

Elephant and Castle leisure centre Public Consultation Report

14 October 2010



Elephant and Castle Regeneration
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1. Introduction

The Elephant and Castle leisure centre was built in the late 1960s, and since 2000 has been managed by Fusion. At its peak the centre enjoyed over 232,000 visitors in 2008, and in 2009 the number of visitors was 173,691. The centre is located at 22 Elephant and Castle, SE1 6SQ.

On 7 July 2010 the council agreed to enter into a regeneration agreement with Lend Lease, paving the way for a historic £1.5 billion regeneration of the Elephant and Castle. The council also agreed to explore the options for providing a new leisure facility at Elephant and Castle which, should the facility go ahead will be paid for by the council.

One of the primary funding sources for leisure facilities is anticipated to be payments made under the regeneration agreement with Lend Lease. Both the redevelopment of the Heygate Estate and the existing leisure facility will contribute to the council achieving its vision for the Elephant and Castle. Unlike with the demolition and redevelopment of the Heygate, through which the council will work in partnership with its development partner Lend Lease, this leisure facility project will be led and delivered by the council independently.

Once it is confirmed that this new leisure facility project will commence a detailed programme of planning and construction will be confirmed. Currently though it is hoped that construction is planned to commence on this project early in 2012 and is likely to last approximately 18 months. These dates are subject to planning permission being granted.

2. The Consultation Purpose

On 23 August 2010 the Council began a seven-week consultation period with 7324 residents in the catchment area, defined by the Elephant and Castle opportunity area, and 866 Fusion customers with membership by posting a letter and business reply card.

A stakeholder database was created and included; MPs, Ward Councillors, Children's Services and Youth Groups, Schools, local University and College, Libraries, Southwark Pro-Active, Sports organisations, ex-Heygate residents (those that had opted to return to the area), Southwark internal management and communication teams, Local residential groups, Fusion and 57 existing block-booking contacts. Two Community Council meetings were also attended.

The purpose of letter, reply card and online form was to involve residents, customers and stakeholders and ask them what might encourage them to use the centre, either for the first time, or on a more regular basis. We wanted to know what type of additional services they would want in **their** leisure centre. We gave them these options and an 'other' box to make their own suggestions in the following format:

As a matter of importance to you, please number from 1 to 5 from the selection of services and facilities below: (1 being not important and 5 being most important)

- Gym
- Swimming pool
- Crèche
- Exercise/studios
- Sports Hall
- Café
- Other

When the consultation closed on 8 October we had received over 1300 responses which is very pleasing and provides a strong foundation on which to continue involving local people in the developments of the leisure centre going forward. The return rate for this equates to 16% whereas the average for the similar exercises are between 2% and 5%.

3. The Consultation Results

The **8190** letters and reply cards Southwark Council sent out resulted in **1316** replies from the business reply cards and online, a response rate of **16%**. The following pages are broken down into three categories; total numbers, by customer and by non customer responses.

a) Category defined by total number of responses - 1316

Table 1 – Total number of responses and breakdown of customers and non-users

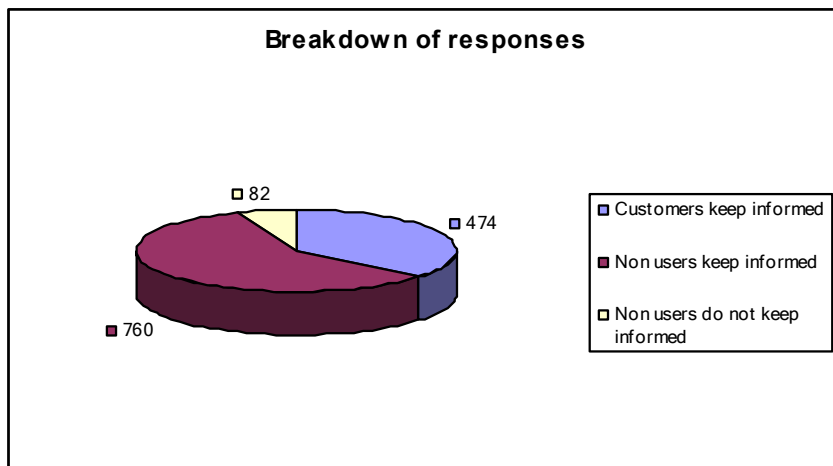
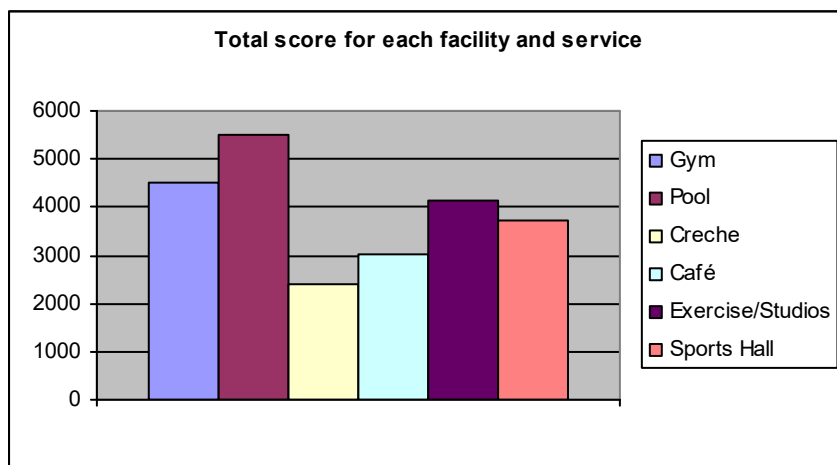


