



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

**Developer Presentation
to Strategic Planning
Committee Members
25th June 2020**

Pre-Application Reference:	PE/00183/20
Location:	Rainham Recreation Ground, Viking Way, Rainham
Ward:	Rainham & Wennington
Description:	Erection of single storey building to provide a new leisure centre comprising: swimming pool, gym, fitness/dance studios and associated changing facilities, with disabled and staff parking; together with landscaping and reconfiguration of the remaining park area, including relocation of existing play and outdoor gym equipment.
Case Officer:	Ben Dixon

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This proposed development is being presented to enable Members of the Committee to view and comment upon it before a planning application is submitted. The development does not constitute an application for planning permission and any comments made upon it are provisional and subject to full consideration of any subsequent application, and the comments received as a result of consultation, publicity and notification.
- 1.2 Officers have been in pre-application discussions with regard to this site for several months. The proposed scheme has been subject to review by the Havering Quality Review Panel (QRP), and it is now considered appropriate to seek Members' views before the proposal is developed any further.

2 PROPOSAL AND LOCATION DETAILS

2.1 Proposal

- Erection of a single storey leisure centre building located on the west side of Rainham Recreation Ground to the north of Viking Way.
- The building would provide a swimming pool, gym and fitness/dance studios, together with associated changing facilities.
- The proposal includes landscaping and reconfiguration of the remaining park area, including relocation of the existing play and outdoor gym equipment.
- Staff and service user parking, including disabled parking, is proposed to be provided within the adjacent Council-operated pay-and-display car park located to the west of the site.
- The building would be accessed from the south off Viking Way.
- The building would be serviced from the northwest corner via the adjacent Tesco car park.

2.2 Site and Surroundings

- The site comprises the Rainham Recreation Ground (owned by the Council), which is located on the north side of Viking Way.
- Rainham Recreation Ground is designated as Public Open Space, and comprises: open grassland used for informal recreation and play, together with a children's play facility, outdoor gym and enclosed ball court. The western boundary of the Recreation Ground is lined with a variety of small trees and shrubs.
- Adjoining the west of the Recreation Ground is a Council-operated pay-and-display car park (freehold owned by Tesco) which provides 32 spaces including 3 disabled access spaces. It is understood that this car park is not heavily used.
- Adjacent to the west of the Recreation Ground and pay-and-display car park is a very large private commercial car park associated with the large Tesco Extra supermarket. The public can park for free in this car park for up to 3 hours.

- To the north of the site runs the River Ingrebourne. A footpath through the Recreation Ground provides pedestrian access to the river area. Due to proximity to the river, the site lies with Flood Zone 3a & 2.
- Adjoining the east of the Recreation Ground is the Rainham Village Primary School and Children's Centre, which comprises single storey buildings and large open tarmac play areas.
- To the south of the site is Viking Way (a single directional carriageway) which connects the roundabout junction of Bridge Road and Lamson Road (to the west) to Upminster Road South (to the east) and provides access to the Tesco supermarket.
- On the southern side of Viking Way is a small area of open grassland with a public footpath, providing connection for pedestrians from Tesco supermarket and the north, to Upminster Road South, heading towards the centre of Rainham Village. South of the grassland is a small two-storey terrace of 10 houses which front Upminster Road South.
- The historic centre of Rainham Village and the Rainham Conservation Area are located to the south of the site. The northern boundary of the conservation area extends close to the south of the site. The conservation area is centred around the Grade I listed Norman Church of St Helen & St Giles. This church has a stumpy tower and spire. Views of the church tower are protected as the setting of the Grade I listed building and the setting of the conservation area.
- The site is located within the boundary of Rainham Town Centre and is covered by the Specific Site Allocation SSA16 for Rainham Central.

2.3 Planning History

There is no recent relevant planning history that relates to the current proposals at this site.

3 CONSULTATION

3.1 At this stage, it is intended that the following will be consulted regarding any subsequent planning application:

- London Fire Brigade
- Environment Agency
- Historic England – Archaeology
- TfL

4 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The main planning issues raised by the application which the committee should consider are:

- Principal of development
- Quality of design, layout & landscaping
- Provision of inclusive access
- Parking and servicing
- QRP feedback

4.2 Principal of Development

- Rainham Recreation Ground is designated as Public Open Space, which is protected from loss or development by adopted Havering and London Plan policies, except where robustly justified that there are exceptional circumstances.
- The proposal would result in building on a significant area of the green Public Open Space at Rainham Recreation Ground. Consequently, the proposal would be a departure from the Development Plan.
- In order to meet planning policy requirements the applicant is required to provide a clear and robust justification for the proposed loss of green Public Open Space. This justification should demonstrate that the space is surplus to requirements to meet existing or projected future need, together with clear and deliverable proposals for improvement to the quality of open space in the vicinity, or to remedying qualitative and quantitative deficiencies in open space elsewhere in the Borough.
- Officers have requested a detailed Open Space Impact Assessment from the applicant setting out the justification for the proposed siting of the development on the green Public Open Space at the Recreation Ground.
- In an effort to assist in reducing the proposed loss of green Public Open Space, officers have advised the applicant to explore the potential to stack the gym and studio space over the changing facilities within a two-storey section of the building.

