

Cabinet

29 January 2020



Title	Replacement of Spelthorne Leisure Centre – Consultation on revised proposals		
Purpose of the report	To make a decision		
Report Author	Lee O’Neil, Deputy Chief Executive Richard Mortimer, Property Development Adviser		
Cabinet Member	Councillor Ian Harvey Councillor Maureen Attewell	Confidential	No
Corporate Priority	Clean and Safe Environment		
Recommendations	<p>Cabinet is asked to:</p> <p>(a) Approve proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The revised location (as outlined in Appendix 1), and• The proposed facilities mix (as outlined in Appendix 2) and additional information for consideration, for the new Spelthorne Leisure Centre <p>for presentation to residents, businesses and other stakeholders.</p> <p>(b) Authorise the Council’s Leisure Centre Development Working Group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the results of the consultation exercise; and• Decide on the business case for any amendments to the proposals for a new Spelthorne Leisure Centre based on the consultation responses, prior to seeking approval from Cabinet to proceed with any planning application.		
Reason for Recommendation	To ensure that the views of stakeholders are taken into consideration before any detailed design is finalised for the new leisure centre.		

1. Key issues

- 1.1 The current Spelthorne Leisure Centre in Staines-upon-Thames has served the borough well, but it is likely that by the end of 2021 this facility will be nearing the end of its useful life. In 2018/19 the centre had 530,019 visitors. It also has over 3,129 fitness members and over 1,774 children are registered on the centre’s learn to swim scheme. The facility is also used by 8 schools

for swimming lessons in addition to other school sports festivals such as indoor athletics, indoor football and swimming galas.

- 1.2 Refurbishment of the current centre is not feasible for a range of reasons:
 - (a) The centre is of a poor design by today's standards, in terms of layout and flexibility of space.
 - (b) The site by itself does not offer sufficient space to provide the additional facilities we are likely to want to incorporate.
 - (c) There is limited space for car parking, which would be difficult to expand.
 - (d) It would be very difficult to match the quality of any new build competition, bearing in mind the age of the current leisure centre buildings and facilities (the site began as a swimming pool in the 1960s and was extended to form a leisure centre in the 1980s).
 - (e) Sustainability – The existing building does not meet current energy saving guidelines. A new building would offer both a reduction in CO₂ emissions and reduced energy costs.
 - (f) Effect on users – Refurbishment of the current centre would require closure of all or parts of the centre, which would have a major effect on users and be likely to result in a significant loss of customers.
 - (g) Repair costs – The increasing maintenance costs of the existing centre indicate that it would not be cost effective to try to refurbish the buildings and facilities.
 - (h) Lifespan – a refurbished centre would have a much shorter lifespan (15-20 years) than a new-build centre (30-40 years).
- 1.3 Cabinet therefore made a decision to pursue the development of a new leisure centre that meets modern standards and today's customer expectations.
- 1.4 A detailed feasibility exercise was undertaken by the Sports Consultancy to establish the optimum facility mix which should be incorporated in any new leisure centre. This took into account a range of factors including Spelthorne's leisure needs analysis, the borough's current and future demographics, current industry data and the Council's key drivers, including the need to maximise the financial viability of the new centre where possible.
- 1.5 A number of options have been considered for locating the new facility, including the site of the current Spelthorne Leisure Centre. It was necessary to identify a location which is:
 - (a) Owned by the Council – to avoid the costs of acquiring a new site;
 - (b) Large enough to accommodate all the facilities required in the new centre;
 - (c) Not in the Green Belt;
 - (d) Easily accessible by a large number of the borough's residents.
- 1.6 It was also necessary to consider a number of other factors which could affect the viability of the site including:
 - (a) The site's proximity to the Council's other leisure centre in Sunbury;
 - (b) The site's proximity to the current Spelthorne Leisure Centre;

- (c) Other planning issues and environmental site constraints;
 - (d) Any requirement to relocate existing site uses/users;
 - (e) Visibility of the site, synergies with surrounding land uses and the Council's regeneration plans;
 - (f) Sensitivity of the site – taking into account the likely reaction from local residents.
- 1.7 Building a new facility within the boundaries of the current leisure centre site was not considered feasible for a number of reasons:
- (a) The footprint of the site by itself would not be big enough to incorporate a significant proportion of the facilities needed;
 - (b) The current centre would have to be closed and it would take 18- 24 months before a new facility would be operational, significantly affecting current users and the future viability of the centre.
- 1.8 A public consultation exercise was held in Summer 2018 on proposals to build the new leisure centre on Staines Park. This resulted in a high level of response, with over 2,300 people completing the consultation questionnaire or otherwise writing to the Council/Councillors. Although there was strong support for a new leisure centre, there was significant concern over the use of Staines Park for this facility. The Council therefore made a decision in September 2018 not to take forward any plans to use the park and to seek an alternative location for the new leisure centre.
- 1.9 An extensive evaluation process has since been undertaken to identify options for the relocation of the Spelthorne Leisure Centre, considering over 50 sites owned by the Council. Most of these sites are currently used as parks and open spaces, play areas and allotments.
- 1.10 These sites were evaluated using a staged assessment process, designed to eliminate obviously unsuitable sites and assess the others against a range of criteria specified in 1.5 and 1.6 above.
- 1.11 This evaluation process was developed following advice from the Sports Consultancy, who have undertaken an external review of the process used to evaluate site options. They have considerable experience in undertaking similar assessments for other local authorities looking to develop new leisure centres.
- 1.12 One of the biggest challenges in trying to find an alternative location was the size of site required for the original facilities mix proposed, particularly the extra space needed for a full-size 3G pitch. In order to open up other options for the location of the new centre, it was therefore decided to modify the facilities mix to incorporate four small-sided 3G pitches rather than the one full-size plus two small-sided 3G pitches originally proposed.
- 1.13 Taking into account all of the specified criteria (and excluding Staines Park), the top three highest scoring sites identified from the detailed site analysis include one park/recreation ground and one allotment site. In view of the concerns raised over the previous proposal for Staines Park it is anticipated that similar concerns would be raised by local residents if the Council were to propose building a leisure centre on any other park/recreation ground setting. Similarly, it is anticipated that there would be strong opposition to any proposal to remove/relocate allotments to enable a new centre to be built.

