

CABINET

29 MARCH 2016

OPTIONS FOR FUTURE OF LEISURE CENTRE PROVISION IN WINCHESTER

REPORT OF LEISURE CENTRE PROJECT TEAM

Contact Officer: Steve Tilbury Tel No: 01962 848135 Ext 2135.

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB2708 – Options for River Park Leisure Centre, 9 September 2015.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides an update on the project to consider the future of Winchester's leisure centre provision. This follows Cabinet's decision in September 2015 to undertake a period of public consultation to determine the public response to the options of either a replacement for River Park Leisure Centre at Bar End (to the east of the stadium) or the refurbishment of the existing facility to extend its lifespan.

Discussions have been progressing with Winchester University, Hampshire County Council and other partners but these have not reached any firm conclusions at this stage.

Cabinet is asked to determine when further decision making should take place if the project is to be progressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That Cabinet notes the information contained in the report and determines the next steps to be taken in relation to the project.
- 2 That Cabinet determines when the process of procurement of consultants for the project should be undertaken.

- 3 That a budget allocation of £80k be made to meet the costs of the technical work and consultation that will be required to sustain project development.
- 4 That Cabinet determine when further consultation be undertaken over the summer to inform a final decision on when or whether to proceed with the project.
- 5 That Cabinet notes that a decision has yet to be made on the facility mix, including the pool provision.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting in September 2015, Cabinet agreed that a period of consultation take place to determine the public response to the option of a replacement for River Park Leisure Centre at Bar End. Cabinet specified that this consultation was only to be in respect of Option 5, which would locate a new facility on the area to the east of the stadium, currently occupied by the play area, artificial turf pitch, land owned by Hampshire County Council and a small part of the Council's King George V playing field. This option would minimise the loss of existing playing field land and retain the site of the former Council depot as a development site which would generate a capital receipt. The refurbishment of the existing facility to extend its lifespan for ten to fifteen years was retained as the 'fall back' option if a new facility is not a viable proposition.
- 1.2 A report was made to the Winchester Town Forum on 18 November 2015 (report [WF232](#) refers) which provided an update on the proposed consultation, in particular explaining that it was not intended to be a process in which comments were obtained on a particular design or layout. It was to ask for advice from the community about what issues were of most concern to local residents and to ensure that local knowledge was taken into account as the Council's architects prepared their verification layout. It has been stressed that further detailed consultation and engagement will be undertaken on a specific design concept if the Council decides to move forward with relocation to Bar End.
- 1.3 To inform the verification process, and at the specific request of local residents, transport assessment work has been commissioned to test highways and access issues and the very important issue of how many parking spaces would be required on site, since this impacts significantly on both layout and cost. Further information on these matters is given below.

2 Background

- 2.1 At its September meeting, Cabinet recognised that the relocation of a major facility to Bar End would have implications for that community and for the use of the recreational land at Bar End. It was therefore determined that an initial stage of engagement should take place to understand local issues and the

way in which a new leisure centre would be perceived, both positively and negatively. This was also the subject of a report to the Town Forum which supported the process. A number of drop-in events were held in the local area, as well as a survey open to residents and businesses in Highcliffe/Bar End. Existing users of River Park Leisure Centre were also surveyed to ascertain their views in relation to a potential move to Bar End. A special whole school assembly and class sessions were held at All Saints Primary School, to obtain the views of local children.

- 2.2 The 'Highcliffe Community Forum for Action' provided assistance by allowing officers to attend meetings, offering another opportunity for feedback.
- 2.3 A range of issues and concerns were highlighted by the process, notably concerning access to the new facility and the related issues of parking, impact on the road network, the availability of buses to a facility and the opportunity to encourage people to travel there by more sustainable forms of transport. Participants were also concerned about light and noise pollution from a new facility, drainage issues and the design/ appearance of a new building, including its impact on views. Although the detail of the facilities to be provided was not the focus of the discussion, local residents did have some views on what would be appropriate, including concerns that the impact of a facility scaled for regional events and activities might be greater and if so would not necessarily receive local support.
- 2.4 The survey of existing leisure centre users identified concerns relating to access to a new leisure centre at Bar End, parking provision, bus services to the new site and road safety issues and personal safety issues travelling to what is perceived as a more remote site. The survey also gave the opportunity to note what facilities users would like to see in a new leisure centre, and what would encourage people to make more use of a leisure facility. A number of respondents also expressed concern at what would happen to the old leisure centre site if a new centre was built at Bar End.
- 2.5 Appendix 1 sets out in summary the results of the existing user consultation. A full record of all the comments received can be viewed on the Council's web site.
- 2.6 Inevitably, in the light of recent events, some negative comments have been made about why the Council has decided to proceed as it has and this is reflected in the letter received from the Highcliffe Community Forum which is provided at Appendix 2. In particular, local people may have expected more detailed proposals to be put before them for comment. However, as made clear in the Town Forum report and at meetings with residents, the purpose of the exercise was to find out about key issues of concern before any detailed proposals were formulated. Had the Council pre-prepared specific drawings or plans it would probably have faced criticism that it had already decided on what it intended to do and that the exercise was not open-minded. However, the next stage of the process, should Members decide to proceed, will allow for more detailed discussion of specific concepts and proposals.

