

## **OXFORD POOL**

### **Job Diary No. 3**

Notes of meeting with Save Temple Cowley Group Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August. Town Hall Library

Present Jane Alexander Save Temple Cowley Group Nigel Gibson Save Temple Cowley Group John Bellenger Oxford City Council Mike Hall FaulknerBrowns Architects John Webb Sense

The meeting began with some detailed clarifications on the MACE report. JA then tabled an approx A1 sized sketch plan of their proposed facility and presented a number of the key features of the proposed 'Eco scheme'.

Particular issues raised are as follows:

#### **1. Pool covers**

The Save Temple Cowley group indicated that they had received quotations for pool covers to the 3 pool tanks of £16k to £18k and that this would make energy savings with a pay back of 13 months.

It is unlikely that this included all the necessary builders work but is not likely to be an order of magnitude out. In a pool of this age with its attendant Mechanical and Electrical and building envelope problems, this is likely to be a sensible option. It is noted however that the viability and payback from pool covers is reduced with a well designed, new facility.

#### **2. Duct/ column repair**

The Save Temple Cowley group asserted that this could easily and cost effectively be repaired.

No evidence or any expertise as tabled to back this up. As previously stated it is difficult to assess the true extent of the problem but evidence and age of the building suggest that this is a significant problem. MH also stated that the existing wet duct in the current configuration is not good practice. It is noisy and exposes a large surface area of water albeit hidden to the pool atmosphere. This may in fact be contributing to humidity/temperature control difficulties. It also exposes a larger area of concrete/structure to potential aggressive environment problems.

#### **3. New seating in two tiers to achieve 450 spectators**

There was no detailed section from the Save Temple Cowley group to suggest how this would work. There would be no wheel chair access to the upper tier which would also be a DDA challenge. It is very unlikely that this could practically be accommodated within the existing footprint without serious and expensive remodelling of the existing building.

**4. Retain diving pool**

This could be accommodated in a refurbishment option if desired but new boards and configuration would be required as the current arrangement does not comply with current standards.

**5. Separate male /female changing to be retained**

MH confirmed as stated at the public Consultation that this would be subject to detail design and no decision had been made on a preferred arrangement. It was noted that whilst purportedly liked by current users this format doesn't typically deal well with school groups (child protection issues) and parent/child of the opposite sex. It was also noted that any significant refurbishment would need to deal with current DDA requirements re accessible changing, showers, toilets, lockers etc.

**6. New Gym**

The sketch proposals presented by the Save Temple Cowley group indicated a new gym at ground floor as part of a new entrance. This is perhaps the most substantive new aspect of the proposals and is clearly indicated on the tabled sketch.

This new feature appeared to be approx 150m<sup>2</sup> in area, which would house about 30 gym stations. It is fair to say that the existing foyer and entrance is poorly laid out and the proposals albeit presented in very diagrammatic form could form the basis of a new and vibrant entrance. The reported cost by JA was £550k. Although the proposals were lacking in detail, this is likely to be the correct order of magnitude. It should be further noted that new gym facilities have been included in our remodelling proposals.

**7. Steam and Sauna relocated to pool side**

This would be subject to a number of detail issues such as supervision, access, servicing and whether the business plan supports this.

**8. Flats incorporated into first floor in lieu of fitness.**

No plans or information was made available of the upper floor level to illustrate these proposals. It was assumed that in relocating the existing gym to a new ground floor entrance position, the space vacated at first floor could be remodelled to incorporate some flats. Whilst there are a small number of examples where flats have been incorporated into pool projects such as Swiss Cottage, there are many complications relating to leases, ownership, two way facing access to natural light, vertical circulation, maintenance, planning etc. This mix of residential and swimming pool is usually very difficult to make work commercially especially where they are conjoined in the same building form. It was not clear whether the £3m budget included this item.

**9. Landscape**

Proposals include some remodelling of the entrance area and parking bays, retention of some particular existing planting and a new garden. There does not appear to be any improvement to the current lack of parking spaces. The aspiration for improved landscape amenity around the building would be welcome. Not clear what allowances of the Save Temple Cowley scheme have been allocated to this item.

**9. Roof mounted Photo Voltaics (PVs)**

JA made reference at the meeting to PVs on the roof. This is reiterated in a letter handed over at the meeting in which JA proposes that the roof would be covered in PVs and provides most of the energy requirements for the refurbished building. There was unfortunately no evidence made available to support these claims.

Even if completely covered in PVs (say 1400m<sup>2</sup>) this would provide not nearly the full energy requirements for the building. An area of PVs of this magnitude could cost over £1m. Whilst this is

a worthy consideration, it is unlikely to be the optimum low carbon solution, particularly for a pool. The MACE team have undertaken an initial assessment of over twenty energy efficiency and sustainable technologies. It is, for example, considered that solar hot water heaters with combined heat and power is likely to offer a more improved cost effective low carbon solution.

## **SUMMARY**

In summary although the work of JA and NG was commended, there was unfortunately no substantive evidence presented at the meeting behind the Save Temple Cowley Group's reported £3m refurbishment proposals. No drawings were made available although we were handed an undated letter from Jane Alexander which describes a number of their proposed features. Despite being labelled an eco proposal, there was no substantive support of this other than reference to a roof covered with PVs. Again it was not clear whether the significant costs for an item like this was covered in the £3m figure. Although the Save Temple Cowley group repeatedly made reference within the meeting and in the letter to proposals being easy and affordable, this was without any supporting information being available.

Having listened to a description of the proposals by the Save Temple Cowley group, JW and MH made the observation that with the exception of the Gym, the proposals provided no substance as to the level and scope of refurbishment. This is essential if a meaningful comparison is to be made between the £3m figure in the Save Temple Cowley proposals and the £6m to £10m in the MACE team proposals. It is noted for example that any quoted 'build cost' figure is likely to require an approx %80 uplift figure to include contractors prelims, overhead, profit, fees and client contingencies. £3m on this basis would be equivalent to £5.3m.

## **POST MEETING OBSERVATIONS**

A key issue in determining the value of a refurbishment option is the comparison between a refurbished cost and new build equivalent cost. At between 60% and 70% of the cost of new build, refurbishment is usually considered uneconomic. This is an industry standard yard stick used by bodies such as Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association. Unlike many building types, Pool Buildings are complex and expensive to build and run. Standards are constantly changing and health and safety issues are of paramount importance. At Temple Cowley the evidence suggests that the fabric of the building is in pretty poor condition. This is one of the primary reasons for the current high energy running costs. In upgrading significant portions of the envelope, it will be a requirement of the Building Regulations that consequential improvements are made to the insulation and air tightness to improve energy performance. There is a significant cost associated with this statutory requirement which is included in the MACE report but unlikely to be included in the Save Temple Cowley Pools proposal based on the evidence presented at the meeting.

Finally in considering a pool refurbishment as a viable option this pre-supposes that the building fundamentally is well laid out and provides optimal spatial relationships and the correct water configuration to meet on-going future needs should refurbishment take place. At Temple Cowley many of these issues can be challenged. In the context of best practice the building is poorly laid out, is unwelcoming and lack of car parking is a significant problem. A particular example is the lack of viewing over the teaching pool from the entrance/ vending area. Even major remodelling will not overcome all of these issues and consequently difficult to justify as good value.