

Overview & Scrutiny Board 8th January 2026

Requisition of Cabinet decision on future proposals for former libraries 8th January 2026

CABINET

10th December 2025

Subject Heading:

Future proposals for former library premises

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Graham Williamson

ELT Lead:

Neil Stubbings, Strategic Director of Place

Report Author and contact details:

Mark Butler, Assistant Director of
Regeneration & Place Shaping

mark.butler@havering.gov.uk

01708 432947

Policy context:

The proposals in this paper align with the objectives within the Asset Management Plan, to keep the use of assets under ongoing review and to promote the release of assets when no longer required for operation use.

Financial summary:

Capital approval of £230,000 is sought to demolish two of the existing library buildings. This expenditure will defray interim costs and will be recovered in the medium term in the form of reduced development costs achieved from a cleared site.

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes - significant effect on two or more
Wards

Questions raised within the requisition request

1. What are the time scales regarding the meanwhile use of Harold Wood Library?
2. What alternatives were rejected regarding Gidea Park library?
3. What other locations have been explored regarding the respite centre?
4. What provision has been made for the disruption and noise associated with the neighbouring development and what effects this will have on those seeking respite?
5. How will the demolition costs be covered and will it be Capital or Revenue?
6. What other proposals have been rejected regarding South Hornchurch library?
7. Why is the whole South Hornchurch site not being proposed for development?
8. How will and what proportion of any receipt be spent on upgrading or replacing the current Community Centre?
9. Has there been a feasibility study of a joint homes/community facility on the sites, such as Gidea Park? If so, can we please be presented with the details of the study?
10. Has the council considered developing the sites into social homes to cut costs from our temporary accommodation bill?
11. Why will the special needs accommodation site at Gidea Park only provide care for such a small number?

1. What are the time scales regarding the meanwhile use of Harold Wood Library?

- The Harold Wood Foundation are seeking to commence their meanwhile lease of the building from Easter 2026.
- Heads of Terms for the lease are under discussion and the Council has offered a 7-year lease, with a landlord's break provision after 3 years.
- The break provision reflects the Cabinet's longer-term aspiration to develop the site for housing, as referenced within paragraph 14 of the original Cabinet report.
- The recommendation within the Cabinet report was simply for Cabinet to note the ongoing evaluation of the proposal.



2. What alternatives were rejected regarding Gidea Park library?

- As highlighted in paragraph 8 of the original Cabinet report, officers had discussed a potential meanwhile use of the building by Galliford Try, the contractors appointed for the construction of the adjacent SEND school.
- However, this proposal faltered due to the timing and terms for their occupation.
- Options for disposal and/or alternative development were considered as long-term proposals for the site, but these were discounted in favour of progressing the opportunity to develop a Children with Disabilities 4 bedded respite and two bedded children's home facility, given both the proximity to the new SEND school and the opportunity to mitigate existing cost pressures on Children Services for statutory short breaks respite, children in care placements and home to school transport.



3. What other locations have been explored regarding the respite centre?

- The former Gidea Park library site was immediately identified as the preferred site for the children's residential unit given the adjacency to the new SEN school facility.
- The financial pressures arising from SEND costs span not only accommodation and care but also transport provision. Developing a residential unit in close proximity to the SEND school offers the opportunity to deliver significant cost reductions across all of the above areas of expenditure.
- Location was also preferred due to the transport journey time that this cohort of children are subject to when being transported to school, home and respite which can significantly impact on children's behaviours and the need for additional escorts.



4. What provision has been made for the disruption and noise associated with the neighbouring development and what effects this will have on those seeking respite?

- It is unclear whether the question refers to the construction or use of the new SEND school, or both.
- The SEND school is due to be completed in 2027/28, prior to occupation of the children's residential unit – i.e. there should be no disruption to occupiers of the residential unit arising from the construction phase.
- The closest part of the school site to the residential unit will be the car park and drop-off areas to the front of the school - vehicular movements will largely be limited to drop-off and pick up times, so this is unlikely to present any material impact or disruption to occupiers. These issues will be further considered by planning officers when determining the planning application for the residential unit.
- It is also worth noting that the same architects have purposefully been engaged across both projects (SEN school and residential unit) to ensure co-ordination across phasing of both schemes, maximising the benefit of adjacencies and to mitigate any disruption.



