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Suffolk Coastal District Council

Felixstowe Leisure Overview

Public Consultation

January 2018



INTRODUCTION

Suffolk Coastal District Council wants to provide increased access to quality leisure facilities and activities as part of our commitment to getting more people fit and active. One of the ten priorities set out in our East Suffolk Business Plan is to provide high-quality, modern leisure centres that the whole community can enjoy.

Building on our leisure redevelopment programme, which started in 2016, leisure provision in Felixstowe follows the pathway set through the upgrading of Deben and Leiston Leisure Centres.

Having recently completed an initial feasibility study we are now presenting our findings to support the next stage, which is to consult with residents, the wider public, sports clubs and other interested groups before we move on to more detailed planning and development of the project.

There will be further opportunity to provide feedback at subsequent stages of the programme. Please get in touch with us via leisure@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

The Sports Consultancy has been appointed by Suffolk Coastal District Council as an independent consultant to undertake an options appraisal for the proposed redevelopment of leisure provision in Felixstowe.

The Sports Consultancy come highly recommended by Sport England and have been involved in many high profile new leisure facilities across the Country that are now either open or under construction.

The Felixstowe development provides an opportunity to explore options to provide an exciting leisure centre that will serve both Felixstowe and be a destination facility within the district.

The proposals for Felixstowe are part of a wider Leisure Strategy that was developed in 2014 and sets out how improvements to our leisure provision will be made across the district over the next 10 years. Deben Leisure Centre was the first to be upgraded (due to re-open in the summer of 2018), followed by Leiston Leisure Centre (work starts Autumn 2018).

Current Provision in Felixstowe

The existing Felixstowe Leisure Centre was built in 1985 and Brackenbury Leisure Centre, also in Felixstowe, operated by the Council from the 1990's. Both facilities are in need of significant money to be spent on them to maintain their current offer.

Therefore, through the Leisure Redevelopment Programme, the Council have the opportunity to consider a range of options to provide Felixstowe with a sustainable state of the art facility that local residents can be proud of and provides a destination focus for tourism opportunities in the town.

As part of the options appraisal carried out by The Sports Consultancy, initial consultation has been undertaken with a number of key stakeholders. The consultation investigates where the best place to site a new leisure centre would be, including the existing Felixstowe Leisure Centre site, the Brackenbury site and also new sites in the northern area of the town.

Following this stage, the Council now wishes to get the local community's views on their priorities for leisure provision to help us with the next steps. We want to highlight that no decisions have been made on where a new leisure facility will be placed. This consultation will help explore the options and make sure we get the best leisure facilities for Felixstowe.

The Sports Consultancy

The Sports Consultancy was founded in 2006 and is a leading company in undertaking feasibility studies and options appraisals for new leisure facilities. In the past 5 years, we have been involved in many new facilities that are either now open or under construction, including Flitwick Leisure Centre, Oriam (Edinburgh), The Castle in Southwark, East Cambridgeshire District Leisure Centre, Bromsgrove Leisure Centre, Elmbridge Xcel Sports Hub and Dover Leisure Centre. Our experience and expertise will be brought to this project to assist the Council in finding the most appropriate solution for Felixstowe.

RESULTS OF THE INITIAL STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The Sports Consultancy has already consulted with a range of key stakeholders. These have included the Council’s leisure facility operator, Places for People Leisure, our development partner, Pulse Fitness, Sport England and key Sports National Governing Bodies. Their work also looked at the Council’s Built Sports Facility strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy.

However, this is just the start of a long conversation with local people about what they want and how we can deliver the best leisure centre possible within an affordable budget.

The key points are summarised in the following table.

Stage	Summary
Council’s Built Facilities Assessment	Suggested that sports halls, swimming pools and indoor bowls have adequate levels of provision to meet existing need at present; however, there would be a small undersupply in each case in the future. There is a demand for health and fitness facilities, and the Suffolk Coastal area has the lowest provision amongst both its neighbours in Suffolk and similar authorities across the country.
Latent Demand Assessment	Based on a 2-mile catchment area from the centre of Felixstowe Town, the estimated unmet demand for health and fitness memberships is 2,049. This would equate to a gym of circa 85 stations in the new centre.
Playing Pitch Strategy	Indicated a clear need for 3.5 additional 3G (third generation) pitches in the district.
Places for People (Council’s leisure management partner)	A 6-lane swimming pool suffices unless there is a clear demand for competitions. A learner pool with moveable floor is important, and the leisure water should have shallow water. 85 stations for the health & fitness suite is the right level of provision.

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Stage	Summary
	A 6-court sports hall would be preferable so as to be able to accommodate trampolining. The existing soft play area works well in the current leisure centre.
Pulse (Council's development partner)	Emphasised the need for the facility to look beyond just the traditional provision of a community wet and dry centre, particularly if it is to draw in users from a wider area and act as a gateway to the town. Linked community facilities such as a doctor's surgery/GP referral unit and a library could also be considered, as well as treatment rooms/space for letting to concessions of various types.
Suffolk Sport	The ageing population should be taken into consideration, with suitable provision provided. The elderly population means that transport links are important. Suffolk Sport believe an 8-lane pool would attract more visitors to the leisure centre.

Stage	Summary
Felixstowe Town Council	Emphasised the importance of leisure aspects such as a Clip and Climb and water leisure features. They would like a centre that attracts tourists and families.
Sport England	The financial sustainability will be important for Sport England, in addition to the consideration of risks. Furthermore, the Built Strategy Needs report should be used as a basis for the facility mix.
Consultation - National Governing Bodies (NGBs)	Swim England expressed their support for the Council going forward with an 8-lane pool as there appears to be a demand for regional competition venues in the area. However, the Council would need to consider seating if they were to be able to host regional competitions in the new centre. In terms of netball, none of the clubs in Felixstowe have issues with the current facilities. However, England Netball highlighted that indoor facilities are increasingly being used for netball, so the sports hall would be valuable for recreational programmes. Badminton England has Felixstowe as a priority

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	area for development in the county. They would like to expand the Felixstowe Badminton Club, and would like the new leisure centre to be as suitable for badminton purposes as possible.

NEXT STEPS

We now want to hear your views on what is important to you in terms of leisure provision in Felixstowe.

In the first instance we are asking you to complete an online questionnaire, which is available from 19th February 2018.

Please take the time to complete this as your views are important to us to help us provide Felixstowe with truly exciting leisure facilities that are fit for the future.

If you want to provide further comments, or are part of a sports or community organisation, who have specific information to highlight, please contact the Leisure Team by emailing leisure@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk Coastal District Council also produces a Leisure Redevelopment newsletter, usually issued quarterly. If you would like to be on the mailing list for this, please email Leisure@eastsoffolk.gov.uk. The newsletter will keep you up to date with the whole redevelopment programme with progress on Deben Leisure Centre, Leiston Leisure Centre and the Felixstowe options.