providing the scope for shoppers and workers to enjoy active participation in sport and leisure in close proximity to shops and their workplaces may also be a step towards achieving this.
- 7.2.4 The proposal is in accordance with Policies CP4 and DC19 of the LDF, which provides that cultural development will be steered towards town centres using the sequential test. This is further supported by the provisions of Policy CP5, which identifies the role that cultural uses, including leisure facilities, can play in adding to the vitality and viability of town centres, contributing to the economy and diversifying the evening activities in the town centre.
- 7.2.5 However, whilst national and local planning policies steer the provision of such development towards existing town centres, the proposal must be balanced against the resultant loss of existing office floor space (and the opportunity to provide additional office floorspace in the future) and the consequent loss of an existing town centre car park.
- 7.2.6 The site lies within the Romford Office Quarter, designated in the Romford Area Action Plan (AAP). Policy ROM13 of the AAP encourages proposals which will increase the provision of office accommodation within the office quarter and seeks to resist proposals that would result in a net loss of office floorspace. It is acknowledged that this proposal would result in the loss of 658 square metres of office floorspace (demolition of part of Chaucer House is proposed under a separate enabling application reference P1537.12, also reported on this agenda), and would not include the re-provision of any office floorspace within the new development. 1311m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace would however be retained within the building Hexagon House, which has a floorspace of around 3,800 square metres will not be affected.
- 7.2.7 However, economic conditions have changed significantly since the AAP was adopted in 2008 and there has been a decline in the viability of the office market in this location. Commercial information submitted with the application suggests that there is some 4,484 sq.ft of office floorspace available in the Romford office market balanced against a steady decline in

take up, such that it is estimated that there is a 4.6 year supply for office floorspace if future demand continues at the current rate. The Council has seen a similar case advanced for other development proposals in the office quarter of the town centre in recent years (largely applications for change of use) and has accepted the validity of the economic case made for alternatives to office use.

7.2.8 Work undertaken in 2012 by consultants URS for the Council to support the review of the LDF has noted that demand in the local office market in Havering has remained at a relatively low level with the existing stock able to satisfy demand albeit with some demand for serviced premises in the Romford Office Quarter. URS consultants noted that where demand has existed it has been for premises from 250m<sup>2</sup> – 2,500m<sup>2</sup>. The GLA London Office Policy review (2009) has noted that changes in working patterns through such initiatives as home working is having an impact on the demand for office space. In regard to trying to assess the likely demand for office space in Romford in the years ahead it is worth reflecting that work undertaken by GVA for Crossrail in 2012 concluded that outside of Central London, Crossrail is likely to have a limited impact in terms of generating additional demand for office space.

7.2.9 There has been recognition within the Council of the shifting demands for office floorspace within the town centre and the Council has acknowledged (in the Havering Culture Strategy 2012-2014) that a key objective is to encourage major investment in Romford including, inter-alia, to deliver leisure-led mixed-use development in Romford to supplement the office market as a means of generating footfall.

7.2.10 In view of the cultural and economic benefits to the town centre that would be created by the provision of a new public leisure centre and having regard to the well-documented changing market conditions since the adoption of the AAP, it is considered in the light of the current and expected low level of demand for office floorspace in Romford that the modest loss of some office floorspace could be accepted in this location without materially harming the future viability of the Romford office market especially when the significant benefits of the proposal are taken into account. The development itself creates employment opportunities and is expected to generate some 50 new full and part time posts.

7.2.11 The proposal will also result in the loss of the existing car park, which is primarily used by employees of Chaucer and Hexagon House, although available for public use on Saturdays. The car park provides 125 spaces.

7.2.12 Policy DC33 states that the Council will support development proposals to convert parking areas to alternative uses where private non-residential parking space is not required by genuine operational business users. The traffic assessment submitted with the application indicates that the week day demand for parking by office users can be accommodated in the 72 space car park associated with Hexagon House to the east of the site. On a

Saturday, the traffic assessment indicates a peak usage of 73 vehicles, which is well below the capacity of 125 spaces.

- 7.2.13 The site is within a highly accessible location in the centre of Romford, well served by public transport and a number of town centre car parks. In regard to overall accessibility, Romford Town Centre enjoys very high levels of accessibility and this is reflected in its high PTAL score. Several bus services have stops along Western Road and the site is within walking distance of other stops along Mercury Gardens. The town centre is widely accessible by bus routes from within Havering and also neighbouring boroughs. Some 20 bus routes pass through the town centre. The site is within walking distance of Romford railway station which will be served by Crossrail trains from 2017/18 which will strengthen Romford's position as the gateway to Essex.
- 7.2.14 Having regard to the sustainable location of the site and the current under-capacity use of the car park it is considered that the displaced parking requirement could be absorbed by existing town centre car parks without any material adverse impact on parking in the town centre.
- 7.2.15 Staff are therefore satisfied that the principle of development, in land use terms, is acceptable.

