

LPA Response to Action 3.5: To provide a note on alternative site selection for the Gurnell Leisure Centre (19EA)

LPA Response: This note sets out a brief background to the scheme and provides more information on the alternative site assessment including a summary of the methodology, findings and conclusions.

1. Background

A hybrid planning application for Gurnell Leisure Centre, Ruislip Road East West Ealing W13 (241706OUTR3) was considered by Ealing Council's Planning Committee on 15th January 2026. It comprised three elements:

- the replacement leisure centre (full application),
- park land improvements (full application); and,
- residential development (outline application).

It was resolved that planning permission be granted subject to Stage II referral to the Mayor of London (under categories 1A, 1B(c), 1C, 3D and 3E), the satisfactory completion of a legal agreement under Section 106 for the residential element and internal transfer from the council for the leisure centre re-provision of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Subsequently, a decision notice was issued on 21st March 2025 with approval granted with a legal agreement. Work on site has already commenced and the old leisure centre has been demolished.

2. Alternative Site Assessment – Methodology

An Alternative Sites Assessment, dated April 2024, was prepared by Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design to support the planning application process. A copy of the report is attached (SD01A). Its main purpose was:

“to review the suitability of other available sites to deliver the proposed development and to confirm that the existing Gurnell Leisure Centre site represents a genuine ‘site of last resort’ for the proposed development” (See SD01A: Para 2.1).

The methodology for assessing suitability incorporated four key stages (See SD01A: Para 2.2):

- **Stage 1: Long List Creation and Sieving:** This stage involves compiling a ‘long list’ of potential alternative sites which are then ‘sieved’ by a series of agreed parameters to assess their suitability. Sites that meet all of the required parameters to be deemed to have the potential to offer a feasible alternative to the existing site are shortlisted to progress to Stage 2 (See SD01A: Paras 2.4-2.23).
- **Stage 2: Mini-Assessments:** Sites that meet all the required parameters of the sieving process set out in Stage 1 progress to the mini-assessment stage. At this stage of the assessment the sites are categorised and explored in more detail against a set of criteria. The criteria are designed to allow for the advantages and disadvantages of developing on each site

to be established against the baseline as established on the existing Gurnell Leisure Centre site (See SD01A: Paras 2.24-2.38).

- **Stage 3: Capacity Studies:** The outcome of the mini-assessment exercise results in sites scoring adequately enough to be further considered for a capacity study. The capacity studies review in more detail the capacity for each shortlisted site to accommodate the minimum development parameter (See SD01A: Paras 2.39-2.48).

- **Stage 4: Detailed Assessments:** Each of the shortlisted sites from Stage 2 were also subject to a detailed assessment that looked in more detail at the unique circumstances of the sites and their capacity for development (See SD01A: Paras 2.49-2.53).

At the end of the four-stage process set out above a conclusion was drawn as to whether there are any suitable alternative sites to the existing Gurnell Leisure Centre site.

3. Alternative Site Assessment – Findings

Stage 1: Long List Sieving - A long list of 544 sites was compiled. The number of sites on the long list within each of the three separate categories was:

- 230 sites are urban;
- 197 sites are designated public or community open space; and
- 117 sites are designated MOL or Green Belt.

The cascade sieve of the long list resulted in the following numbers of sites being excluded under each of the assessment criteria:

- **Size** – 256 sites were excluded on the basis that their site area was below the 0.25Ha threshold. The 288 remaining sites were progressed to the next sieving criteria.
- **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)** - 27 of the sites were excluded on the basis that they have been disposed of or allocated for disposal as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The remaining 261 sites were then progressed onto the next sieving criteria.
- **Availability** – 79 of the sites were excluded on the basis that they were not genuinely available in a way that would ensure commencement of construction within the necessary timescales for the project. The remaining 182 sites were then taken forward for mini assessments at the next Stage of the process (See SD01A: Paras 3.2-3.3).
- **Stage 2: Mini-Assessments:** Of the 182 sites that underwent the mini-assessment 171 were eliminated on the basis that they did not score better than the benchmark established by the existing Gurnell Leisure Centre site (See SD01A: Paras 3.4-3.5).
- **Stage 3: Capacity Studies:** The remaining 11 sites were then progressed to Stage 3 (Capacity Study) and were assessed for their residential capacities. All sites demonstrate that they have theoretical capacity to accommodate 50 residential units and are therefore assessed in detail at the next stage (See SD01A: Para 3.7).
- **Stage 4: Detailed Assessments:** In addition to the capacity study exercise each of the sites was subject to a detailed site assessment looking at the unique and specific circumstances of each of the sites (See SD01A: Para 3.8).

4. Alternative Site Assessment – Conclusions

The findings of the study established that each of the 11 sites assessed are unique with their own set of constraints, uses and opportunities.

“Whilst some have fewer constraints than others with a greater capacity to accommodate development, on balance it is considered that none are able to appropriately support a meaningful provision of residential uses to the same degree and with as minimal an impact as that of the existing Gurnell Leisure Centre site – much less accommodate both the residential and leisure uses at the same time.

Accordingly, it is considered the existing Gurnell Leisure Centre Site represents the genuine site of last resort in terms of providing a new leisure centre alongside the requisite enabling 300 residential units” (SD01A: Paras 4.1-4.2).

Therefore, based on the findings of the assessment, Council officers were satisfied that there are no alternative sites that could accommodate the proposed development.

Notes:

Full documentation for the consideration of planning application 241706OUTR3 can be found at the following link:

[241706OUTR3 | Hybrid planning application for comprehensive phased development incorporating the redevelopment of all existing buildings and structures and construction of new buildings comprising: "Full planning permission for the construction of a replacement leisure centre \(Use Class F2\(d\)\), including new car / coach / cycle parking and vehicular / pedestrian access arrangements, associated highways works, new and replacement play space, public realm, landscaping and flood management to existing public open space. Outline planning permission \(means of access not reserved\) for about 300 affordable and market housing enabling residential development \(Use Class C3\), public realm, play and amenity space and open space improvements". \(Regulation 3 Application by London Borough of Ealing\) \(Revised red line boundary\) The proposals represent a Departure from the Development Plan that is not in accordance with the development plan in force in the area, being a Major Development on land designated as Metropolitan Open Land and comprising public open space. | Gurnell Leisure Centre Ruislip Road East West Ealing W13 0AL](#)