4.3 Quality of Design, Layout & Landscaping

- The prominent and exposed location of the proposed building make all elevations highly visible from the public domain. The quality of the design of all elevations will need to be carefully considered, particularly the level of activity, interaction and natural surveillance of the adjacent public park area provided within the east facing elevation.
- The careful selection of a palette of affordable, but high quality and robust materials that appropriately reference the local character will be an important factor in the success of the development.
- This site sits just outside the historic Rainham village centre and Rainham Conservation Area. Therefore, the way the height, bulk and massing of the building relate to the surrounding townscape and long views into the Conservation Area will be an important consideration.
- The layout, quality and usability of the remaining area of green open park space, once the development has been completed, will need to be carefully considered.
- The quality and design of the hard and soft landscaping surrounding the building and within the park will be key to the success of the development. The quality and design of the landscaping surrounding the entrance to the building (including any stairs and ramps) will be of particular importance.

4.4 Provision of Inclusive Access

- Havering and London Plan policies require that all developments (and particularly public facilities such as leisure centres) should take a best practice approach to inclusive accessibility, with both the building and landscaping being designed to be fully inclusive.
- The proposed building would be constructed with a floor level 1.25m above ground level, at a site that does not have challenging ground level conditions. The consequences of this design is the requirement for provision of stairs, ramp and/or lift either inside or on approach to the entrance to the building. The impact of this on the quality and inclusiveness of access provided for customers/staff that are wheelchair users, have walking difficulties, or are parents with pushchairs is something that needs to be considered and appropriately justified.

4.5 **Parking and Servicing**

- Staff and service user parking, including disabled parking, is proposed to be provided within the adjacent Council-operated pay-and-display car park located to the west of the site. This car park provides 32 spaces including 3 disabled spaces.
- The proposal will need to provide safe and accessible provision for taxi and bus/coach drop off for school groups using the swimming pool.
- The facility would be serviced from the northeast corner via the Tesco car park.
- The proposal would provide cycle parking spaces for users and staff.

4.6 **Quality Review Panel (QRP) Comments**

- The proposal was presented to the Havering Quality Review Panel on 20th May. Members should note that the proposal being presented to them now may possibly have changed to reflect the QRP's comments. The following comments were made by the QRP:
 - The panel recognises the scheme will be a valuable community facility, one that has the potential to enhance an equally valuable asset, Rainham Recreation Ground, which is a valuable community resource in its own right. However, the current proposals do not yet realise this second opportunity and the design team will need to work harder to integrate the building, landscape and place if the opportunity is not to be missed. This will require an approach that sees the building as part of its setting, not simply in it.
 - The panel would like to see the design team revisit the building's specific location within the park, to explore the possibility of locating the building to the west side of the park adjacent to the school.
 - The panel would like the design team to explore the potential for stacking some of the internal uses to create a two-storey building with a smaller footprint in the park.
 - The panel would like to see greater links between the internal uses of the facility and the park beyond, building on the introduction of a window looking out from the gym to create a landscaped connection between the interior and exterior, so that the view out is as attractive as can be.
 - The landscape design should be an important part of this scheme, but currently is neglected within the proposals. Used creatively,

landscape could help to integrate the building with its setting and also be used to create more satisfactory level access, rather than the engineered ramp proposed.

- The potential for accessing additional funding to support a high quality park landscape should be explored with LBH, including the possibility of drawing on grant funding or S106 contributions from nearby development in the Beam Park area.
- The visualisations provided do not show the context and, as such, are misleading, for example omitting the certain visual intrusion of cars parked around the entrance.
- The current layout and orientation is driven by simple assumptions about the internal functions and servicing of the facility, without proper regard for its setting. As a consequence, the proposed layout creates pinch points and awkward spaces, rather than making best use of the site.
- Currently the rationale for the location of the entrance is unclear, and it is hard to make sense of the arrival point. To address this, and to improve the building's relationship with the park, the entrance could be moved to the southeast corner, with the internal configuration transposed accordingly.
- The panel feels that attempts to reference the smaller, suburban scale of Rainham village, rather than the neighbouring superstore, is the right approach. However, the attempt to recognise this context in the pitched roof has resulted in an overcomplicated solution. The panel would rather see a simpler building, using a small palette of local materials without unnecessary embellishment, such as the inverted canopy over the entrance, with resources diverted to integrating the landscape into the scheme.
- There is currently insufficient information, in the form of verified views, to make any definitive comment on the impact of the scheme on the neighbouring Conservation Area, but providing the building does not intrude upon views of the church, it is likely to be acceptable.
- The panel is concerned that the scheme relies upon land owned by Tesco, and leased to the Borough, for its accessible parking provision, as this may be unsustainable in the long term.

4.7 Other Planning Issues

- Potential to utilise S106 funding from local strategic planning applications (e.g. Beam Park / New Road) to help fund park enhancement works;
- Sustainable design and construction measures;

- Biodiversity enhancements
- Secured by Design
- Preventing Anti-Social Behaviour
- Flood Management
- Mitigation of noise from plant and servicing
- Archaeology

Summary of Issues

4.8 Officers have discussed the following matters with the applicant team and Members may wish to comment in relation to these points in addition to any other comments/questions that they may wish to raise:

- Principle of development on public open space
- Design, built form and materials
- Landscaping, park layout, biodiversity and trees
- Access
- Parking & Servicing
- Energy & Sustainability
- Conservation of heritage assets

Conclusion

4.9 The proposals are still at pre-application stage and input from Members would help to influence the final details of any development. There are some aspects that require further work as identified in this report and Members' guidance will be most helpful to incorporate as the various elements are brought together.