3 Technical studies

- 3.1 As Cabinet will be aware, it has been difficult to provide answers to some of the questions currently being asked about the project because no decision has been taken on what facility mix should be provided. This is extremely important since it does have a significant impact on site layout, highways issues, and the cost of the facility, and therefore on the likely public response and level of support. To date, officers have worked on the basis of evaluating a facility which would accommodate either a 50m pool or similar water area, a large 12 court sports hall and other facilities which are proportionately larger than those at the existing leisure centre. Some take the view that a facility should be more ambitious and extensive, whilst others believe that it should be more focussed on local community need rather than aiming to provide facilities that would serve regional events.
- 3.2 As requested by Highcliffe residents, a transport assessment has been commissioned and some initial transport and engineering feasibility work has been undertaken in order to help assess the suitability of the Bar End site for the location of a new Leisure Centre. This work is ongoing and is being undertaken in close liaison with Hampshire County Council as Highways and Transport Authority.
- 3.3 The assessment identifies the amount of travel by all modes associated with the proposed development, based on patterns of visitor behaviour surveyed at the existing leisure centre. Allowance has been made in these calculations for the change in overall accessibility of the site resulting from the change in location and the expected overall increase in visitor numbers generated by the enhancement of the facilities provided. Consideration has also been given to the accessibility of the proposed site on foot, by bicycle and by bus and opportunities for improving access by these modes has been identified.
- 3.4 The assessment also considers the impact of the proposed development on junctions along the Bar End Road corridor between Junction 10 of the M3 and the city centre. The removal of a significant generator of traffic from the city centre is found to lead to a modest reduction in vehicle movements through the city centre at peak times. This is a very positive result.
- 3.5 It is envisaged that vehicular access to a new leisure centre would be achievable by the provision of a junction onto the Bar End Road north of the existing Barfield Close mini-roundabout. This would entail a new access road from this point through the Council's 'old' depot site past the athletics track to a new Leisure Centre located to the rear of the athletics track. The pedestrian route across Bar End Road adjacent to the site will be enhanced through the implementation of a new junction either in the form of a traffic light controlled crossing or informal crossing points formed by the provision of refuge islands. These details are still being discussed with the County Council but it is envisaged that a suitable and agreeable solution can be agreed.

- 3.6 The level of parking provision for a potential new leisure centre been assessed using the maximum parking demand at the existing leisure centre adjusted to take account of the change in overall accessibility and the expansion of the available facilities at a relocated centre at Bar End. This indicates that around 400 spaces would be required on site even after taking account of the proximity of the park and ride facilities. Local residents are very concerned that unauthorised car parking should not increase in nearby residential roads and providing the full complement of on-site car parking is one way to address this. Car parking would have to be on a chargeable basis because of the relative proximity to the town centre and park and ride car parks. If the Bar End option is progressed, a detailed travel plan will be prepared for a new Leisure Centre.
- 3.7 Overall, this assessment shows that a larger leisure centre could be achievable in transport terms provided that suitable mitigation and accessibility enhancements as set out in the assessment are provided. These would include a pedestrian crossing facility across Bar End Road, suitable site access arrangements, appropriate parking management and travel planning measures, enhanced cycling and walking facilities and maximising the use of existing commercial bus and park and ride services. The assessment has been based on what is considered to be the largest facility which would be provided including a 50 metre pool and associated spectator seating. Any reduction or increase in the facilities provided would decrease or increase the travel and parking demand accordingly.

4 Possible Facility Layout

- 4.1 Taking into account the issues raised by the site constraints and comments made by Highcliffe and Bar End residents, Appendix 4 shows how a new leisure centre could be accommodated onto the identified site. It should be stressed that this is not a representation of a final design nor does it take account of many variables which may yet prove significant. It simply shows what it would mean to locate the building and its supporting infrastructure into the area.
- 4.2 As can be seen from the layout it would be necessary to reach agreement with Hampshire County Council regarding the use of land in their ownership. The County Council is aware of this and has indicated that it is willing to discuss the prospects. A key consideration may be working on a joint plan which demonstrates how the Hampshire Cultural Trust, which occupies the adjacent Chilcomb site, could also improve some of their facilities in due course. There would be a requirement to relocate the existing University synthetic pitch onto playing field land, but there is no further loss of playing field land.
- 4.3 The project cost of this facility, inclusive of fees, contingency and inflation has been assessed by the Council's cost consultants, MACE, at approximately £29million. This is similar to the cost advice being provided to Eastleigh Borough Council for their similar sized new facility at Fleming Park, Eastleigh.