Table 2 – Total score for each facility and service

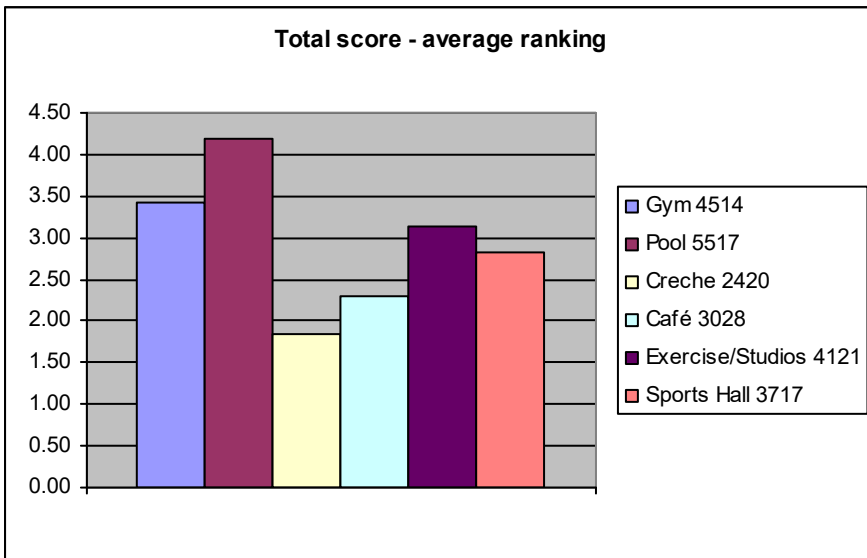


Total score in order of highest number for each facility and service

- Swimming pool 5517
- Gym 4514
- Exercise/studios 4121
- Sports Hall 3717
- Café 3028
- Crèche 2420

b) Category defined by total score – average ranking facility and service

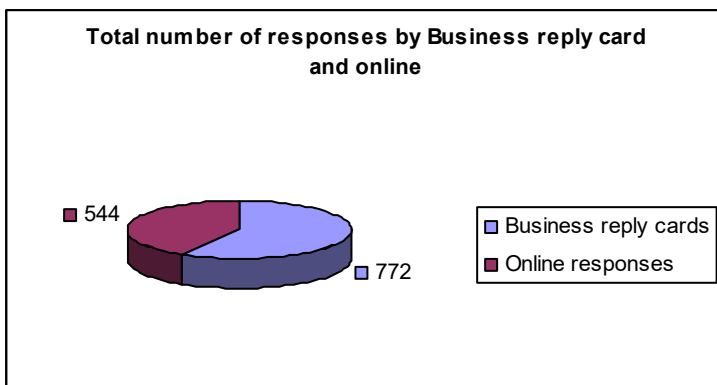
Table 3 shows the average score importance rating for each of the services and facilities from the total number of votes **1316**, e.g. the average importance rating for Swimming pool and Sports Hall is **4.19** and **2.82** respectively. This indicates that a majority of respondents regard these as important on the scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is most important and 1 is least important.