### **7.3 Need for Proposed Development/Loss of Existing Ice Rink**

- 7.3.1 Policy DC19 of the LDF sets an indicative upper limit of 45,000 sq.m. gross leisure floorspace in Romford Town Centre in the plan period to 2020. Therefore, the proposal will meet an identified quantitative need in the town centre. In principle the proposal is compliant with Policy DC19, as well as the requirements of the NPPF and Policy 3.16 of the London Plan.
- 7.3.2 Since the closure of the Dolphin complex in 1995, Romford Town Centre has been without a public leisure centre or swimming pool and the provision of a replacement facility which is reflected in the current Corporate Plan and which is a long held ambition of the Council, which fits with the LDF Core Strategy objectives.
- 7.3.3 The proposal provides a quality leisure development within the centre of Romford, contributing to sustainable living objectives and promoting a healthy lifestyle in line with the Corporate Plan and Core Strategy themes. It is considered the proposal would contribute to the economy of Romford by adding to the vitality of the town centre and improving the character and appearance of this under-utilised car park, as well as provide sporting opportunities through the provision of a 25m, 8 lane swimming pool, learner pool and new ice rink. The proposed development will also create approximately 50 new jobs (full and part time) and would accord with the NPPF overarching objective of strengthening the economy .
- 7.3.4 As previously outlined, this proposal has been enabled by a partnership approach between the Council and the previous owners of the application

site. The Council has negotiated the sale of a site on Rom Valley Way, which currently houses the existing Romford Ice Rink, enabling the purchase of the application site for the proposed new leisure development. A separate planning application has been submitted in respect of the Rom Valley Way site for a new food store and residential development (application reference P1468.12). The proposed new development in Rom Valley Way is the subject of a separate report elsewhere on this agenda. However, there are linkages between this and the leisure centre proposals in that the existing Ice Rink facility is to be demolished. The worst case scenario is that Romford would be without an ice rink facility for up to two years pending the completion and opening of the new facility.

- 7.3.5 The Council has given consideration to the feasibility of retaining and refurbishing the existing ice rink but the costs involved in bringing the existing facility up to standard and maintaining it are not viable or prudent in the current financial climate. It is noted that a number of the letters of representation raise concern about the lack of an ice skating facility within the Borough for this period of time. The Council has completed a feasibility study in to the option of providing a temporary ice rink facility. During the process of completing the Feasibility Study the Council has met with a number of ice rink operators, managers of existing ice rinks in the sub region and local stakeholders who have an interest in the provision of a temporary facility (ie people involved in ice hockey and ice skating).
- 7.3.6 The feasibility study considered a number of different types of facilities and associated costs, as well as potential sites across the borough. It concluded that the Broxhill site in Harold Hill would be the best site for a temporary facility and identified a range of costs from approx. £750k to £1.5m, depending on the type and quality of the facility to be provided. The cost of provision elsewhere would be greater.
- 7.3.7 The Council does not have any identified capital funding for the provision of a temporary ice rink facility, but has nevertheless offered to consider providing a site (rent free) and a serviced building to house a temporary ice rink, providing the stakeholders can find the funding to fit out the facility and are prepared to run it at no risk to the Council. Despite an initial positive response the stakeholders have not yet been able to confirm they have funding or the ability to manage a temporary facility.
- 7.3.8 Whilst, at the time of writing this report, no final decision has been taken on whether to provide a temporary ice facility, or not, it looks increasingly likely that such a facility will not be provided. The Council has however been talking to other ice rink operators in the sub region (Chelmsford, Alexandra Palace and Lee Valley) to explore a transfer of the ice activities currently taking place at Romford. Whilst the concerns of local users of the facility regarding a gap in provision is understandable, this does not of itself constitute material grounds to refuse the development.
- 7.3.9 Policy CP7 of the LDF states that the Council will retain existing facilities where a need exists. The policy also states the aim of addressing



quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in open space and recreation facilities. The proposed development on the ice rink site, under application P1468.12, results in the loss of the existing ice rink facility and will leave the Borough without an ice rink until the new development is constructed and operational. Whilst, in the short term, leisure provision in the Borough will be diminished, it is important to look at the long term objectives of the proposal. The quality and usefulness of the proposed facility will significantly outstrip that of the existing facility meaning that, the overall outcome will be the provision of enhanced recreation and leisure provision within the town centre. The loss of the existing ice rink facilities is a necessity in this case to enable the improved facilities to be provided and in view of the longer term objectives Staff are satisfied that the proposal is consistent with the objectives of Policy CP7. The Council is committed to ensuring that the new leisure facility will be provided and will enter into a legal agreement to ensure this commitment is binding. Meanwhile, the Council is committed to working with the ice rink stakeholders to ensure that, in due course, a new ice rink facility is provided, which will provide top class training and facilities.