5 Partnership Working

- 5.1 As Cabinet has previously recognised the delivery of a new leisure centre will require substantial partnership funding in order to make the project affordable. Discussions are continuing with the University of Winchester, the Pindar Trust and Hampshire County Council in relation to possible joint working arrangements and/ or financial contributions.
- 5.2 The University and the City Council have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out a provisional funding contribution but this is dependent upon further approvals by the University and consideration of a governance model for a new facility at Bar End. Careful consideration will need to be given to the governance and management arrangements as the University has expressed views on both as a condition of their funding for the project.

6 Land ownership issues at Bar End

- 6.1 Further attempts have been made to understand the position of Tesco in relation to the Garrison Ground but these have been difficult as Tesco have been difficult to contact directly and have acted through intermediaries. It is believed that Tesco will not sell the Garrison Ground to the Council for permanent retention as playing fields even though officers have made clear that the Council would be a willing buyer at a fair independent valuation.
- 6.2 As Cabinet is aware, part of the playing fields on which facilities are already built are formally designated and held in trust as King George V playing fields. This status is overseen by an organisation called Fields in Trust which Members may know better by their previous name, the National Playing Fields Association. The Council is in contact with Fields in Trust and is discussing what measures would satisfy them that the status and quantity of playing field land would be properly protected in any development. This is of course in addition and separate to the planning policy considerations.

7 Current condition of River Park Leisure Centre and maintenance issues

- 7.1 A key driver for reaching a prompt decision on whether to provide a new leisure centre or refurbish the existing building is River Park Leisure Centre is now more than 40 years old and its ability to meet the needs of a growing population in Winchester is limited. Refurbishment cannot increase the quantity of facilities and is therefore not the preferred option. However, if there is no other option then refurbishment will provide additional years of life to the building whilst a long term solution is found. The existing building will require some significant attention even if it is decided to provide a replacement. If there are long delays in decision making, then this work will have to be brought forward and will deplete the capital resources available. The Head of Estates will advise further on maintenance requirements in the next report on the project.

8 Project Development Work

- 8.1 For Cabinet to be able to make a fully informed decision by the end of the year further technical work will be required, not least the full design of a building. Cabinet is reminded that some of this work can only be meaningfully undertaken with a settled facility mix.
- 8.2 In addition to architects and to support the further design works the following will be required:
- a) archaeological assessment
 - b) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
 - c) possible further transport and highways assessment
 - d) landscape and visual impact assessment
 - e) pre BREEAM assessment
 - f) further refinement of cost estimates
 - g) financial appraisal
 - h) legal advice on governance structures
 - i) legal advice on management and procurement
- 8.3 Cabinet is invited to consider what timetable it wishes to work towards and therefore what decisions might be taken to facilitate this. When it is decided to procure the full range of consultants to progress the scheme it will be necessary to appoint some or all of them through an EU procurement process which will take some time. The full fee package to take the project through to completion will exceed £2million. It would not seem prudent to begin the procurement process until the Council has committed to the project but it should also be recognised that there are considerable cost and deliverability uncertainties until relevant studies and design work have been undertaken. Cabinet may wish to consider that the procurement of consultants should begin now or may wish to wait until early in the new municipal year. In the meantime it is suggested that a relatively small budget to support on-going investigations and consultation be approved to ensure that the project maintains momentum.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

9 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 9.1 The Council has previously determined that it does consider the provision of a major public leisure facility in Winchester to be a priority in the interests of public health and well being. Provision of an indoor leisure facility meets the Council's key outcome of Active Communities, as well as supporting the Community Strategy priorities to provide accessible sport and recreation.

