

Consultation on Leisure Facilities and the Proposed Competition Standard Pool at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre

1. Introduction

A great deal of public consultation taken place in relation to the proposals for the competition pool. This consultation has been carried out in line with Oxford City Councils strategy and four primary methods have been used, these being:

- A city wide survey;
- Public open sessions;
- Focus groups; and
- Design boards and comment cards.

The consultation was promoted through the following methods:

- Several press releases;
- Coverage in the Oxford Mail;
- Coverage on radio and television;
- Posters to community centres, surgeries, libraries and sport centres;
- Front page web coverage on Council's website for the duration of consultation periods;
- Direct e-mails; and
- Through key groups such as the Community Sports Network.

As would be expected a mixture of view points have been expressed by those who contributed to the consultation process, especially at the open sessions where there was committed local support to keep Temple Cowley Pools open. However, throughout the process the majority of consultees have indicated that 'doing nothing' is not an acceptable way forward and that the proposed solution demonstrates value for money.

2. Consultation with Key Stakeholders

A great deal of consultation has been undertaken since 2009 with various key stakeholders and statutory consultees, regarding the Leisure Facilities Review 2009 and also the proposed Competition Standard Pool. The consultation has included liaising with the following bodies:

- the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA);
- the City of Oxford Swimming Club;
- Sport England (utilising the Sport England's Facilities Improvement Service);
- the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership;
- Fusion Lifestyle and other leisure operators;
- the Community Sports Network (includes a representation for the voluntary sector, and the Youth Sport Trust);
- the County Council (social care, education - including Peers Academy, and Oxford Community School);

- the Library Service;
- the Primary Care Trust; and

2.1 Sport England

In particular, Sport England have been a key consultee from the Leisure Facilities Review (May 2009) up to the current consultation on the outline designs for the new pool. Oxford City Council has worked closely with Sport England on the Facility Improvement Service when looking at the Blackbird Leys option.

Key meetings with Sport England have taken place over the last year including the following key meeting dates:

- October 2009;
- April 2010;
- October 2010; and
- Nov 2010.

Oxford City Council has also corresponded with Sport England in regards to comments on the outline designs. Sport England has indicated that they are supportive of the project.

2.2 Amateur Swimming Association

Oxford City Council's Leisure Team has also been working closely with the Amateur Swimming Association (A.S.A). In particular the Leisure Team have worked with the ASA's Regional Officer. The Regional Officer took part in the pool focus consultation group that met in June 2010 and also attended the outline design consultation on the 26 November 2010. The Council also met with the A.S.A's Regional Director in July 2010 and a representative from the A.S.A's Facilities Team in November 2010. The A.S.A has indicated that they are supportive of the project.

2.3 Oxford based Swimming Clubs

The City of Oxford Swimming Club and the Oxford Swans (a club aimed at disabled people) have been fully involved within the consultation process and have contributed to ensuring that there have been improvements to the new facilities changing facilities, private shower areas, spectator seating and disabled access. Both clubs are supportive of the proposed new facility.

3. Focus Group Sessions

Two focus group sessions took place between June and August 2010. The focus group was made up of the following key users and stakeholders:

- Temple Cowley Pools User (Swimming);
- Temple Cowley Pools User (Swim, Gym and Classes);
- Blackbird Leys Pool Users;

- City of Oxford Swimming Club;
- Oxford Swans Disability Swimming Club;
- Thame and Oxford School Sports Partnership;
- Fusion Lifestyle;
- Old Temple Cowley Residents association; and
- Oxfordshire Sports Partnership.

The focus group was instrumental in the design and approval of the web and paper based survey. A summary of the key points that were raised by the focus group sessions are shown below:

- Temple Cowley Pool is currently poor quality, except for the gym which is of good quality;
- Any option that is approved must provide value for money, be affordable and sustainable;
- The disabled provision at Temple Cowley Pools is of a poor standard;
- Doing nothing is not a good enough option for the Council; and
- A new competition standard pool at Blackbird Leys was the most sensible way forward and first choice of those present at the latter meeting.

There were an additional two Focus Group drop in sessions on the 24th and 26th of November where members could view the outline designs for the proposed new pool. Comments from the individuals from the groups were fed into section 6 below.

Focus group sessions have been held on the 4th February, 8th March, 7th April and 4th May 2011 with the key comments shown below:

- Is it possible to have some wheelchair refuges alongside the benches on poolside?
- Is there enough competitor seating?
- Can some of the lockers be added to the group changing room?
- Is there enough storage on poolside? (The feeling at the time was that there is currently adequate).
- Lane rope storage.
- Moveable floor (longitudinal) was highlighted as a good feature.
- Number and placement of hoist sockets around both the main pool and learner pool.
- Underfloor heating. It was generally thought that this was expensive and could be problematic and costly if there was an issue.
- There is a proposal for a biomass boiler. The potential of solar panels was also discussed although the cost / benefit would seem to rule these out.
- A discussion was had regarding potentially having blinds to help ensure privacy. Although the group could see that it was important for privacy for some groups, it was felt that this shouldn't compromise the building / glazing. Possibilities such as landscaping, film on windows and screens could have potential.