7.3.10 The GVA work undertaken to support the LDF review highlighted growing awareness of public health and obesity issues and suggests that together with growing numbers of GP referrals, there are likely to be growth opportunities for fitness and health facilities. It also mentioned that the success of the 2012 Olympics is expected to inspire increased participation in sport and exercise. GVA noted that Romford has a fair range of commercial leisure uses but noted that the provision is fairly basic and only readily addresses the budget family and core youth markets. It noted that there is little leisure offer for a resident older than a young adult or young family in the evening. It concluded that that this has implications for the future role and prosperity of Romford as a shopping centre. GVA concluded that the provision of a new leisure facility in this location has the potential to be well-integrated with the shopping area and considered that it would be a positive contribution to the town centre. Having regard to these matters, it may be considered that the proposed leisure facility has the potential to help secure Romford's longer term future as it looks to respond to the challenges elsewhere.

## **7.4 Design and Visual Impact**

7.4.1 The proposed development occupies a prominent site within Romford Town Centre. The scale, form, massing and appearance of the proposed development are critical to providing a successful development that complements the wider town centre and enhances the economy and vitality of the town centre as a whole. Strong emphasis is given to the quality of design in both the NPPF and within Policies 7.1-7.6 of the London Plan. This is further reinforced by Policies CP17 and DC61 of the LDF. Core Policy 17 requires new development to improve the character and appearance of the local area in respect of scale and design, to provide a high standard of inclusive design so that it is accessible to all and to be safe

and secure and contribute to community safety. These objectives will be explored further below.

- 7.4.2 In terms of site layout, it is acknowledged that the development proposes a high degree of site coverage. This is not unusual in the context of the existing urban grain and is consistent with other development in this part of the town centre, for example 10-14 Western Road. In so far as character is concerned, the extent of site coverage is entirely acceptable. This leaves little scope for public realm improvements within the site but the development does take advantage of the reasonably deep front forecourt to the building of 5m increasing in part to 12m, where there is opportunity to provide new hard landscaping, seating and lighting. The proposed ground floor café is designed with bi-folding doors, which are capable of opening out onto a pavement-café style seating area, which would all contribute to the character and quality of the public realm.
- 7.4.3 It is noted that there is further potential for other public realm improvements in Western Road within the vicinity of the application site and the Council are currently exploring the scope for this with other partners, principally Transport for London. These could potentially include kerb realignments, a zebra crossing and bus stop resiting. A masterplan for the works has already been produced and the Council is now investigating the possibility of additional funding for the project from Transport for London. The initial phase of this is submission of a case to Transport for London demonstrating the need for the works, which is underway and, subject to provisional agreement at this stage, will progress to detailed scheme development and design works around September 2013. These works would be outside of the application site and, whilst are potentially longer term objectives of the Council, do not form part of the consideration of the current application. Officers are meanwhile exploring funding opportunities with Transport for London for these highway and wider public realm improvements along Western Road and Grimshaw Way. These improvements will seek to complement the works being undertaken at the site and as far as is possible would be phased and implemented so as to achieve the best outcomes for the town centre.
- 7.4.4 The development includes some limited on site car parking, which will be for disabled users. Due to site constraints this would be located to the rear of the site which, although not ideal in terms of urban design, is perfectly acceptable providing the spaces are designed to the required standards of accessibility and are safe and secure to use. There will be level access from the parking spaces along the western side of the building to the public entrance of the leisure complex and this is considered acceptable. Details of lighting and security measures will be secured by condition. Issues of community safety are also further addressed elsewhere in this report.
- 7.4.5 Plant and other equipment for the development, including refuse, surface water attenuation and rainwater harvesting equipment, has intentionally been located to the rear of the site, where its degree of public visibility is

limited and the resultant impact on the clean profile, design and visual appearance of the building is reduced.

- 7.4.6 In terms of siting, the position of the building within the site is considered to relate acceptably to neighbouring development. The building does project forward of Sovereign House, to the west and, to a more limited extent, Chaucer House to the east. However, in relation to Sovereign House this is off-set by the intervening approximately 12m wide flank to flank separation across Grimshaw Way. In relation to Chaucer House it is considered that the forward projection of the proposed leisure centre reinforces its position as a civic building and a development that should rightly be the focal point of Western Road. There is a relatively hard urban edge to this part of the town centre in any event, characterised by multi-storey development being sited close to the footway and it is considered that the siting and scale of the proposed development is consistent with this.
- 7.4.7 Turning to scale and massing, the proposed development has a parapet height of 24m and so is taller than both of the neighbouring properties (Chaucer House is some 17.5m and Sovereign House some 18.5m) and is defined, under the provisions of Policy DC66, as a tall building. Tall buildings can be accepted in principle within the town centre under the provisions of Policy DC66 and ROM19 but are required to be of exemplary high quality and inclusive design. It should be noted that there is a clear functional design justification for the height of the building proposed, in order to accommodate the spectator seating for the pool and ice rink, which is an integral requirement of the proposed leisure centre. There are other tall buildings within this part of Western Road and it is considered that the overall scale and massing of the building, although taller than neighbouring development, is of a proportionate scale consistent with adjacent buildings and local character. Under the provisions of Policy ROM19, as also with Policy DC66, the acceptability of tall buildings is also dependent on the quality of the resultant building, as well as inclusivity of design, and these issues are explored further below.
- 7.4.8 The design concept of the building is to create a simple box-like structure supported on a largely glazed plinth, with the detail of the development created by the proposed external cladding materials and lighting system. The concept of the built form is supported in principle. There are a variety of building types and materials displayed in Western Road and it is considered appropriate that this development should set its own architectural character.
- 7.4.9 The design concept of the development has been refined since the proposals were originally submitted, which has resulted in changes to the appearance of the external materials and the lighting scheme for the building. The use of polycarbonate cladding panels is retained in the revised scheme but the colour is adapted from the single shade of blue originally proposed to a combination of four shades of blue, arranged vertically. It is considered this results in a more pleasing design than originally proposed, as it adds a richness of colour and texture to the building that will be particularly noticeable during the daytime and add visual