10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

To maintain work on the project there will be costs associated with technical work, layout studies and consultation. £80k is considered a reasonable amount to take the work through to November and support the development of robust options. £50k could be drawn from the major projects budget and £30k from the major investment reserve. The total fee package associated with bringing the project to a successful conclusion is estimated at approximately £2million. The total project cost is estimated in the region of £29million.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

11.1 In addition to the financial issues raised above, there are significant risks attached to the decision making process and the ability of the Council to ensure that any decision can be implemented. These are set out in the Risk Management Table attached as Appendix 3. In particular Cabinet's attention is drawn to the following:

- a) A final decision to move to Bar End and away from North Walls may be contested by those who do not agree with that proposition (in either location) and seek to prevent that occurring by some process.
- b) The Council has not settled on the facility mix to be provided in any new facility and this may be a contested point with significant financial implications.
- c) There are a number of unresolved issues relating to land use, access and legal status at Bar End which could still provide obstacles to relocation.
- d) There is no guarantee of external funding on acceptable terms at this stage and this may not be settled for some time. Lack of such funding would affect the viability of proceeding with a new build at Bar End.
- e) The condition of the existing building will require attention even if it is decided to provide a replacement. Some expenditure on maintenance is likely to be required but cannot easily be planned until a decision is made on the building's future.
- f) The Council's financial circumstances may change as a result of Government policy or some other event which would have an impact on the affordability of one or other the options.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Documents included as Appendices to this report.

APPENDICES:

- Appendix 1 Report of Leisure Centre Consultation: November 2015 – January 2016
- Appendix 2 Letter from Highcliffe Community Forum
- Appendix 3 Options for future leisure centre provision in Winchester – Risk Register
- Appendix 4 Possible Facility Layout (nb A3 colour versions attached for Cabinet Members only and available to view on the Council's website – <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/meetings/details/1511>)

Report of Leisure Centre Consultation

November 2015 to January 2016

1 Introduction

At its meeting in September 2015, Cabinet agreed that a period of consultation take place to determine the public response to the options of either a replacement for River Park Leisure Centre at Bar End (Option 5 – new building at the Bar End site on the ‘back site’ i.e. area east of the stadium currently occupied by the play area, artificial turf pitch, land owned by Hampshire County Council and a small part of the Council’s King George V playing field and utilising an access through the existing depot site) or the refurbishment of the existing facility to extend its lifespan prior to a further report to Cabinet at which a final decision on how to proceed can be taken. It was thought at the time that this would allow time for the position of other potential funders of the project to be made clear and incorporated into the consultation process.

This has not proved possible during this period and the consultation has therefore focused on getting input from residents and businesses in the Highcliffe area of the City to understand their views and issues and how this would impact on the detailed consideration of location, as well as seeking views of the current users of River Park Leisure Centre on the implications of a potential relocation of the centre. This report sets out the key issues and concerns that were raised during the consultation. Full record of comments made in this period can be found in the appendices accompanying the report.

2 Methodology

A series of meetings were held to which local residents were invited, where the possibilities of a new leisure centre being built in Bar End were explained. Local residents were then asked to complete an online survey form as part of this consultation.

Existing users of River Park were sent a link to an online survey asking for their views about the option of moving the leisure centre to Bar End. Finally local businesses were also sent a link to an online consultation form and asked for their views about a possible move to Bar End.

Drop in events:

- Church coffee morning 28 November
- Session prior to Highcliffe Community Forum 7 December
- Meeting of Highcliffe Community Forum for Action 7 December
- Church afternoon tea and cake 8 December

Surveys:

- Local residents' survey 26 November – 14 December
- Local business survey 26 November – 14 December
- Existing users of RPLC 11 December – 15 January

In total there were 811 separate responses producing 1,680 separate comments to the three strands of consultation. The response from local businesses was not very strong with only 4 responding. There were 85 responses from residents in the Bar End area and 722 responses from existing users of the River Park leisure centre.

3 Key themes from resident drop in sessions and resident/business surveys

As detailed above, residents and local business views were received from two sources 1) an online survey sent to local residents and businesses and 2) four public meetings. There were in total more than 250 different comments, although only 1 from the business survey. The comments concerned a wide range of topics and have been summarised in the table below.

Access	66
Parking	21
Noise & Light	21
Community Facilities	20
Flood/Drain	18
Shops	12
Buses	12

Most comments expressed concern about access to the proposed new site, followed by comments about a) the sufficiency of parking and b) the effect on residents' current parking arrangements. Concern was also expressed about the affect of noise and light and a number of people were also worried about the possible flooding risk.

The comments from the surveys are reproduced verbatim in tables in the appendix. At the public meeting officers made notes of comments from those attending and wrote them up after the meeting (**Note:** *In the tables in the appendix the comments with a number in front of them are officers notes of residents comments – the number in the right hand column are the number of people expressing that view*).

4 Key themes from existing RPLC user surveys

The survey sent to existing users of the River Park centre asked respondents for comments about four distinct areas.

1. Improvements
2. Concerns
3. What would encourage more use?
4. New facilities

IMPROVEMENTS

There were 318 comments in response to the question “Is there anything else that you think would need to be improved?” An analysis of the respondents broke the responses into four main issues.

Car Parking	155 comments	Traffic/Congestion/Issues	58 comments
Public Transport	60 comments	Cycling/Walking	50 comment

There were also another 83 comments about miscellaneous issues.