- Can traffic signs be looked at further down the line?
- The group felt that it would be good to have pictures or freezes on the outside of the buildings.
- Could we adapt two of the group change so that there were hoists and plinths for increased accessibility?
- Ensuring that pool surrounds were non-slip.
- Placement of timing clocks.

Further focus group meetings will also be planned during the construction period on a quarterly basis.

4. Open Sessions

There have been three open sessions that have been conducted with two being held in June and one in August 2011.

Within these sessions it was clear that the majority of individuals that attended the sessions have a preference to refurbish Temple Cowley Pools. The group does not want to lose a facility in the local community. A number of questions were asked at these sessions and these have been answered on the council's website under the question and answers section.

5. City Wide Survey

A survey was produced at a city wide level, which was agreed by the focus of group of key users and stakeholders and included a TalkBack panel which is a representative cross section of the City's population.

The survey took place from 26 May to 23 June 2010. There were a total of 641 responses, which gave Oxford City Council a confidence interval of plus or minus 3.9%.

Within the results of the on-line and paper survey, as well as the TalkBack survey there is an indication that satisfaction is lower at Temple Cowley Pools than Ferry Sports Centre. Users of existing Sports Centres were least satisfied with:

- The availability of spectator facilities;
- The quality of catering/vending facilities; and
- How well the facility caters for clubs.

In light of this feedback the proposed new pool facility at Blackbird Leys will have much improved spectator seating meeting Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association guidance. The Café is also proposed to have an improved seating area.

Underperforming areas for Temple Cowley Pools (low satisfaction and high importance) were identified as;

- The quality of the changing facilities;
- How well the centre caters for people with a disability; and
- The continuity of service

The designs for the proposed new facility will look to implement an improved flexible changing space that meets Sport England requirements. It will also look to ensure that the new facility meets the Equalities Act legislation and modern day standards; meeting all relevant guidance to ensure the continuity of service.

Respondents strongly indicated how important it was that sports/leisure facilities provide value for money. The new proposed facility at Blackbird Leys will look to achieve this by ensuring a high quality leisure experience planned, with forecasted lower costs and projected higher usage in comparison to Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool.

6. Outline Design Consultation 22nd Nov – 17 Dec 2010.

Consultation was undertaken in regard to the outline designs of the new proposed facility at Blackbird Leys. The public were asked about their thoughts on the outline designs. Most of those who took part in this were very positive about the outline designs.

Four sessions were undertaken the week of the 22-26 November including both lunchtime and evening sessions. Facilitating these events were City Councillors, Parish Councillors, key users and stakeholders. The following groups were invited and their comments fed into the overall process:

- Temple Cowley Pools User (Swimming);
- Temple Cowley Pools User (Swim, Gym and Classes);
- Blackbird Leys Pool Users;
- City of Oxford Swimming Club;
- Oxford Swans Disability Swimming Club;
- Thame and Oxford School Sports Partnership;
- Fusion Lifestyle;
- Oxfordshire Sports Partnership;
- Local schools (including TCP users);
- Oxford Blackbirds Football Club;
- All residents on Pegasus road that are opposite the existing and new proposed facility;
- Greater Leys football Club; and
- The Leys Children's Centre

Designs were also made available for the public to view and comment on between Monday 29 November and Friday 17 December 2010 on the Council's website and at the following facilities:

- Barton Leisure Centre;
- Blackbird Leys Centre;
- Blackbird Leys Pool;
- Ferry Leisure Centre;
- Temple Cowley Pools; and
- The Ice Rink.

In total there were 168 comments made on comments cards. The most common areas of response can be summarised as follows:

- More spectator seating needed;
- Need to maintain the current community hall;
- Need to add in a sauna;
- Not enough space on the pool surrounds;
- More car parking; and
- Single sex changing preferred.

In respect of these comments the following design amendments are being investigated:

- Additional spectator seating has been incorporated to proposals to meet A.S.A guidelines;
- The current community hall is proposed to be re-provided at the first floor level;
- A sauna facility has been incorporated onto the poolside in the proposals;
- The pool surrounds exceed Sport England guidance and are now wider than found at Aylesbury's, Aqua Vale;
- An overflow car is now being considered as part of the proposals;
- The group change areas have been modified so that single sex use can be achieved in them;
- Inclusion of additional private showers.

7. Door to door canvassing by local councillors

This has been undertaken and general feedback has been positive to the proposed new competition standard pool at Blackbird Leys.