

Proposal Re-provision of White Oak Leisure Centre

Applicant Sevenoaks District Council

Ward(s) Swanley White Oak

RECOMMENDATION: That the **£900,000.00** applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Re-provision of White Oak Leisure Centre” be approved on the following grounds:

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community
- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan
- Sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate a strong link between new development and the scheme.
- There is strong community support of the scheme

Introduction

- 1 Sevenoaks District Council has 54 elected Members and is responsible for delivering services for local communities as well as producing statutory plans and strategies.
- 2 The application was received before the application deadline closed on Monday 30 September 2019. This proposal has not been previously considered by the CIL Spending Board.

Description of Proposal

- 3 The proposal is to replace the existing White Oak Leisure Centre complex with a brand new facility. This is to be re-provided on the current site of the existing leisure centre. It is submitted to the CIL Spending Board that the existing leisure centre is coming to the end of its existing life given that it is now 53 years old (originally built in 1967).
- 4 The new leisure centre will offer brand new and fit-for-purpose facilities including:

- A 6 lane, 25 meter length pool and learner pool with wet-side spectator seating for events;
- Tag Active Arena;
- New fitness suite;
- Toning room for people who need to use Shape-Master equipment;
- Group exercise studios;
- Changing facilities;
- Multi-purpose rooms and multi-functional courts;
- Café and other associated community uses.

Funding

- 5 Sevenoaks District Council has estimated that the total cost of the project to re-provide the White Oak Leisure Centre will be approximately £20 million.
- 6 The District Council have identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
 - A bid has been submitted to Sport England under their Community Asset Fund stream for the maximum amount available (£150,000)
 - A bid has been made to Swanley Town Council for CIL funding (£10,000). A decision has not been submitted as part of the applicant's application.
- 7 It should be noted within the application that there is an expectation that capital receipts from a number of development sites within Swanley will contribute to the overall project cost. The value of capital receipts expected is currently unknown.
- 8 Further to this, the applicant's consultants have advised that a combination of income from the sale of assets, borrowing and income from a leisure centre operator will contribute to the overall cost of the scheme.
- 9 Therefore to meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, Sevenoaks District Council has applied to the Board for £900,000.000 of CIL funding. This equates to 5% of the total project cost.

Representations and Support

- 10 The application submitted indicates that Sevenoaks District Council is not working in partnership with any other organisation to deliver the scheme. Therefore, it should be assumed that the District Council is the sole organisation for the delivery of the scheme.

11 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:

- Cllr. Lesley Dyball (SDC Member for Swanley St. Marys and People & Places Portfolio Holder)
- Cllr. Paul Darrington (SDC Member for Swanley White Oak)
- Mr. Steve Nash (Clerk to Swanley Town Council)
- Mr. Tony Smith (White Oak Swimming Club)
- Mr. Ben McDonald (Water Polo Manager and Bexley Water Polo Club)
- Ms Carol Kent (White Oak Gymnastics Club)

Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

Principal Criteria met

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community
- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan
- Strong link between new development and the scheme
- Strong community

Appraisal

Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 12 When considering an application for CIL funding from the Board, it must be demonstrated that there are clear economic, social and environmental benefits to the scheme proposed. This enhances the sustainability case as to whether the scheme should receive CIL funding.
- 13 The proposal is a significant piece of infrastructure that would bring substantial social, economic and environmental benefits to the local community as well as the wider community that the facility would serve. In terms of the economic benefits, the proposal seeks to align with the aspirations and ambitions of the Local Plan to create integrated communities, which are served by appropriate infrastructure to support development. There are also aspirations to integrate existing community facilities and services with the new leisure centre.
- 14 The application sets out a number of community benefits to the area, including social, economic and environmental gains. The applicant has demonstrated that the scheme will have significant impacts not just in the local project area but also provide benefits to the wider town and further afield as this is a community asset used by the residents outside of the District as well.

The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan

- 15 As submitted in the funding application, it is stated that the White Oak Leisure Centre is coming towards the end of its operational life and must be replaced.
- 16 As the local planning authority, the applicant identifies Swanley as an area of regeneration in the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2018-2021, and is supported through the priorities of the Sevenoaks District Community Plan 2019-2022.
- 17 The re-provision of the existing leisure centre is identified within the Sevenoaks Sports Facility Strategy 2016-2035, an evidence-based document which supported the preparation of the emerging Local Plan. The Open Space Study 2016-2035 also describes that there is an undersupply of fitness stations across the District.
- 18 Furthermore, the White Oak Leisure Centre has been identified as a draft allocation in the new Local Plan (Local Plan site reference ST2-20) where the proposed allocation seeks to develop 80 units on the existing site as well as a new leisure centre facility.
- 19 It should be noted that the new Local Plan is currently under Examination and has not been adopted by the Council (see paragraphs 24 to 26 of this report). However, in March 2019 the Council agreed to submit the Plan to the Planning Inspector which formally included the White Oak Leisure Centre as a proposed development allocation, which was based on local evidence.
- 20 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project is identified in an adopted strategy or plan.

Sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate a strong link between new development and the scheme.

- 21 As part of their submission, the applicant has specifically identified developments in the area that have created a need for this project.
- 22 The applicant has identified 1875 housing units to be delivered between 2019 and 2024 within the catchment area of the leisure centre which includes Swanley Town and the surrounding area, which is evidenced in the Local Plan as draft allocations, through existing planning permissions or where applications are being prepared.

- 23 The applicant has therefore sufficiently identified evidence to demonstrate that there is a strong link between the new development and the project, which is seeking funding.
- 24 Therefore, after careful consideration, the need for the scheme has been adequately demonstrated through the submitted application.

Strong community support for the project

- 25 The applicant has carried out extensive consultation in Swanley and the surrounding areas on new homes, improved health facilities, better public transport, improving retail, entertainment and leisure facilities and open spaces.
- 26 Over 1800 household surveys were completed between February and August 2016, with over 1,000 residents attending consultation drop-in sessions organised by the Council. It was highlights during the consultation sessions that the existing White Oak Leisure Centre was no longer financially viable to maintain. A majority of residents who responded to the Council's survey (96%) wanted to keep a leisure centre in Swanley.

Other considerations

Project management

- 21 Whilst the project is in its early stages, Sevenoaks District Council have confirmed that the Council would manage the project with an appointed contractor. A project management timetable has been provided with the application which clearly demonstrates how the project will be managed and expected timeframes to complete the scheme. This is set out in Appendix 2 of the applicant's original CIL funding application.

Requirement for Planning Permission

- 22 An additional consideration of the criteria is which applications are assessed is whether a proposal has the appropriate consents in place to carry out the project.
- 23 Given the scale and the type of development proposed, planning permission will need to be granted before any works are carried out. As part of their CIL application, Sevenoaks District Council has indicated that a planning application has been submitted in October 2019. Officers can confirm that the planning application is currently under consideration and that the application reference number is 19/02951/HYB.

- 24 Once planning permission is granted it is expected that the project will take approximately two years to build out, with a completion date of Quarter 1 2022.
- 25 When considering this application for CIL funding, Members of the Board could consider whether the clear merits of the scheme outweigh the absence of planning permission.

Implications for the Local Plan

- 26 It should be drawn to Members attention that the proposal is also being considered as part of a mixed use allocation in the emerging Local Plan. The Council has been made aware of proposals on the site, which include an element of housing alongside the provision of a new leisure centre on site.
- 27 The Council submitted its Local Plan to the Planning Inspector for Examination in April 2019 and Hearings have taken place in September/October 2019. It should be noted that the Council received an initial response from the Planning Inspector in mid-October which set out concerns about the Local Plan in its current form. The Council will continue to monitor the situation with the Local Plan Examination, and will provide updates to Members and the public when further information becomes available.
- 28 Members should note that if the site is formally allocated in the Local Plan following Examination by the Planning Inspector, it does not mean that the proposal is automatically granted planning permission. The purpose of the allocation is to establish whether the principle of development in this location is acceptable. The proposal is then subject to the Development Management process through a separate planning application.

Application Considerations - Weakly Performing Criteria

- 29 When carrying out the assessment of this funding application, Officers felt that the application did not perform strongly against the following criteria:
 - Working in partnership

Conclusion

- 30 Sevenoaks District Council has submitted an application to the Board to consider funding to re-provide a leisure centre facility on the existing White Oak Leisure Centre. The need for the scheme has been clearly demonstrated and there are a number of social, economic and environmental benefits. The proposal is formally identified in a number of plans and strategies and is

supported by the local community. It is noted that the applicant is asking for a small amount of funding in comparison to the total project cost, and has not benefited from CIL funding previously.

- 31 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £900,000.00 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project. It is clearly demonstrated that the scheme provides clear public benefits and approving this bid would provide good value for CIL money applied for, compared to the cost of the overall project.

Appendices	Original bidding proforma and supporting information
Background Papers	None
Contact Officer	Simon Taylor Ext. 7134

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