A full list of the comments is attached in the appendix, but below is brief analysis of the comments from each issue.

Improvements to Car Parking (155 Comments)

The majority of comments were not concerned as much with improvements to the car parking, but to ensure that there was sufficient car parking available. There were a significant number of comments asking for free or reasonably priced parking for users of the leisure centre.

Improvements to Public Transport (60 Comments)

The majority of comments thought the current bus service to the centre was/would be inadequate and suggested that the frequency should be improved. There were several comments about improving the number of buses in the early mornings and later in the evenings. Several comments were made about the possibility of two bus journeys being needed to access Bar End.

Improvements to Traffic/Congestion/Issues (58 Comments)

There were some comments suggesting that more parking and/or wider roads would ease traffic congestion, but the majority of comments were about the current congestion and how a move to Bar End would make it worse. There were a few comments from people who thought moving to Bar End would ease traffic in the city centre.

Improvements to Cycling/Walking (50 Comments)

There were various suggestions asking for new or improved walking & cycle routes, especially away from the roads. Several respondents asked for improved cycle storage. There were a number of comments suggesting that crossing the road to the proposed new centre could be improved and improved street lighting.

Miscellaneous Improvements (83 Comments)

This section includes several diverse comments that could not be easily grouped together. The most common of which were expressing concerns about the lack of drainage on the site. Also included in these comments are several requesting that the leisure centre should stay at River Park. There are also a few which think moving to Bar End is a good idea. However as neither of these views are 'improvements' they have been included in this section with the other various suggestions made.

CONCERNS

There were 224 comments in response to the question "Is there anything else that you think might be of concern?" An analysis of the respondents broke the responses into five main issues.

Access to Bar End Site	97 Comments	Security & Safety	17 Comments
Car Parking	29 Comments	Future use of River Park	13 Comments
Travelling to and/or near the Bar End Site	20 Comments		

There were also another 63 comments about miscellaneous issues.

A full list of the comments is attached in the appendix, but below is brief analysis of the comments from each issue.

Concerns about Access to Bar End Site (97 Comments)

The majority of comments were concerned that if the leisure centre moved to Bar End, it would no longer be accessible to people living near River Park. There was also concern that users would no longer be able to walk to the centre. There were also some comments about people being able to combine a visit to the current leisure centre with activity in the town centre and that this would no longer be possible if it moved to the outskirts of the city.

There were also various concerns about the impact on traffic driving through the town centre to get to Bar End, although there were one or two people who thought access would be easier, because it was close to the motorway junction.

Concerns about Car Parking (29 Comments)

The main concern about car parking was focused mainly around the adequacy of provision. There were, however, a minority of views that too much car parking would encourage people to use their cars unnecessarily and these respondents believed that users should be encouraged to walk or use the park & ride to access the site. There a couple of comments about how much should be charged to use the car park, with some suggesting it should be free for users.

Concerns about Travelling to and/or near the Bar End Site (20 Comments)

There was a mixture of comments about various aspects of travelling to Bar End, but no common theme.

Concerns about Security & Safety (17 Comments)

The comments about safety and security split into two main areas 1) Road safety issues e.g. vehicular access to and from the Bar End site & pedestrian safety crossing Bar End Road 2) A more general concern about personal safety travelling to, what is perceived as, a more remote site, especially during the darker mornings and evenings in the winter.

Concerns about future use of River Park (13 Comments)

Some users were concerned about the future use of the River Park site, if a new facility was built at Bar End. The majority of concerns were that the site would be used for housing development which was strongly opposed. There was strong support for some form of leisure/ recreational use to continue on the site.

Miscellaneous Concerns (63 Comments)

This section includes several diverse concerns that could not be easily grouped together.

Amongst these comments are several requesting that the leisure centre should stay are River Park. There are also a few which think moving to Bar End is a good idea. However as neither of these views are 'concerns' they have been included in this section with the other various concerns raised.

ENCOURAGE EXTRA USE.

There were 546 separate comments about what would encourage users to make more use of leisure centre facilities. These suggestions are listed below in order of popularity.

131	Pool
113	Free/More Parking
86	Stay/Happy at River Park
72	Improved Changing Rooms
44	More Classes
42	Café/Bar/Lounge
30	Pricing
27	Larger Gym
26	Cleaning
23	Public Transport
22	Access
20	Staff
15	Walking/Cycle
15	Creche/ Soft Play
15	Improve Web Site

A full list of all comments to this question is included in the appendix.

FACILITIES IN NEW CENTRE

There were 342 separate comments about what users would like to see in a new leisure centre. These suggestions are listed below in order of popularity.