In order of most requested

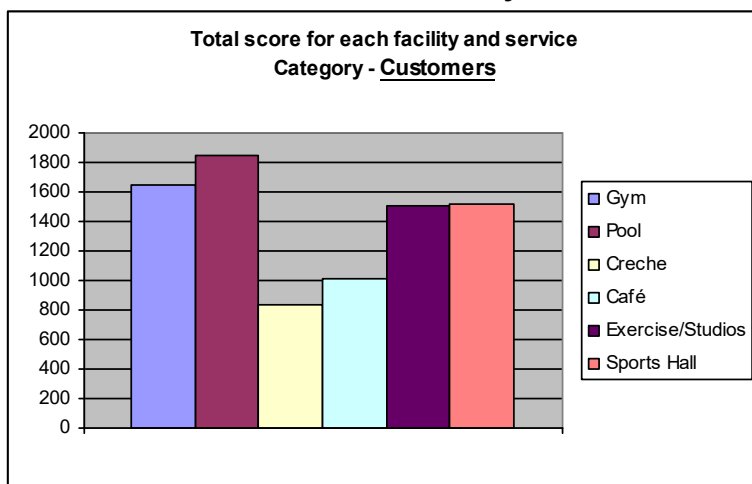
- **Swimming pool** **4.19**
- **Gym** **3.43**
- **Exercise/studios** **3.13**
- **Sports Hall** **2.82**
- **Café** **2.30**
- **Crèche** **1.84**

Table 4 shows of the 1316 number of responses which were received by Business reply card and online



c) Category defined by customers that requested to be kept informed – 474 responses
(The number of responses includes members and centre users)

Table 5 – Total score for each facility and service



Total score in order of highest number for each facility and service

- Swimming pool 1852
- Gym 1651
- Sports Hall 1513*
- Exercise/studios 1504
- Café 1012
- Crèche 840

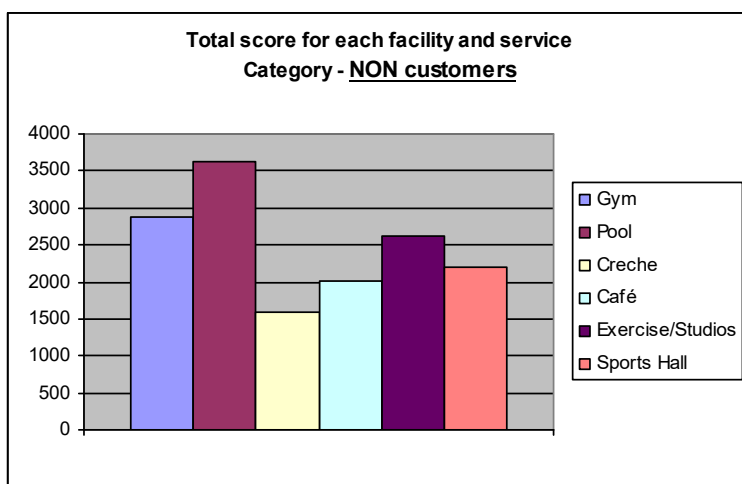
* Compared to the overall scores existing centre customers prioritised a sports hall over exercise/studios option.

The two highest 'other' suggestions were

- Squash with 41 individual requests
- Sauna/steam room with 14 individual requests

c) Category defined by non-users that requested to be kept informed and those not willing to be kept informed – 842 responses

Table 6 – Total score for each facility and service



Total score in order of highest number for each facility and service

- Swimming pool 3625
- Gym 2879
- Exercise/studios 2627*
- Sports Hall 2209
- Café 2017
- Crèche 1581

* Compared to the overall scores NON users prioritised exercise/studios over a sports hall option.

The two highest 'other' suggestions were

- Sauna/steam room with 29 individual requests
- Squash with 11 individual requests

4. Other suggestions made

We also asked for any other ideas or suggestions that people had for the leisure facility and services that people might want included. The two most popular suggestions were Squash courts requested by 52 individuals, and Sauna/Steam rooms requested by 43 individuals.