interest when the building is unlit. Staff have had regard to the longevity of the building and have considered the durability and ease of maintaining the materials proposed. The proposed material is considered to meet these objectives, as well as providing a good thermal performance, and having a quality visual impact.

7.4.10 As originally proposed, the building was to be lit with diagonal LED lights and shadow lines. However, there were concerns as to how this would affect the external appearance of the building during the day. The revised proposals now proposed a system of vertical LED lighting, which has a projection of some 25mm from the face of the cladding. This simplified appearance is considered to relate better to the overall design of the building.

7.4.11 The proposed new leisure centre building is considered to result in a development that is of exemplary high quality. The proportions, massing and relationship to neighbouring development is well suited to the site and surrounding streetscene. The design concept of the development is strong enough to provide an impressive focal point within the Western Road streetscene during the day, whilst the LED lighting will ensure that the building is particularly striking during the evening. It is considered that the proposed development will make a strong contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the town centre. It is considered the proposed development, in conjunction with its landscaped setting will create a well-defined public realm, at a scale that fits well within its context and provides a strong and accessible frontage at street level. The internal and external design of the development pays high regard to inclusivity of access, which is an integral element of the proposals, and can be seen in the detailed design of the sports facilities within the building, as well as the access, parking and landscaping arrangements around the building.

7.4.12 It is noted that the GLA considered the proposals, as originally submitted, to display striking and bold architecture that would be instantly recognisable as a legible and unique town centre building. The GLA have been notified of the revised proposals and Members will be advised if any further comments are received. Staff however consider the refinement of the original design concept to be to the overall benefit of the design and character of the building and judge that the proposal will result in a distinctive, exemplary quality development that will make a strong and positive contribution to this part of the town centre.

7.4.13 Having regard to the factors set out above, it is considered that the proposed development complies with the aims of Policy DC61 in respect of responding to local built form and pattern of development. It would regenerate a prominent, under-used site within the centre of Romford and, through its detailed design, would improve the character and amenity of the existing area.

7.4.14 In terms of accessibility and public realm, issues of site layout have largely been addressed in paragraphs 7.4.2 and 7.4.3 above. It should be noted

that the site is located in an area of high accessibility, both by walking, cycling and public transport and the locality is well served by public car parking. There are five parking spaces within the site for disabled users and the site is in particularly close proximity to Western Road multi-storey car park, which also has parking provision for disabled users. The scheme will also include provision for 41 cycle spaces. The proposal is designed with level access from the rear parking areas to the site frontage and the foyer of the development is also level with the street in Western Road to aid accessibility and to comply with the relevant building regulations standards.

7.4.15 Existing cycle parking is located at several locations along South Street with more stands planned to be installed opposite Romford Station in 2013/14 (subject to approval by Network Rail and Transport for London). With existing and proposed stands, there will be cycle parking for around 50 cycles when these works are finished. The Mayor has announced recently a focus on cycling including specific priority for Outer London. These initiatives are likely to encompass infrastructure works, public realm improvements to facilitate cycling and measures to encourage more people to cycle. Havering will be exploring these opportunities with Transport for London.

7.4.16 Measures aimed at providing inclusivity of access are detailed in the submitted Design and Access statement. Section 8.2 in particular details measures adopted to provide acceptable movement through the site and building for all users. Some of the measures include rotating sliding doors, suitably sized to be used by wheelchair users, buggies etc; the provision of lift access to all floors of the building; provision of spectator seating for wheelchair users; a mix in the size and range of changing cubicles, including larger cubicles suitable for use by wheelchair users and combined wet/dry shower and changing facilities; the use of colour schemes and way-fare signage to aid visually-impaired users of the facility. The extent of consultation with disabled user groups, the issues considered and range of measures adopted to ensure inclusivity of access is integral to the design of the proposals are given in greater detail in the Design and Access statement. However, Staff are satisfied that, in respect of access, the scheme has been designed to meet the objectives of Policies CP17, DC16 and DC62 of the LDF, as well as Policy ROM19 of the Romford Area Action Plan and Policy 7.2 of the London Plan.

7.4.17 The Borough Crime Prevention Design Advisor has liaised with the scheme architects in respect of the detailed security measures to be incorporated within the development and is satisfied that suitable provision has been made to design out crime. The proposal is therefore considered to suitably deal with issues of community safety subject to relevant planning conditions, which will also include a requirement for CCTV.