55	Pool 50m
44	Climbing Wall
33	Pool Other
30	Steam/Spa
29	Gym Facilities
19	Pool Diving
17	Creche
15	spin/Pilates
14	Indoor Athletics
13	Outdoor Running
12	Restaurant/Café
11	Parking
10	Improved Changing Rooms
10	Tennis Courts

A full list of all comments to this question is included in the appendix.

**Highcliffe Community Forum for Action
St Giles Hill Residents' Association
Winchester & District Allotment Holders' Society**

Cllr Stephen Godfrey
Leader
Winchester City Council

14 March 2016

Dear Cllr Godfrey

Re Bar End Leisure Centre plans

We call for Winchester City Council (WCC) to pause in making a decision to use the King George V playing fields for the future location of the Leisure Centre at their meeting on the 29 March, until such time as local residents have received further information on the choice of location/alternative sites within the area.

We consider that it would be premature for the WCC Cabinet to accept recommendations that the new leisure centre should be built on the King George V (KGV) playing fields, without residents having more information and more time to consider the implications or to express a preference for an alternative site at Bar End.

We have fully outlined our concerns in the attached appendix of feedback. In summary they are:

- Preference for the Depot/Garrison Ground site

Based on the limited information we have, Highcliffe and neighbouring residents would prefer the Depot/Garrison Ground site as the location for a new leisure centre, and we believe it would confer a range of benefits for Highcliffe and the neighbouring areas as well as the wider community through greater ease of access.

We find it strange that WCC having chosen Bar End over River Park, partially on grounds that easier access will increase revenue, would then select the option at Bar End with the least good access (i.e. KGV).

We believe there are several very good reasons for favouring the Depot/Garrison Ground site option rather than KGV, and we are not convinced WCC has worked hard enough to find ways to mitigate the two obstacles they have identified to the use of the Depot/Garrison Ground site.

We would like further information from WCC about the pros and cons of the KGV site and the Depot/Garrison Ground site and to be able to feed back from a more informed position.

- Confusion about location of Bar End site during consultation

Some residents were initially misled on the proposed location of the leisure centre within Highcliffe believing the “Bar End” tag meant the facility would be located close to the Bar End Road and would probably be partially on the Depot site.

Although the consultation sessions in December referred to the KGV site, there were no maps detailing the future location of the leisure centre or parking facilities. For many residents this confusion was only uncovered at the Highcliffe Forum meeting on the 1 February following a presentation given by Steve Tilbury and the extent of the KGV site was only confirmed to the Highcliffe Forum on the 8 February. As a result, some feedback was based on the assumption that the location of the proposed leisure centre is on the Depot/Garrison Ground site.

Local residents are broadly in favour of a well designed leisure centre in Bar End and we are keen to take it forward with more information about how our concerns will be addressed.

We would like to see plans for a leisure centre within the context of an overall plan for the whole area including Garrison, Depot and HCC/WCC land rather than a piecemeal approach that we may all have a better oversight and therefore better informed view.

We would like to work with Winchester City Council to provide accurate information to residents. We do require additional information about the pros and cons of the two sites, who owns the land, and the full costs of siting the leisure centre on either of the two sites.

We are keen for our Council to follow best practice in consulting and engaging with communities throughout the project definition phase, for example adopting the recommendations of Claer Lloyd-Jones, and expect you to work in the best interest of all residents. The first requirement is for accurate, clear and timely information to be readily accessible to the general public.

We have discussed the points above with the Winchester Sport Art and Leisure Trust (Winchester SALT) and they share our concerns.

We would welcome further information about the above and points we raise in our summary of feedback below. We would be very happy to meet in person to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

Sam Cairns, Chair, Highcliffe Community Forum for Action
Liz Cooper, Chair, St Giles Hill Residents' Association
Bill Leadbetter, Winchester & District Allotment Holders' Society

Cc:

Camilla Woodhouse, Steven Pease and Susan Falconer, Trustees, Winchester SALT
Steve Tilbury, WCC
All WCC councillors
leisurecentproject@winchester.gov.uk
Prof. Joy Carter, Vice Chancellor, University of Winchester
Steve Brine, MP

Appendix – Feedback and key concerns from Highcliffe Community Forum for Action and other local residents

Residents are excited by the possibility of a leisure centre in Highcliffe that:

- Provides enhanced facilities for families and young people – including a leisure pool suitable for babies, toddlers and young children – and that are accessible to all, including people with physical or other disabilities
- Ensures that leisure users can access facilities at the same time as organised groups – such as university students and faculty, or community sports clubs – and that one user group is not favoured over the other
- Meets the highest possible ecological standards
- Is well designed and not intrusive, within the bowl of the hills, for example set low to the ground with a grass roof
- Is well managed to minimise air, noise and light pollution to be the same or less than current levels
- Has carefully designed drainage
- Includes free to access kick about space, a play ground and a skate park, that can be accessed at all times without having to pay a fee or go through leisure centre space that could be gated, or across access roads or a car park
- Provides a hub for the local community and includes meeting spaces, a café and a shop
- Provides facilities to enhance the wellbeing of all ages
- Leads to improved bus routes, frequencies and timetables in Highcliffe, which is currently poorly served by public transport
- Has a carefully managed plan for transport, with a focus on pedestrian and cycle routes, and cuts down on the current levels of traffic from users of the University Sports Stadium within Highcliffe
- Makes use of the Depot site for parking rather than green space or playing fields, of which Winchester already has a deficit
- Includes a pedestrian crossing on Bar End Road to facilitate leisure centre visitors using the park and ride or those walking or cycling along Domum Road.
- Does not block light to the allotments or affect their access to running water
- Is well planned to stop ingress to the allotments from users of the leisure centre

Residents are concerned by:

- The speed at which proposals are being taken forward and believe they lack the information they need to provide informed feedback on the proposal to build the new leisure centre on the King George V site.
- Losing green space in Highcliffe with no other space being provided as compensation.
- The risk of this opening the door to further “creeping development” on nearby greenfield land, beyond the city development boundary.
- Increased traffic congestion, noise, light and environmental pollution, the latter being particularly related to extensive car parking facilities and entrance/exit of cars to the site.

- Ensuring access easy to the existing allotment site whilst ensuring the boundaries of the allotments are secure with the increased traffic from the proposed Leisure Centre. Any buildings might cut light levels in the allotments and if built too close to the boundaries will result in sterile, unusable plots.
- The issues of drainage and supply of water as well as access to toilets (or permission to build a toilet block for allotment users) and of ensuring adequate drainage for the site as a whole.
- The lack of involvement they currently have with the formulation of plans. Residents would be keen to take a more active role in the planning for the site and have considerable skills they could bring to bear for the benefit of the project.
- The risk that the part funding from the University would come with strings attached regarding access that many non-university users would find unacceptably restrictive. We would like to see a draft agreement setting out the principles that would be adopted.
- The offer by WCC to Places for People Leisure of a preferential position to continue as the facility manager without competition, through single bidder status for a period of some months, allowing them to bid for design/build/operation before others are allowed in.
- WCC having not taken advantage of the experience gained by other Leisure Centres with innovative arrangements based on trusts, non-profit companies and partnerships for the construction or operation of their facilities.
- The brief to architects Limbrick, currently, we understand, working up the concept design, has not been made public and appears not to have been seen by Councillors. The supplementary information provided to Limbricks following initial feedback from Highcliffe residents titled "Leisure Centre Project: Preferred Option – Bar End Location – Concept Design: Notes for Roberts Limbrick" does not reflect the level of concern or views on a wide range of issues that residents recognise.

We have a number of concerns about siting the Leisure Centre on the King George V playing fields.

- Loss of playing fields bought with subscriptions from local people to provide a not for profit, permanent memorial to King George V as part of a national tribute, to be preserved in perpetuity for the purpose of a public playing field and open air recreational activities.
- King George V playing fields are highly visible from the South Downs and St Catherine's Hill. This is the most intrusive of the five possible sites in WCC's commissioned study and also represents a major urbanisation of much valued green space in an area of high density housing.
- Deficiencies in terms of access compared to the Garrison Ground, for example the need for a new c.350m long access road, and concerns about exacerbating the impact of the current stadium on Milland Road.

- What appears to be a significant net reduction in the area of natural grass playing pitches. We understand there are plans for inappropriate use of a portion of protected playing fields on King George V for car parking, if the brownfield Depot site is not used for this purpose.
- The loss of the amenity of free-to-use open space in this less affluent part of Winchester. In addition, there is no possibility of replacing the loss of playing field facilities and Winchester Town is already short of 11 hectares for publicly accessible sports grounds according to the Open Space Strategy (September 2015).
- The Depot land is scheduled for redevelopment, likely to cost WCC £5 million (according to the latest WCC budget), which could then generate a significant income for WCC. While understanding the benefit this could bring, we would like to understand why WCC weighs this more heavily than the benefits of locating the Leisure Centre there and what options have been explored to offset the lost revenue in this scenario.

We understand:

- Hampshire County Council is prepared to discuss use of their land at Southern End of the site. The details of this are not known to us but it seems that this could reduce the land take currently proposed for King George V and also open up other opportunities that would benefit the leisure centre and Winchester, including possibly siting here a combined heat and power plant and/or anaerobic digester. We would like to understand this better.
- Tesco is prepared to discuss use of their land at the Garrison Ground without immediately triggering demands for planning permission for the whole of the Garrison Ground. We would like to understand why WCC is not pursuing this more determinedly.