See below a variety of ideas put forward by 500 of the 1316 respondents;

33 and 50 metre swimming pools • Adventure playground • Archery • Badminton • BMX Cycle track • Cinema/Theatre • Children's Sports Club • Chlorine free hypo-allergic pool water • Climbing Wall • Contemporary Art Gallery • Courses for kids • Disabled facilities/access/parking • Event hire space • Fun pool/paddling pool • Gardens, plants, trees • Gymnastics/dance classes • Healthy Café • Hot Yoga room • Ice rink • Indoor playground • Information and emergency desk • Internet room free to OAPs • Library/reference facilities • Line dancing • Massage/spa • Meeting/events hall/arena • Netball court • New, NOT second hand gym equipment • Outdoor floodlit/ all purpose/ all season football pitch • Outdoor covered café on a flat roof • Outdoor pool • Outdoor space for eating/relaxing/café • Paint balling • Physiotherapist (NHS) • Proper shops e.g. Next, Marks & Spencer etc., • Psychedelic art installation • Rooms for reflexology • Reiki, massage & meditation • Plunge pool • School holiday activities • Secure storage for buggies, bikes and scooters • Social club • Space for children and families to grow and cook vegetables together • Special fee for people over 65 years old • Spectator seating • Spinning/Aero biking studio • Suitability for cardiac rehab • Table tennis • Tennis courts • Toilets outside • Treatment rooms • Turkish Bath • Wi-Fi access and an informative notice board • Women only swimming day.

Should the proposed leisure facility go ahead, the council's responses to the above suggestions and other comments received are set out below

• Access and Parking

The redevelopment will result in a centre that is fully compliant with the Disabilities Discrimination Act ([DDA](#)). There will be cycle parking and car parking for people with disabilities. The entrance lobby and wide corridors will also make visiting the centre a great deal easier for people with pushchairs.

• Café

Serious consideration is now being given to providing a café at the heart of the building, which will allow users to relax and wind down after their sessions and other visitors to take a break while friends or family are participating in activities. A good-quality café will also encourage new users who may initially come in just for a coffee but be persuaded by the new facilities to become regular visitors for physical activities.

• Changing rooms

The changing rooms will be up to the standards one might expect from a quality 21st Century leisure centre. In addition to male/female changing rooms there are planned larger cubicles for family changing and for people with disabilities.

• Children and Crèche

The council aim to encourage children to exercise from the earliest age and the facility will provide the required facilities and opportunities for this to take place. In the proposed leisure facility there is provision for a learner/hydrotherapy pool. We are also looking at the provision of a crèche with extended hours so that parents and carers of younger children can take part in activities, knowing that their children are safe and usefully engaged.

• Classes

The Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre already provides: Yoga, Pilates, Step Aerobics, Legs, Bums and Tums, Total Body Circuit, Personal Training, Indoor Basket Ball, Indoor Volley Ball, Racket Ball, Badminton, Squash, and women/men only sessions, with other dance classes include: Bollywood and Bhangra, and Line dancing. It is hoped that these can all be continue to be

accommodated in the new leisure facility and new ideas put forward in the consultation will also be considered.

- **Disability Discrimination Act (to review [DDA](#) guidelines)**

As previously stated, the refurbished Centre will comply with DDA regulations. The aim is to create a facility which is much better suited to people with disabilities and other special needs in terms not only of building design and equipment but also of services on offer and staff training. We are working closely with the organisations Interactive (Disability equality in sports) and the Southwark Disablement Association to meet with their observations and suggestions.

- **Green issues**

Energy efficiency and long-term sustainability are key issues in designing the Centre. The new facility will be required to comply with existing planning policy concerning this through the use of both proven and innovative approaches including the proposed Multi Utility Service Company (MUSCo) that will service the wider Elephant and Castle regeneration area.

- **Membership types and cost**

We have been asked all sorts of questions about membership combinations, all of which are being considered in planning for new services to be delivered within the redeveloped building. The aim is to keep prices affordable in the future so that as many people as possible are able to use the centre.

The centre already provides a 'Pay-as-you-go' service whereby customers do not have to be members to use the facilities. Members and non-members can also book onto classes via the internet and on arrival swipe their membership card and go straight to the class. Members can also book a week in advance at reception to attend classes thereby speeding up the process when they arrive at the centre.

- **Opening / Closing times**

The opening and closing hours at the Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre is from 7am to 10pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday. Some respondents have requested earlier opening times to use the centre before they go to work. Extended opening hours will be considered for the new facility.

- **Outdoor sports facilities**

Unfortunately the footprint of land proposed for the leisure facility does not permit space for outdoor floodlit, all purpose, all season football pitch as requested by a number of respondents. Less than half a mile away from the centre in the same grounds as the Imperial War Museum, is the Geraldine Mary Harmsworth (GMH) sports facility which opened in 2009 with part-funding from the Big Lottery Fund. The GMH offers school holiday facilities, Short Tennis (ages 4 to 10 years), Outdoor 5-a-side football, Outdoor Basketball, Outdoor Netball and Outdoor Tennis. Members of the existing Elephant and Castle leisure centre are allowed to use these facilities at present and will be encouraged to use them during the period of closure required for construction of the new facility.