## **7.5 Environmental Issues**

7.5.1 A sustainability and renewable energy statement has been submitted with this application. This sets out the measures to achieve levels of energy efficiency to comply with the London Plan. The proposed development

includes measures such as the use of a gas-fired combined heat and power (CHP) system within the building and a solar-thermal water heating system. The submitted statement concludes that the development is expected to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good', which accords with Policy DC49 of the LDF, and that a 20% reduction in carbon emissions would be achieved, which accords with London Plan targets set out in Policies 5.7-5.9 and the Havering Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. Staff are therefore satisfied that the development is on course to meet the required sustainability and energy efficiency standards.

- 7.5.2 The site is located principally in Flood Zone 1 as shown by Environment Agency mapping. This is the lowest risk zone and development of a leisure centre is therefore considered appropriate in accordance with the NPPF. The south eastern boundary of the site is affected by Flood Zone 3 associated with the culverted Black's Brook. A Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared and submitted in support of this application, which includes a proposed drainage strategy for the site, discharging attenuated flows via an existing Thames Water manhole, to the culverted Black's Brook. The ground floor level of the development will be raised to 16.5m AOD at the southern boundary, thereby mitigating against the fluvial flood risk from the Black's Brook through raising of the ground floor level. The Environment Agency have been consulted on the proposals and advise that they have no objections to the development providing it is carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment. This can be secured by condition and the development is therefore considered to accord with Policy 5.12 of the London Plan and Policy DC48 of the LDF in respect of flood risk.
- 7.5.3 There are a small number of trees within the application site and a further belt of trees to the rear boundary of the site. None of these are subject of a Tree Preservation Order. An arboricultural assessment has been submitted with the application, which looked at 27 individual trees and 2 groups. The assessment found that none of the trees were of high quality or value, and only five were of moderate quality or value. Having regard to the conclusions of the arboricultural report Staff raise no objection in principle to the loss of trees from the site but consider that scope for any replacement planting should be considered in detailed hard/soft landscaping proposals for the site, to be secured by condition. It is however acknowledged that the opportunity for additional landscape works will be limited by the site constraints and degree of proposed site coverage. The Council is working with Transport for London to identify opportunities and funding for more trees to be planted in the vicinity as part of the Mayor's objectives of increasing street trees across London.
- 7.5.4 An Extended Phase 1 ecological study of the site has been carried out. The study found no direct evidence of protected plants or species on the site. In particular it indicated that bats are unlikely to be present on the site or affected by the development. The report does make recommendations for the timing of the works, to avoid nesting birds, and for protection measures for foraging mammals during development. Additionally, it identifies the presence of an invasive plant species (butterfly bush) on the site, which will

need to be removed in a controlled manner. However, there are no ecological grounds why the development is unacceptable and the development accords with Policy DC58 of the LDF. It is however recommended that a condition imposed requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the submitted Extended Phase 1 ecological study.

7.5.5 In respect of noise issues, this is considered principally to evolve from the noise of plant or machinery or break out noise from the use of the premises (primarily from ice disco nights). Technical reports submitted with the application indicate that the noise generated by the proposed development will be within acceptable limits. However, given that the final, technical details of the construction are not finalised, as is common with developments of this scale, it is recommended that conditions be attached in respect of noise breakout from the premises and plant and machinery in order to ensure that acceptable noise levels are maintained. A further condition requiring the submission of a construction method statement and limiting hours of working is also recommended. On this basis the proposal is considered to comply with Policy DC55 of the LDF.

7.5.6 Environmental Health have requested a condition relating to contaminated land. Details relating to air quality have been submitted with the application. Environmental Health have also requested that conditions be imposed requiring the fitting of suitable ventilation and extraction equipment in order to avoid odour nuisance.

7.5.7 A preliminary site waste management scheme has been submitted with the application. Whilst it is acknowledged that no demolition is proposed by this application (part demolition of Chaucer House is subject of a separate application reference P1537.12) no detail is yet known about the removal of construction materials from the site. It is therefore recommended that this be dealt with by condition.

7.5.8 The GLA has assessed the proposals in respect of energy efficiency and use of renewable energy technologies. The GLA notes that the proposed energy strategy will provide for a 28% carbon reduction beyond current building regulations. This is acceptable in principle, although scope for enlarging the combined heat and power unit (CHP) should be investigated as this is preferred to use of solar energy collectors to achieve carbon savings. The proposal is supported in terms of climate change measures.

## **7.6 Impact on Amenity**

7.6.1 The proposed development is located to the west of Chaucer House, which is a 4/5 storey office block. Alterations will be required to take place to Chaucer House to facilitate the proposed development, which are subject of a separate planning application (P1537.12). Other than the direct implications of the enabling works to Chaucer House the proposed development is not considered to materially impact on the continued functionality and amenity of this office block. Similarly, Hexagon House,

which is situated slightly further east of the proposed development than Chaucer House, is not judged to be materially adversely affected by the proposals. The impact of loss of the car parking area has already been assessed elsewhere in this report.