Appendix 3 - Risk Register

Options for Future of leisure centre provision in Winchester – Risk Register March 2016

Risk number	Description of risk	Likelihood	Impact	How will the risk be managed?	Assigned to
1	The Council cannot agree strategic governance and management arrangements with funding partners. Causes project to fail.	Unlikely	Major	On-going discussions with funding partners informed by external legal and financial advice. Early decision making by Cabinet/Council.	Project Executive (Corporate Director)
2	Uncertainty in firming up projected income level from new facility (necessary for business case) due to delays in reaching agreement on and implementing tendering process or other income determination process as agreed with partners	Unlikely	Major	Reach agreement on process with funding partners and early decision taken by Cabinet	Project Executive (Corporate Director)
3	Uncertainty and insufficient information for decision making because proposed mixture of facilities in the new leisure centre not determined. Causes reputational damage and delay	Unlikely	Major	Member decision on facility mix made so that more detailed designs, costs and land requirements for the project can be identified and consulted upon. Basis for decision clearly explained.	Project Executive (Corporate Director)
4	Delays to decision making lead to increased costs for new building and for maintaining the existing leisure centre. Possibly prejudicial to economics of new build.	Unlikely	Moderate-Major	Early decision making to minimise risk. Allocation of sufficient budget and/or advance decision regarding level of affordable repairs.	Head of Estates
5	Public demands for certainty over the future of existing leisure centre site and Bar End depot site delays decision	Unlikely	Moderate-Major	Ensure Council's position on existing site is clearly articulated.	Project Team

Risk number	Description of risk	Likelihood	Impact	How will the risk be managed?	Assigned to
	making causing impacts on finance and viability.				
6	Partner requirements are greater than Council's willingness/ability to deliver them. Public opposition to partner involvement.	Unlikely	Moderate-Major	Establish an understanding of expectations and work to agree a way forward via on ongoing communication with funding partners. Clearly articulate benefits of partner involvement.	Project Executive (Corporate Director)
7	Council is not able to obtain agreement for the use of land in the area identified for the new leisure centre.	Unlikely	Moderate	Engage with Fields in Trust at an early stage, ensure application process is understood and commit to allocation of land to be exchanged. Continue discussions with HCC and move on to formal negotiations.	Project Team
8	Highway requirements on Bar End Road require a technical solution which is undeliverable.	Unlikely	Moderate	A transport assessment has been commissioned to understand the transport implications, including land requirements and likely costs. Has not identified highway requirement which is impossible in principle.	Project Team
9	Technical Options Appraisal and Feasibility Studies were completed in May 2013 and May 2015 are out of date for decision making purposes due to delays.	Likely	Moderate	Review the scope of these studies and update as required as part of the development of the Outline Business Case. Will be cost attached.	Project Team

Risk number	Description of risk	Likelihood	Impact	How will the risk be managed?	Assigned to
10	Further costs are identified regarding access issues and other site constraints.	Likely	Moderate	A transport assessment has been commissioned to understand the transport implications, including land requirements and likely costs.	Project Team
11	Local residents and members of the public feel dissatisfied with the engagement process to date.	Likely	Moderate	Make clear the consultation process to date, communicate this in a simple and concise way and promote using a variety of media and additional meetings. Consider other forms of consultation/engagement. Explain benefits of new facility and efforts to provide mitigation of all negative impacts.	Project Team
12	Project outline business case does not demonstrate financial affordability.	Likely	Significant	Undertake Financial Due Diligence and develop financial model to assess and identify mitigation of financial risks. Assess WCC ability to secure prudential borrowing.	Head of Finance
13	External funding committed in principle may not be secured.	Unlikely	Significant	Continue negotiations and secure funding from key partner organisations	Project Executive (Corporate Director)
14	Legal challenges cause a delay and an additional cost to the project.	Likely	Significant	Based on current knowledge this is to be expected. Ensure any legal challenges can be defended by obtaining expert advice to guide and inform processes.	Head of Legal and Democratic Services
15	Planning permission is refused.	Unlikely	Significant	Engage with planning officers and SDNP early in the project process. Ensure that the design principles are in accordance with the themes of Local Plan Part 2. Seek pre-application advice prior to submission of the Planning Application.	Project Executive (Corporate Director)

Risk number	Description of risk	Likelihood	Impact	How will the risk be managed?	Assigned to
16	Different staff resources will be required at different stages of the project e.g. legal, project management and then construction. If these resources are not available there could be a delay in the development.	Unlikely	Major	Ensure the appropriate expertise is brought together at the appropriate time to support the project.	Assistant Director, Policy & Planning