- **Pool**

After receiving the highest level of support through the questionnaires that were returned it is obvious that new pool facilities is something that is important to the local community at the Elephant and Castle. Respondents also requested a hydrotherapy, a children's learning pool and showers for pre-swim these have all been considered within the existing architectural drawings, however the requests for a larger 50 metre pool will be unfeasible due to the available footprint for this development.

- **Sauna and Steam room**

As with all new leisure centres being built, a sauna and steam room is high on people's priority list. Although not in the conceptual diagrams this request will be put forward as an option in the redesign of the facility.

- **Security**

Security of equipment and personal belongings is also a priority for respondents. The proposed redesign of the centre will take these issues fully into account and design proposals will be required to demonstrate how crime and individual security has been considered.

- **Senior Citizens**

Ensuring that there are opportunities for older people to participate in activity is crucial in providing a leisure facility that is inclusive for all. Comments received through the consultation event will be further considered at the appropriate stage.

- **Services**

This section was designed to capture miscellaneous ideas that could not easily be accommodated under a specific category both for services as they currently are and for the future. Lots of good ideas were put forward for the centre; a more efficient booking and ticketing system; qualified trainers; air-conditioning; a monitored telephone answering service; better signage; more staff in the gym to help and advise; cycle parking; wall mirrors for weight training; lockers with key pins and locker numbers; energy efficient environment; solar panels to heat water; drinking water in coolers; more staff generally; family lockers and a secure area for pushchairs. We aim to address most of the current issues you have raised immediately with the operators of the existing leisure facility.

While the centre is being redeveloped members will have to use other local centres. All those respondents, that requested to be kept informed, will be updated with the progress of the redevelopment programme so that you remain an essential element of the process throughout the rebuild.

- **Youth Opportunities**

At the request of the respondents, activities for people between the ages of 14 to 18 years are being considered.

5. Stakeholder groups with specific comments

During 23 August and 8 October a wide number of stakeholder organisations and individuals were consulted.

We had one petition delivered by Giles Semper, Deputy CEO of Better Bankside on 17 September with 200 signatures from the parents of Crampton School, SE17 3LE. The signatures came with this message *'We the undersigned, believe that a large, good quality swimming pool is an essential ingredient of the new leisure centre proposed for the Elephant and Castle.'*

Individuals from these groups were first sent an email encouraging them to take part in the consultation either via the business reply card or on online.

Educational establishments – age groups from 5 to 25

The head teachers at these ten schools within the Elephant and Castle Opportunity Area were notified of the public consultation and invited to the evening meeting:

- Charlotte Sharman Primary School, SE11 4SN
- Crampton Primary School, SE17 3LE (See above for response from the school parents)
- English Martyrs Roman Catholic School, SE17 1QD
- Globe Academy, SE1 6AG
- Notre Dame Roman Catholic Girls School, SE1 6EX
- Robert Browning School, SE17 1DQ
- St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, SE5 7TF
- St John's Walworth, CoE Primary School, SE17 1NQ
- St Jude's Church of England Primary School, SE1 6HA
- Victory School, SE17 1PT

South Bank University and London College of Communication students were given the opportunity to take part in the consultation as we arranged for an A1-sized panel with options A and B to be delivered and remain on site in their café areas for seven working days.

Youth Groups – aged between 8 to 18 years)

These groups were targeted through 100+ Community Club leaders. These leaders were notified of the consultation and asked to discuss the proposition with their students. Management within Children's Services were also contacted.

Sports and other organisations

Directors, Head of Department and Managers of these organisations were notified of the public consultation and meeting:

- Southwark PRO-ACTIVE Strategic Steering Group (SPASSGp) including representation from:
South Bank University, Sports Action Zone, Harris Girls Academy, Bacons College,
NHS Southwark, Community Action Southwark, Interactive*.