- 7.6.2 To the west of the site is Sovereign House, a 4/5 storey office block. Given the nature of the use of this building and its separation from the application site by Grimshaw Way no material adverse impact on this building is considered to occur.
- 7.6.3 Further west is the nearest residential property, Halyards and Eldon Court, located some 70m away from the site. In view of this distance and the orientation no material harm to residential amenity is considered to result from the proposed building. Noise reports have been submitted with the application, which indicate that material harm through noise generated by the building is unlikely to occur. Environmental Health has however suggested conditions so that this can be further addressed when precise construction details are known.
- 7.6.4 Other buildings near to the site include Scimitar House, the Romford and District Synagogue and St. James House. Taking into consideration their degree of separation from the site and their non-residential use it is considered that the relationship between the buildings is acceptable and would not give rise to material harm to amenity. It is acknowledged that the synagogue is a place of worship but having regard to the town centre location and the noise break-out levels the development is expected to achieve, it is not considered that this would give rise to levels of noise and disruption to religious activities that would justify refusal of the proposals.
- 7.6.5 The proposed leisure facility will be a well-used public building. It is expected to attract high volumes of users comprising, not only individuals and families making use of the swimming pool, gym and ice rink facilities, but also various sports clubs and teams and a high volume of spectators watching swimming galas, ice skating shows, hockey matches etc. The facility makes provision for over 800 spectator seats and it should be therefore anticipated that there will be frequent occasions when people will be entering and leaving the building en masse. The transportation issues arising from this are assessed later in this report but consideration also needs to be given to the potential noise from mass dispersal of people from the building and the likely opening times of the facility.
- 7.6.6 In terms of proposed opening hours, the nature of a public leisure facility is that it attracts users at various times of the day. It is common for swimming pools to be open early in the morning from around 5am for general use but particularly for those training in a dedicated sport, such as ice skating. It is also not unusual for facilities to be in use until late into the evening, again particularly for those involved in training for swimming or ice sports, who need to be able to fit intensive training around work, school and other commitments. With this in mind, Members are requested to consider whether it is reasonable to enable the sports facility to open 24 hours a day.



- 7.6.7 Staff consider that, although this would generate some levels of noise and activity locally, particularly within Western Road, the number of individuals using the facility either extremely early or extremely late at night would be expected to be relatively low. Given also the town centre location, where a number of pubs and clubs already stay open until the early hours of the morning and the fact that there would be no parking next to the nearest residential properties, Staff consider that material noise and disturbance to residents would not occur. The Council will not be the operators of the leisure facility. However, as a Council owned building, the Local Authority would be in a position to manage the day to day operation of the facility if general noise and disturbance were to become an issue.
- 7.6.8 Staff do however consider there is potential for unacceptable noise and disruption to local residential amenity if large sports or entertainment events, such as ice hockey matches, shows or galas were undertaken at unsociable hours as this could result in over 800 spectators exiting the building onto Western Road. Staff therefore consider a reasonable balance between the needs of users and the amenities of residents would be to enable general 24 hours opening of the facility but with a limit on the hours that public events can be held. It is considered, in the context of the town centre environment, that opening hours for public events could be accepted up until 1am on Friday and Saturday evenings, as there is generally high levels of late night activity in the town centre on these days. Earlier finishing times for sporting events are suggested on other days of the week.
- 7.6.9 A sunlight/daylight assessment has been submitted with the application. This includes an assessment of the proposal on daylight and sunlight received by neighbouring properties against BRE guidelines. It should be noted that these are not a standard adopted by the Council but are an industry-acknowledged guide to the impact of development on sunlight and daylight. The report assessed the impact on a number of windows to Sovereign, Scimitar, St. James, Hexagon and Chaucer House, as well as on retail development to the north and the synagogue to the south of the site. It concluded that the proposal would result in reduced daylight to all the windows tested, in particular 3 of the windows tested. Sunlight to all but one of the windows (one in Chaucer House) would be above recommended levels. Whilst Staff accept that the reduction in daylight may be perceptible to occupiers of these buildings or require some greater usage of electric light, given the non-residential nature of these buildings it is not considered that the impact would be so severe as to give rise to a material loss of amenity. Much of the building is presently empty so impact on existing occupiers would be limited. Staff do not therefore judge this to be material grounds for refusal.

## **7.7 Highway/Parking Issues**

- 7.7.1 The site is located within the heart of Romford Town Centre. It provides a public leisure facility including a swimming pool, gym and ice rink, with around 210 spectator seats for the swimming pool and 863 for the ice rink

(or 1073 spectator seats in the unlikely event of both the swimming pool and ice rink simultaneously holding major events). The development is largely car-free, with the exception of the provision of 5 parking spaces to the rear of the building for disabled users. In considering the acceptability of the proposals the issues of trip generation and distribution, traffic and impact on capacity, parking and servicing have been taken into consideration against a background of this being a town centre location which accords with the focus in the NPPF of sustainable development.