5. How will the demolition costs be covered and will it be Capital or Revenue?

- The costs should be capital. To qualify as capital the demolition costs need to be linked to the increase in value of an asset, whether that is the existing site or because it allows for the creation of a new asset on the site.
- The reference to the potential for the costs to be revenue is due to the costs being linked to strategies for Gidea Park and South Hornchurch. In the instance of Gidea Park the capitalisation is predicated on the creation of the childrens' residential unit. For South Hornchurch it is predicated on the disposal adding value to the site for sale purposes.
- Revenue would only be the case if we chose to proceed with demolition and then a subsequent event changed the strategic direction of the decision to build at Gidea Park and dispose at South Hornchurch.
- Additional capital budget is being requested as part of the paper. In the unlikely, but possible event that the costs are revenue this would be a cost pressure that would require either growth or corresponding savings.



6. What other proposals have been rejected regarding South Hornchurch library?

- As highlighted in the previous slide, marketing has not yet concluded, so the opportunity has not arisen to review proposals.



7. Why is the whole South Hornchurch site not being proposed for development?

- This was one of the options considered as part of the Asset Review work and discussions with Cabinet.
- Sale of the wider South Hornchurch site would require reprovisioning of both the nursery and community centre that occupy the remainder of the site.
- This would require substantial upfront investment by the Council and prolong the timescale for generating the subsequent capital receipt, both of which were considered unattractive, given the Council's financial position.
- It was also felt that the proposed approach would minimise disruption for both facilities by leaving them in-situ



8. How will and what proportion of any receipt be spent on upgrading or replacing the current Community Centre?

- This is a separate and subsequent consideration for Cabinet, once:
 - a) the resulting capital receipt from disposal of the former library has been quantified
 - b) options to enhance the community centre have been fully evaluated and costed.
- The decision sought in the Cabinet report is to approve disposal. Any subsequent decisions on use of the receipt would come back to Cabinet



9. Has there been a feasibility study of a joint homes/community facility on the sites, such as Gidea Park? If so, can we please be presented with the details of the study?

- A study was previously undertaken by Bissett Adams architects, commissioned in 2022 by the Library Service
- This included reviewing the scope to intensify the use of several sub-library sites, including:
 - Gidea Park
 - Harold Wood
 - South Hornchurch
- Details for each site are set out in the following slides



9a. Massing study for Harold Wood library site



Potential to add value with additional floor (4th storey) at the corner junction only with approx 1No. 2 bedroom and 2no. 3 bedroom additional flats



9a. Massing study for Harold Wood library site (cont'd)