* During early October specific meetings were held with stakeholder representatives to see the two options and provide feedback to the consultation. Some of the above organisations attended and others in addition were:

- Interactive (Disability equalities in sport), Southwark Disablement Association, Sport England, London Swimming Association

The British Paralympic Association was kept informed as well as other Southwark Council key departments including;

- Head of Youth, Partnership Development, Strategy Development, Play Service, Leadership and Learning, Extended Services, Children's Services, Parks and Open Spaces, Healthy Southwark and Head of Leisure.

Southwark Council

Members of Parliament, the Mayor's Office, Cabinet Members, Ward Councillors for Cathedrals, Chaucer, Newington, East Walworth, Bishops and Princes, Senior Management Team, Project teams for Investing in Leisure and Regeneration, Children's Services, Corporate and Strategic communications, Libraries and Council offices were provided with business reply cards and kept informed.

Fusion

The senior management and centre teams at Fusion were kept informed throughout.

Block bookings at Elephant and Castle

The lead contacts for 57 block bookings were encouraged to take part in the consultation and attend the public meeting.

External Partners and Statutory Bodies

Three stakeholder representatives provided direct responses after reviewing the two proposed conceptual diagrams;

Sport England – Conal Stewart, Planning Manager

In general Sport England would wish to see the development of a new leisure centre based on the plans provided in **Option A** - with sports halls. We clarify this preference with further comment:-

Need for Sports Halls

It is important that a replacement sports hall is provided on the site. Sport England has, in collaboration with the Greater London Authority, completed a *Facilities Planning Model* run for sports halls needs across the capital. North Southwark is in an area of substantial unmet demand for sports halls and can ill-afford to lose any single sports hall. The model was also run for 2021 assuming all current commitments are built and the population growth in line with GLA forecasts. The need for sports halls is further exacerbated in the area. I have taken the opportunity to provide some documentation (in attachments) illustrating the sports halls issues relating to the London FPM and specifically the central sub-region to which Southwark belongs.

It would be quite a concern that the current users of the Sports Hall would be significantly displaced should they lose the sports hall entirely. It is very clear that six court sports hall provides much greater flexibility of use over a standard four court hall. The six court hall allows for several different types of sport to be played simultaneously on different configurations, and certainly allows for more advanced levels of competition.

There are also the financial benefits of sports halls to consider. The leisure centre could risk losing significant revenues from renting out the sports hall to groups as sports halls are substantially more lucrative in terms of rental value to clubs and private sports groups than swimming pools. The sports halls should be seen as an opportunity to help pay running costs of the pool facilities at the site.

Costs differences for building a six court hall in contrast to building a four court hall are small. IN summary, we would advise the council to look at all possibilities for trying to retain the six court hall on the site

Swimming Pool

It is very clear that there is substantial local support for pools and there is some evidence that a swimming pool in the northern area of the borough would be needed in advance of 2021. As you will see from the aggregate unmet demand (AUD) maps I have provided to you for Central London; whilst most of Central London is actually well furnished with pools, there is an area of south central London where AUD is higher and of course this would back the community consultation identifying community demand for a 25 m pool.

General Comments

The new leisure centre is to be built on a smaller footprint releasing land for development of a 14 storey building. It would seem a lost opportunity not to look at the potential for putting a third floor on half the building to save on space on the hall and pool floors. The council could look at the opportunity for providing a roof terrace and café and thereby save space on lower levels to provide the six court hall, swimming pools and generous changing space.

The option A provided at consultation does allow some scope for a little reconfiguration of the internal layout and does seem to suggest that space saving could be made to maximise the useable sport and leisure assets of the building.

PRO-ACTIVE Central London – Angus Robertson, Director

PRO-ACTIVE Central London is the strategic sport & physical activity partnership for the 7 Central London boroughs including Southwark. The Greater London Authority and Sport England have recently completed an analysis of sports facilities across London measuring provision and projected population/demand. This shows that in Central London, including the Elephant & Castle area, there is a significant deficit of both sports halls and swimming pools. This would support the provision of both a swimming pool and a sports hall a re-developed Elephant & Castle Leisure Centre.

In terms of the sports hall provision my view is that it would be a retrograde step if the current six badminton court sized sports hall is reduced to only a four court sized hall as proposed. Not only would current users be restricted by the availability of courts/space thus potentially reducing their activity but also it would lose one of the few larger sports halls in Central London.

Of the seventy-nine main sports halls in the Central London area only ten are of five courts size or larger, the vast majority being the four court hall size now proposed for E&C. Larger sports halls not only provide opportunities for a greater number of users and activities but also enable a much greater range of uses for sports and other community events e.g. basketball matches, school sports events, receptions, concerts, exhibitions etc. I would have thought this flexibility of use would be a desirable feature for a re-developed centre as well as giving a significantly greater scope for income generation.

