Feasibility Study
Littlehampton Swimming & Sports Centre

Summary Report
18 June 2014
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1. Introduction
Background and Context

Littlehampton Swimming and Sports Centre (LSSC) was built in 1982 and is now over 30 years old. It occupies a prime site to the south of the town overlooking the sea on the Sea Road, adjacent to a housing development, a boating lake and a pitch and putt golf course.

Given the age and condition of the facility, its future is uncertain. Therefore, in December 2013, Arun District Council (the Council) appointed The Sports Consultancy (TSC) to complete a feasibility study to recommend a preferred option for the future of the leisure centre, exploring the options of a new build facility and a refurbishment/extension of the existing facility.

The Council’s vision for a leisure centre to serve Littlehampton is one that:

- is modern and fit for purpose; the destination of choice for residents to enjoy a wide range of affordable activities
- supports the health and wellbeing needs of the community
- offers a management model that will secure a suitable return on investment and a predictable revenue stream for a facilities management company to enable a substantial reduction in the current management fee.
Background and Context

In 2006, Inspire Leisure was set up as a Trust to manage LSSC, together with Arun Leisure Centre and a range of other leisure facilities in the district. This contract will expire in March 2016 and it is the intention of the Council to ensure the recommendations for a leisure centre in Littlehampton help secure best value for the management contract.

Condition surveys undertaken in 2011 identified a range of works to be undertaken on the building over the next 10 years and its income generating potential is likely to decline as the building ages.

Against this backdrop, the Council is keen to explore the most appropriate long term solution to deliver fit for purpose leisure provision in the district.

The current scope of facilities within the centre includes:

- 6-lane 25 metre pool
- Learner pool
- 50-station fitness suite
- Fitness studio
- 5-court hall in separate dome
- Vending area
- 2 multi-purpose / meeting rooms

As part of this study, TSC has explored the most appropriate facility mix to best serve the growing local catchment in the longer term based on supply and demand analysis, strategic consultation and research.

We have assessed the viability of the options from a financial perspective, both in the terms of ongoing operating costs and the capital costs of delivering new or refurbished facilities, as part of a full viability assessment. We have prepared business plans for each of the following options, based on detailed operating assumptions and capital costs:

- Option 1: Do Nothing
- Option 2: Refurbishment
- Option 3: Extension
- Option 4: New Build on Existing Site
- Option 5: New Build on Alternative Site
2. Current State Review
Introduction

The facility was built in 1982 and was managed in-house by the Council, until 2006, when responsibility for its operation was transferred to a leisure trust created by the Council, Inspire Leisure, as part of a district-wide leisure portfolio that also includes a leisure centre in Felpham, the Windmill Theatre, and various outdoor facilities. Inspire’s contract expires in March 2016.

A condition survey, based on a visual inspection was undertaken in 2011. The purpose of the condition survey was to highlight any visually evident defects and provide budget costs to repair these areas and also items requiring future maintenance expenditure on the timescales of 0 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years and 11 to 25 years.

It was recommended that a budget of over £100,000 be set aside by the Council to cover essential structural repairs and replacement items in the short term (0-5 years from the time of the survey) and over £260,000 be budgeted for various works between 6-10 years. Given the age of the building, not surprisingly, the surveyor could not commit to providing building-related estimated budget provisions beyond a 10-year period.
Design, Operational Merits and Location

LSSC is typical of the wet and dry leisure centres designed in the early 1980s. We have reviewed the location, layout, design and specification with a specialist leisure architect. Our comments are set out below:

**Pros**
- Proximity to the sea
- Parking
- Adjacency to outdoor leisure areas (boating lake and golf)
- Located in a benign market with only one major competing facility.

**Cons**
- Building is over 30 years old
- Not particularly identifiable externally as a leisure centre
- Offers no views to the sea
- Detachment from the main population hubs to the north
- Limited internal views into key activity areas
- Constrained entrance area
- Separation of the sports hall with rest of leisure activity areas
- Limited front of house activities
- Non-intuitive layout
- Sports hall is not compliant with Sport England standards
- Function rooms disconnected from entrance and inward facing
- Gym and studios are inadequate and hidden.
3. Future Facility Options
Refurbishment/extension of existing centre or to build a new centre

As part of the study, TSC explored the most appropriate facility mix to best serve the growing local catchment in the longer term based on supply and demand analysis, consultation and research.