Ground floor

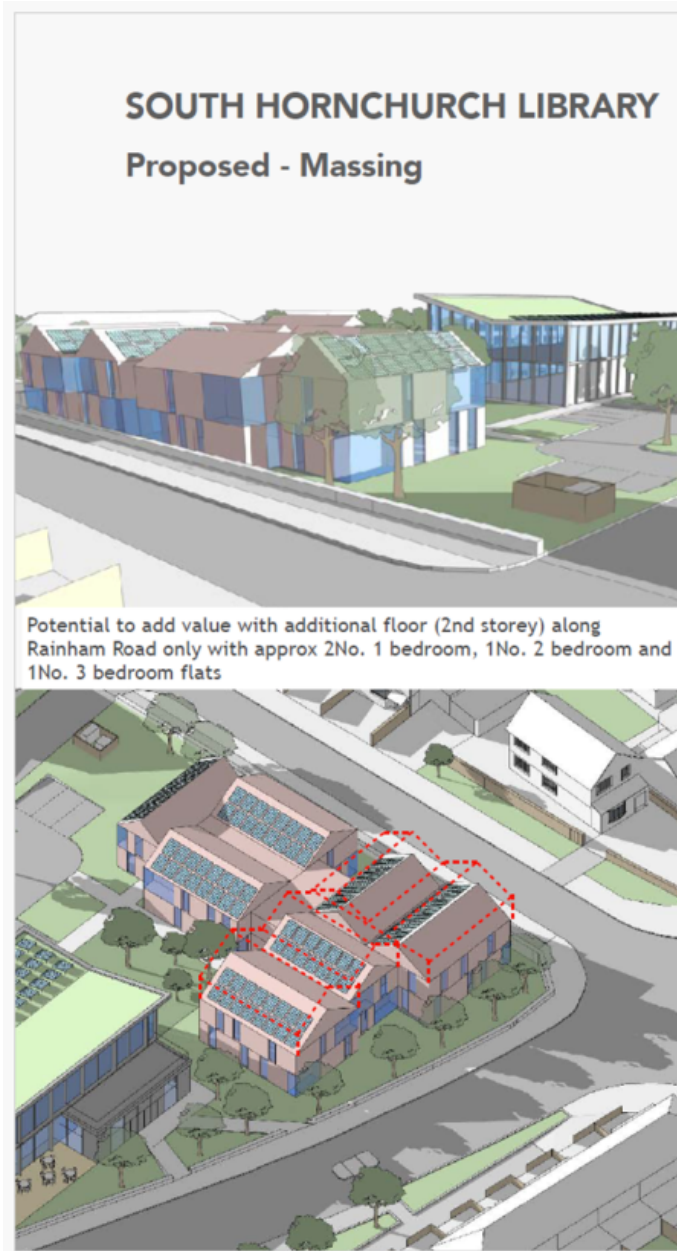


First floor



Second floor

9b. Massing study for South Hornchurch library site



9b. Massing study for South Hornchurch library site (cont'd)

SOUTH HORNCHURCH LIBRARY

Proposed - Ground Floor

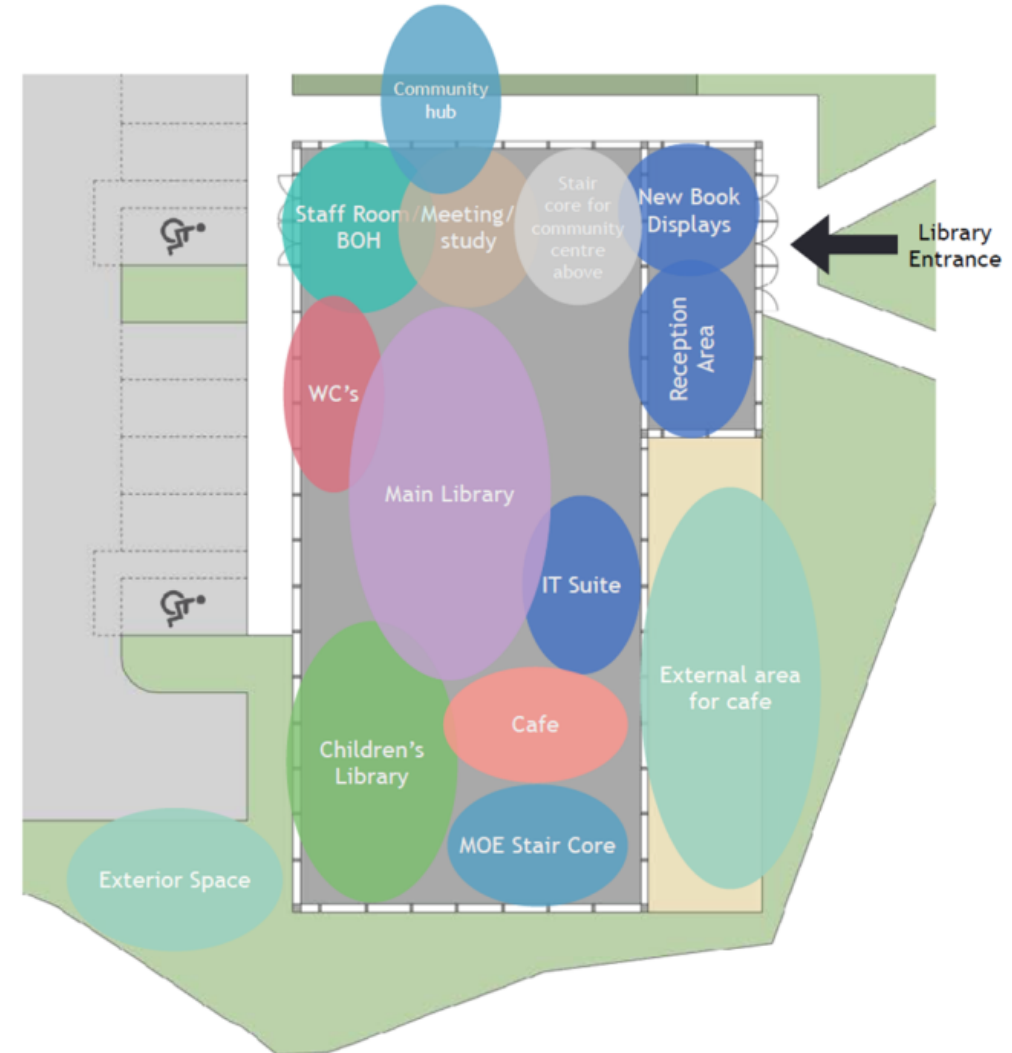
 Library
500 sqm

Proposed First floor community
space : 500 sqm

Parking: 20No. Spaces inc. 2No.
Accessible spaces

Potential for visitors
to community facility
and deliveries

Cycle parking :
Housing Design
Guide requirement
26No. long stay
spaces + minimum
2No. Short stay
spaces