- 1.14 The other location which has been assessed as offering the best option for a new centre is the open space between the current leisure centre and our Knowle Green Council offices (see **Appendix 1 – site X**). This site was previously considered as an alternative option to the Staines Park site but was discounted as being too small to incorporate all of the facilities originally proposed. However, by modifying the facilities mix as outlined in 1.12 and using the existing leisure centre site (**Appendix 1 – site Y**) as car parking for the new centre, this location scores highly against the relevant assessment criteria. Both sites are owned by the Council and are not in the Green Belt. Although Site X is designated as public open space, a usage survey has been undertaken during the school term and outside of term-time that demonstrates that this site is only used minimally by the public. The greatest level of activity tends to be council staff moving to/from the leisure centre.
- 1.15 The proposed development of a new leisure centre on sites X and Y would not be able to incorporate all of the facilities originally proposed for Staines Park and would therefore generate less income to help fund the costs of the new facility. In addition, due to the need for a phased scheme this would require a longer, more complex approach to development than the previous Staines Park proposals. However, the revised site option would ensure that no designated park, recreation ground or other significant community use is affected. In addition, with careful planning it should be possible to keep the existing Spelthorne Leisure Centre open as long as possible until the new facility is available, minimising disruption to existing users.
- 1.16 An updated feasibility exercise has been undertaken by the Sports Consultancy taking into account the revised facilities mix and further work has been undertaken with local sports clubs to understand their preferences for facilities within the centre. Feedback from over 2,300 consultee responses from last year's public consultation has also been taken into consideration. The proposed facilities mix arising from these exercises is outlined in **Appendix 2**.
- 1.17 A range of technical studies are in the process of being undertaken to confirm the suitability of this site, which would need to be completed prior to submission of any planning application.
- 1.18 In undertaking such a development it is important to seek the views of users of the current centre, residents of the borough, local businesses and other stakeholders. It is therefore proposed to undertake a consultation exercise based on the revised proposals, building on the information gathered from the first consultation undertaken last summer.
- 1.19 This report seeks Cabinet's approval to undertake this second phase of consultation seeking views on the revised location for the new leisure centre (outlined in **Appendix 1**) and the proposed facility mix (outlined in **Appendix 2**). Proposals for the design and layout of the new centre will also be presented for comment.
- 1.20 If approved by Cabinet, this consultation exercise will run for a period of four weeks from 28 February to 27 March 2020 and will involve:
- (a) Social Media – Spelthorne's Communications Team will promote the consultation following Cabinet approval.

- (b) Targeted communication – letters inviting comments on our proposals will be sent to local residents; to residents' associations within the borough; the Spelthorne Sports Council; and to local businesses via the Spelthorne Business Forum and the Surrey Chamber of Commerce. Borough and County Councillors for Spelthorne will also be contacted directly to seek their views. It will also be publicised in the Surrey Advertiser and the Heathrow Villager.
 - (c) A public exhibition/drop in event will be held in the current Spelthorne Leisure Centre from Friday 28 February to Saturday 29 February 2020.
 - (d) An online questionnaire – available from 28 February – 27 March 2020. Hard copy versions will also be available.
- 1.21 Although the majority of the consultation exercise will be coordinated by the Council's Communications Team it is proposed to employ Cushman & Wakefield, who have experience in this type of work, to provide additional support, particularly with the drop-in event.
- 1.22 The results of the consultation process will be reported to the Council's Leisure Centre Development Working Group (LCDWG), which has been set up to monitor progress with the development of the new leisure centre and report/make recommendations to Cabinet as necessary. This Group comprises the Leader of the Council (as portfolio holder for Strategic Assets), the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing (responsible for leisure), the Deputy Chief Executive, the Property Development Advisor, Communications Manager and the Leisure Facilities and Project Manager.