It is not clear from the outline designs presented whether every option has been explored to maintain a larger sports hall. It seemed to me that a lot of space is currently allocated to plant etc which could be freed up for a larger sports hall. I would suggest that there is both a significant need and benefit to explore an option that could accommodate a six court sized sports hall as well as a swimming pool at a redeveloped Elephant & Castle Leisure Centre.

London Swimming Association – Colin Brown, Director

I would strongly support the development of a swimming pool in the Elephant Castle area and this is reflected in 'A Strategy to Get London Swimming 2008-2012+' which is our London version of our national whole sport plan – endorsed by both Sport England and the GLA.

I would recommend that moving floors are included in both pools if possible as this will increase the flexibility of use and revenue potential.

6. Campaign activity

Southwark News wrap

On Thursday 9 September Elephant and Castle regeneration sponsored a wrap on the outside cover of Southwark News (circulation 9000) informing readers of the consultation details and advising of the public consultation event on 14 September.

Additional contact

On Wednesday 8 September the 524 respondents that had replied online and stakeholder database were prompted to attend the public consultation meeting.

Public Consultation – 14 September 2010

Over 100 people attended the public consultation between 6pm to 8pm on a very rainy Tuesday evening. On display were two conceptual diagrams – option A and option B. The difference between the two schemes being the larger facility option A included a swimming pool and 4 court sports hall, with a smaller footprint for residential development, and option B was a smaller facility without a sports hall and a larger footprint for residential development.

The purpose for two options was to explore what is achievable within the budget and the consultation is to determine the genuine demand for a sports hall and swimming pool.

South Bank Employers Forum – 30 September 2010

Two representatives from the Elephant and Castle leisure centre consultation project attended this meeting with the two conceptual design options, business reply cards and frequently asked questions to discuss with the attendees.

Borough and Bankside Community Council meeting – 5 October 2010

Two representatives from the Elephant and Castle leisure centre consultation project attended this meeting with the two conceptual design options, business reply cards and frequently asked questions to discuss with the attendees. The meeting was held at Charles Dickens School and had over 100 attendees.

Walworth Community Council meeting – 6 October 2010

Two representatives from the Elephant and Castle leisure centre consultation project attended this meeting with the two conceptual design options, business reply cards and frequently asked questions to discuss with the attendees. The meeting was held at the Walworth Academy and had over 90 attendees.

7. Do you want to become an 'Interested Party'?

Of the **1316** respondents, **858** people indicated that they wanted to be kept informed via email and a further **334** that updates to be posted to them when they become available.

Even though the initial consultation has passed, the Council still wants to hear from all residents and customer if they have an opinion to voice or if they want to be kept informed.

To register your interest in this project please visit the Southwark Council web site at www.southwark.gov.uk/elephantleisure – the form takes approximately one minute to complete.

Details will be posted on the web site as more information becomes available on further consultation, notice of key dates and special events as part of the redevelopment programme, however if you register your interest then we will notify you directly via your chosen method of communication – post or email.

8. What happens next?

The results of this consultation report will be read by the Cabinet members in November 2010, and a decision will be announced on the forward plans for the redevelopment of the leisure facility. It is anticipated that further design work will commence early 2011 with further consultation exercised carried out prior to a formal planning application being submitted.

It is our aim for everyone in Southwark to have great leisure facilities and we want to make sure we provide the facilities local people want to use. The excellent response rate of over 1300 replies to this consultation is a strong foundation on which to continue involving local people in the future about the redevelopment.

If you hold a Fusion 'Lifestyle' membership you can use any of the Fusion centres in Southwark

- [Dulwich Leisure Centre](#) – pool re-opened in September 2010
2B Crystal Palace Road, SE22 5HB – Tel: 020 8693 1833
- [Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Sports Facility](#)
St Georges Road, SE1 6ER – Tel: 020 7735 3294
- [Peckham Pulse Healthy Living Centre](#)
10 Melon Road, SE15 5QN – Tel: 020 7525 4999
- [Seven Islands Leisure Centre](#)
Lower Road, Rotherhithe, SE16 2TU – Tel: 020 7237 3296

To see a list of opening times and all leisure centres in Southwark visit: www.fusion-lifestyle.com

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