9b. Massing study for South Hornchurch library site (cont'd)



9c. Massing study for Gidea Park library site



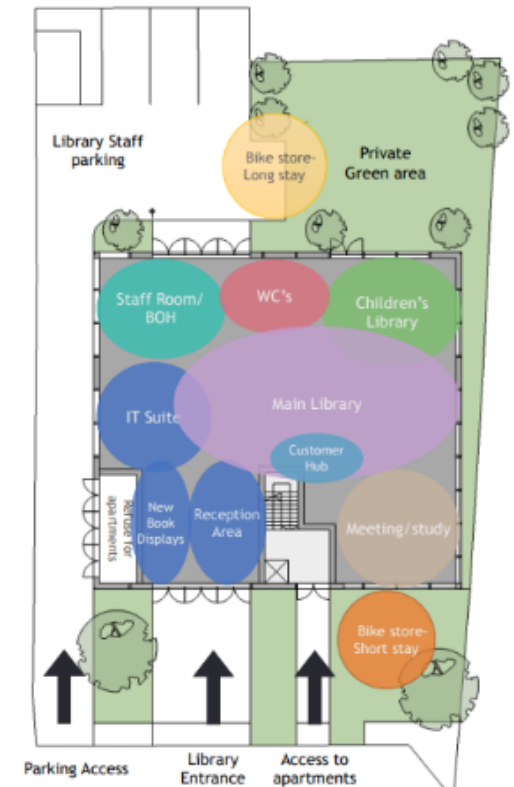
GIDEA PARK LIBRARY

Proposed - Ground Floor

Library
372 sqm

Parking : 4No. spaces inc. 1No. Accessible space
Potential to use for deliveries

Cycle parking : Housing Design Guide
requirement 16No. long stay spaces + minimum
2No. Short stay spaces



9c. Massing study for Gidea Park library site

GIDEA PARK LIBRARY
Proposed - First Floor

Flat Typology - 1 Bed / 2 Person
50 sqm

Flat Typology - 1 Bed / 2 Person
53 sqm

Flat Typology - 2 Bed / 4 Person
71 sqm

Total Flats : 5No.

Option for potential community space at first floor



GIDEA PARK LIBRARY
Proposed - Second Floor

Flat Typology - 1 Bed / 2 Person
50 sqm

Flat Typology - 1 Bed / 2 Person
53 sqm

Flat Typology - 2 Bed / 4 Person
71 sqm

Total Flats : 5No.



10. Has the council considered developing the sites into social homes to cut costs from our temporary accommodation bill?

- The Council is seeking to develop and acquire homes to accommodate a variety of housing needs and tenures, spanning all sectors. The acquisition of street properties and Regeneration programmes are the primary routes to increasing social housing stock, supplemented by Housing initiatives such as Chalk Hill.
- For the **Gidea Park** site, the synergy with adjacent SEND school is such that there was a preference to realise the opportunity to develop a children's residential unit and mitigate the social care costs that accrue to the Council from sourcing accommodation and care provision elsewhere.

10. Has the council considered developing the sites into social homes to cut costs from our temporary accommodation bill?

- **South Hornchurch** library site is seen as a scarce opportunity to generate a capital receipt from disposal, meaning that this option was preferred to the Council developing the site itself.
- Residential development of the former **Harold Wood** library site is anticipated – further work is required to establish the development potential of the site and no firm decision has yet been taken as to the nature and tenure of the resulting development.

11. Why will the special needs accommodation site at Gidea Park only provide care for such a small number?

There are two principal reasons;

- Modern children's homes and short breaks units attempt to mirror family settings, with small number of children and adults in line with statutory Ofsted guidance. The short breaks unit will be for 4 children per night as part of their assessed package period and the children's home will be for 2 children to live long-term. The complex needs of this cohort of children does require additional staffing of one adult carer per child.
- The capacity of the homes is based upon projected levels of demand and safeguarding requirements. Children using the short breaks unit will primarily live at home with their families and only use the unit for respite. There will be a maximum of 1,460 bed nights of respite available, and it is estimated that on average children will receive approximately 50 nights annually. This is considered sufficient to meet the demands of our population. The longer stay children's home will provide 20% of Havering's children's home demand. The building can be used flexibly, so if there is greater demand for long term care there can be a reduction in respite nights, and vice versa, if there is greater demand for respite the two bedded home can be utilised for respite.