- 7.7.2 In establishing the level of trip generation a review of similar sites was carried out in both of the main databases TRICS and TRAVL. Neither contained leisure centres that included Ice Rinks. As such it was decided to use the leisure centre sites contained in the TRAVL database (given their locations in London) and estimate the trip generation of the Ice Rink based on the current site in Rom Valley Way and a stand alone Ice Rink in Norwich. In the peak hours the level of vehicle trip attraction, a maximum of 58 vehicles per hour was anticipated. This was shown to have a negligible impact on the surrounding highway network.
- 7.7.3 The level of trip generation highlighted in the Transport Assessment (TA) was demonstrated to be insignificant during peak periods and the impact on the surrounding road network, in particular the Western Road, Mercury Gardens roundabout was shown to be negligible. The Council's highway engineers have advised that they accept the conclusions of the TA in this respect and are satisfied the proposal would not materially add to congestion in the town centre. Following the initial TfL response further clarification on trip generation of the site has been provided and TfL have confirmed that they do not consider the proposal to have any adverse effect on the operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN).
- 7.7.4 The development relies predominantly on the use of public transport and town centre car parking provision, as well as walking and cycling. The site is in the highest PTAL level of 6-5 and, as such, considered to be in the highest sustainable location within the Borough. The site is within a short walking distance from Romford Train Station and the Atlanta Boulevard Bus Interchange. In principle, the low levels of on-site parking proposed are acceptable. The nearest town centre car parks to the development are Slaney Road Car Park, The Liberty Car Park (served from Western Road opposite the development) and The Mercury Mall car Park (served from Western Road between Mercury Gardens and Junction Road). These are a mixture of privately and publicly owned facilities and Section 106 Agreements exist which oblige the privately owned car parks to permit general Town Centre Parking.
- 7.7.5 Surveys of these car parks have been undertaken and demonstrate that there is sufficient space to accommodate the additional demand especially at the Slaney Road Car Park. Additional investigation into the amount of space required for major Ice Hockey games was considered but it was identified that most league games take place on a Sunday evening away from the major weekend peak for Romford Town Centre, such that this

would not have a significant impact on the existing demand for parking in the town centre and the requirement for car parking for ice hockey spectators could be accommodated without detriment to the town centre

- 7.7.6 The TA demonstrates that the maximum demand, when considering the availability of space for spectators, is an additional 950 persons and / or 238 car borne trips. As previously shown the surrounding car parks can comfortably accommodate this level of demand as well as the day to day functioning of the other uses including the swimming pool and gym. Furthermore, the TA has only considered the closest three car parks and for major events other town centre parks are not an excessive distance away.
- 7.7.7 There are five disabled spaces to the rear of the building. As they are located off the highway they can be retained solely for the use of visitors to the leisure centre. Further spaces are included on the ground floor in the Liberty Car Park. TfL has requested that one electric vehicle charging point be provided and this is since been included within the development, to be secured by condition.
- 7.7.8 A “kiss and ride” or drop off facility is to be provided closer to the entrance. This will provide a convenient place for not only members of the public, but also team or school coaches to drop off customers and / or team members to the facilities. A number of Coach parking facilities exist in the town centre for vehicles to park i.e. Mercury Gardens Service Road and Como Street Car Park. Any changes to parking restrictions will however be subject to a separate statutory process. It is recommended that details of coach parking and management be submitted by condition. TfL have indicated that this is acceptable to them in principle and are supportive of a planning condition setting out how the facility will be managed. TfL have also requested that this area be available prior to the site being brought into use.
- 7.7.9 Cycle provision will be required to be provided on site and it is recommended that details of this be secured by condition. TfL have advised that the development should provide cycle parking spaces for both employees and users of the facility. It is now proposed to secure a total of 41 cycle spaces within the development (31 spaces for visitors and 10 for staff). TfL have confirmed this is acceptable. The cycle parking provision is to be secured by condition.
- 7.7.10 The proposals show a service area at the rear of the building to provide for deliveries and refuse collection. Highways engineers have advised that the proposals are considered to be acceptable in this respect and make adequate provision for the servicing of the development. Details of refuse storage and collection arrangements are recommended to be secured through condition.
- 7.7.11 It is acknowledged that the proposed development will have an impact on Western Road. There will be increased pedestrian footfall to the leisure centre and this will change pedestrian desire lines, in particular between the Western Road multi storey car park and the leisure centre. The carriageway

in this section of Western Road is wide and is a main route into the town centre for a considerable number of buses. The Council is currently considering options for highway improvements works in Western Road, although these do not form part of the current planning application.

7.7.12 It is accepted however that consideration will need to be given as to how pedestrian crossing facilities in Western Road can be improved and it is recommended that subject to funding from Transport for London an investigation into the options for public realm improvement, including improved crossing facilities, in Western Road be secured through a legal agreement. Subject to consultation on a proposed scheme(s) the Council will, as Highway Authority, progress as appropriate the approved scheme. In principle, TfL support the provision of improved pedestrian crossing facilities in Western Road..