2. Options analysis and proposal

2.1 Option 1 – (Recommended option)

- (a) To approve the proposals to consult with the borough's residents, businesses and other stakeholders on the proposed revised location for the new Spelthorne Leisure Centre (as outlined in **Appendix 1**) and the revised facilities mix (outlined in **Appendix 2**) and additional information for consideration.
- (b) To authorise the Council's Leisure Centre Development Working Group to:
 - i) Consider the results of the consultation exercise; and
 - ii) Decide on the business case for any amendments to the proposals for a new Spelthorne Leisure Centre based on the consultation responses, prior to seeking approval from Cabinet to proceed with any planning application.

2.2 **Option 2** – Do nothing. This is not recommended as the current Spelthorne Leisure Centre will be coming towards the end of its useful life in 2021. Costs of repairs to the current centre will increase over time. It is therefore necessary to move forward with proposals to replace this facility within the next few years before it becomes unviable to keep the existing centre open. Results from the first consultation exercise held in Summer 2018 indicated that there was public support for a new facility.

2.3 **Option 3** – To propose an alternative approach. Any alternative options put forward would have to be based on a thorough analysis of needs and a suitable business case. The LCWDG have reviewed alternative sites and the

proposed facilities mix reflects feedback from all consultation and stakeholder engagements to date.

3. Financial implications

- 3.1 As part of the 2018/19 Capital Programme the Council approved a capital growth bid to cover the initial costs for the Leisure Centre Redevelopment project (£8.1m). In view of the delay progressing this project due to the need to identify options for a new location it was necessary to carry forward £7.09m of this budget into the 2019/20 Capital Programme. Part of that budget will be used to cover the costs of the proposed work outlined above.
- 3.2 It should be noted that if costs were charged to capital and the scheme ultimately was not progressed those costs would need to be charged to the revenue budget.
- 3.3 The costs of building the new leisure centre will be significant and will depend to a large extent on the final design following the second public consultation exercise. It is therefore important that any amendments to the facilities within the new centre are financially viable wherever possible. It is anticipated that the ongoing financing costs of a new facility would exceed the value of additional income generated from the centre. The Council will work with its Treasury Management advisers to finance the capital cost as efficiently as possible.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1 The Council's Sunbury Leisure Centre is not affected by the above proposals.
- 4.2 The contract for the current operator of the Spelthorne and Sunbury Leisure Centres (Everyone Active) is due to expire in 2021. The Council has the option to extend this contract for up to five years and discussions are already underway with Everyone Active regarding this matter. A procurement exercise will have to be undertaken in due course to appoint an operator to run the Council's leisure centres, when this contract comes to an end.
- 4.3 Risks:
 - (a) There is always a risk of negative feedback as a result of any consultation exercise. The purpose of this exercise is to seek the views of relevant stakeholders and to consider whether changes should be made. As the Council's plans for the new centre have been informed and refined by the responses to the previous consultation, the public will be able to see how these align with their feedback. This final consultation gives them an opportunity to comment whilst allowing the Council to make any final amendments before submitting a planning application.
 - (b) The Council will be undertaking a range of environmental studies to assess the suitability of the new proposed site for the new centre. Although it is not anticipated that there will any problems arising from this work, it is possible that an issue arises which makes it more difficult to develop the centre on the proposed site. In such a case the Council would need to consider whether any mitigation measures would affect the viability of the project.

5. Timetable for implementation

5.1 Outline timetable for Consultation 2:

- (a) Cabinet decision on proposed consultation (29 January)
- (b) Commence promotion of consultation event (w/c 10 February)
- (c) Commence delivering letters to targeted groups (w/c 10 February)
- (d) Consultation to run for approx. 4 weeks (28 Feb – 27 March)
- (e) Public exhibition/drop-in event – 2 days (28 – 29 Feb)
- (f) Online questionnaire available on Council's website (28 Feb – 27 March)
- (g) Cabinet decision whether to proceed with development – Date TBC

Background papers:

None

APPENDIX 1 – PROPOSED SITE FOR NEW SPELTHORNE LEISURE CENTRE (west of Spelthorne's Knowle Green Council Offices)

Site X – Proposed new leisure centre building

Site Y – Proposed car parking for new leisure centre

PROPOSED SITE PLAN



APPENDIX 2 – PROPOSED REVISED FACILITIES MIX

Core facilities mix to be included

Main Pool:	25m length, 8 lanes with 250 spectator seats, timing office, judging room & first aid
Learner Pool:	20 x 10m learner pool with moveable floor
Splash Pad	
Sauna, Steam Room & Spa	
Sports Hall:	6 courts with spectator seating.
Squash Courts:	3 courts. Changeable to flexible studio space or 2 badminton courts.
Health & Fitness:	200 station fitness suite
Studios:	2 x multi activity studios
Spin Studio:	1 x spin studio
Multi-Purpose Room:	1 x multi-purpose room for 20 people + Youth Zone/Bar/Lounge
Soft Play	
Physio Rooms	2 x physio rooms
Reception With Retail Area	
Café:	100 seats with poolside viewing
3G Pitches:	4 x small sided pitches
Roof Garden:	Over fitness suite
Clip'n Climb	
Parking	300 spaces

Potential Additional Facilities

Outdoor Gym:	Over fitness suite
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