7.7.13 TfL have also requested conditions relating to the submission of a construction logistics plan and delivery and service plan. These can be secured as part of any grant of planning permission. TfL have also requested a travel plan for the site, which it was suggested could be secured by legal agreement. Staff agree that a travel plan is required as the site is in a highly accessible location in terms of public transport links and it is appropriate to encourage visitors to the site to use public transport. It is considered that a condition would be sufficient to achieve the submission and implementation of a travel plan in this case.

## 7.8 Referrals

7.8.1 The application has been referred to the Greater London Authority as it is inter-linked with the separate planning application for Rom Valley Way (P1468.12). If Members are minded to grant permission for the development the proposal will need to be referred back to the GLA as a Stage II referral before permission can be issued.

7.8.2 Staff have considered whether the proposal is also referable to the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009. It is considered that this development does not fall within any of the categories requiring referral but that the planning application for Rom Valley Way (P1468.12) does. It is therefore considered, given the linkages between the two development proposals that both applications should be referred to the Secretary of State together.

## 7.9 Mayoral CIL

7.9.1 The proposed development is liable for the Mayor's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It is also within a part of the Borough which is liable for a Crossrail contribution under the terms of the Mayor's Planning Obligations SPD July 2010.

7.9.2 The Mayor's Planning Obligations SPD relates only to residential, retail or hotel accommodation. It can apply also to certain leisure and entertainment proposals on a case by case basis. Staff take the view that this would only be likely to apply on particularly large or significant leisure or entertainment proposals and note that the GLA have not specifically requested a contribution under the provisions of the SPD. The view is therefore taken that only the Mayoral CIL will be applicable in this case.

7.9.3 The Mayoral CIL requirement is based on the gross internal area (GIA) of the development. The proposal has a GIA of 8,081 square metres. From this, the existing floorspace of 1,385sq.m. from the demolition of Chaucer House may be subtracted, giving a net increase in floorspace of 6,696 square metres. The Mayoral CIL liability is therefore £133,920 (based on 6,696sq.m. @ £20).

#### 7.10 **Legal Agreement**

7.10.1 As the Council holds only an equitable interest in the land the current owners, the Council and the Greater London Authority as the enforcing planning authority will enter into a legal agreement under the appropriate enabling statutory provisions to secure the obligations set out as Heads of Terms in the recommendation.

### 8. **Conclusion:**

8.1 This application relates to a proposed new public leisure development, including a swimming pool and ice rink, on a site located in Western Road, Romford. The proposals are a culmination of long term ambitions to re-introduce a swimming pool and public leisure facilities back into the centre of Romford. The proposals have been made possible through a land swap arrangement involving other land owned by the Council at Rom Valley Way, which currently houses the existing Romford Ice Rink. The Rom Valley Way site is now subject of a separate planning application, reported separately on this agenda, for a new Morrisons food store and residential development. Whilst both applications are separate there is a strong degree of linkage between the proposals, such that each should be considered with regard to the other

8.2 The proposal will introduce a leisure facility within the heart of Romford Town Centre, in an area currently identified as the Office Quarter under the Romford Area Action Plan. However, the proposed location is entirely acceptable for such a facility under the terms of national, regional and local planning policies. The impact of loss of office floorspace has been considered but is judged not to be materially harmful in the current economic climate and having regard to the relatively small overall reduction in office floorspace availability in Romford.

8.3 The proposed leisure centre is judged to be a well designed, high quality facility that will provide a significant boost to the economy and environment of the town centre and complies with all relevant material planning policy objectives. It is acknowledged that significant concern has been raised

regarding the continuity of provision of ice skating facilities in Romford, both by local people and bodies such as the GLA and Sport England, until new facilities are constructed and open for use. Whilst there is genuine appreciation of the concerns and the Council is looking at options with stakeholders to address this issue, it remains the case that this does not constitute material grounds to lose the opportunity to provide this new, valuable community facility.

- 8.4 It is therefore recommended that, subject to no contrary direction by the Mayor for London or the Secretary of State, and the prior completion of an appropriate legal agreement and planning conditions, that planning permission be granted.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

Notwithstanding the Council's interest in the site, its decision as a local planning authority is taken solely on the policies in the development plan and other relevant material planning considerations. The Council will be financially affected, directly or indirectly, by planning resolutions. This will have no relevance to the planning decisions taken in respect of these proposals.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

The proposed development generally accords with the relevant policies of the Council's LDF and the London Plan. It should be referred to the Mayor and the Secretary of State because of the linkage with the proposals for the redevelopment of the current ice rink site. The proposed legal agreement will have to be with the GLA because the Council cannot enter into an agreement with itself as applicant and local planning authority.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

None arising from this application.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

The proposal will provide for a new public community facility within the centre of Romford. The proposal is consistent with the themes of better health and welfare and increased community participation, which underpin the Core Strategy Vision. The facility is located within the most highly accessible part of the Borough, thereby encouraging its use by as wide as possible a cross-section of the community.

The proposed development is designed to high standards that complies with legislative requirements aimed at ensuring equality of access for all users of the facility.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Planning application P1492.12 received 29 November 2012 and revised plans received 20 March 2013.