The recommended facility mix is based on a detailed needs assessment and compromises:

- 8-lane 25-metre pool (fully DDA compliant)
- Learner pool (moveable floor and fully DDA compliant)
- 80-85 station gym (circa 450 m²)
- 1 dance studio (50 capacity with capability for dividing into 2 spaces)
- 1 spinning studio (25 capacity)
- Café (30 capacity)
- Multi purpose / meeting room

Whilst there is not a demonstrable evidence base to support the reprovision of the existing facilities in the LSSC dome in terms of badminton courts, there may be a case for providing additional multi-purpose hall space, depending on the future availability other Council-owned facilities elsewhere in the district.

Do Nothing Option

Retaining the existing facility in its current scope is not considered a viable option as it will not deliver the recommended facility mix, and the condition surveys indicate that the building is reaching the end of its design life.
4. Site Options Appraisal
Site Options Appraisal

As part of this study a number of potential sites have been considered for a new leisure centre within Littlehampton, including of course, its current location.

We have applied a ‘first filter’ to help shortlist the sites for further consideration. This is summarised below, and maps of each of the sites are contained in Appendix 5.

12 sites were dismissed, each for specific reasons, including lack of visibility, likelihood of planning objections, the size of the site, and poor access.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Size (m²)</th>
<th>Initial view</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brookfield Park</td>
<td>78,000</td>
<td>Significant cost for access route</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Caffyn's Field</td>
<td>11,641</td>
<td>Planning objections likely</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Daisyfields</td>
<td>29,290</td>
<td>Contaminated land and poor visibility</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Daisyfields - adjacent WSCC land</td>
<td>33,848</td>
<td>Ideally located adjacent to planned new road</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>East Green</td>
<td>14,322</td>
<td>Ideally located on seafront site</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Health Centre</td>
<td>12,386</td>
<td>Site too small</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Langmead Recreation Ground</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>Site difficult to access, surrounded by residential, and poor visibility</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lashmar Recreation Ground</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>Site difficult to access, surrounded by residential, and poor visibility</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Littlehampton Leisure Centre</td>
<td>23,777</td>
<td>No continuity of service but existing site</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Maltravers Road</td>
<td>15,184</td>
<td>Tight site and poor visibility</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mill Lane (opposite Virgin Active)</td>
<td>68,689</td>
<td>Remote access and too close to key competitor</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Norfolk Gardens - Pitch &amp; Putt</td>
<td>33,740</td>
<td>Ideally located on seafront site</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Norfolk Gardens - Sea Road Crazy Golf</td>
<td>19,120</td>
<td>Ideally located on seafront site</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Police Station</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>Too small</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Rosemead</td>
<td>13,321</td>
<td>Tight site and already earmarked for residential development</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Southfields Recreation Ground</td>
<td>36,755</td>
<td>Poor visibility, poor access and surrounded by housing</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>West Green</td>
<td>23,844</td>
<td>Ideally located on seafront site</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Worthing Road Allotments</td>
<td>48,000</td>
<td>Ideally located on the junction of the future new road</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Worthing Road Recreation Ground</td>
<td>11,871</td>
<td>Too narrow</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>St Martins Car Park</td>
<td>11304</td>
<td>Ideally located in town centre on prominent site</td>
<td>For consideration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Site Options Appraisal

Based on each site’s score in each of the suggested evaluation criteria, site adjacent to the Daisyfields caravan park is the preferred site. The site next to Daisyfields is owned by West Sussex County Council and we understand they are looking to develop the site for residential development. We would recommend exploring the potential for a land swap deal with the Arun District Council-owned Daisyfields site. The site would be ideal for a number of reasons but crucially: (1) it is closer to the Littlehampton residents in greater need – the Council’s target groups, (2) it will occupy a high profile location on the crossroads of the A259 and the proposed new north-south access route, and (3) it will be close to the planned new housing development to the north of the district.

![Table]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Proposed Criteria</th>
<th>Criteria weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Likelihood of achieving planning consent</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Allows continuity of service during build phase</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Revenue generating potential</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Necessity for an iconic (and expensive) facility</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Proximity to local neighbourhood improvement areas</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Potential for capital receipt (net of acquisition costs)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ownership (and likelihood of acquiring site)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ground conditions</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total weighted score</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Site ideally located on what will be the junction of a planned new north-south access road and the existing A259. Would bring the leisure centre towards the more deprived wards and close to the proposed new housing development to the north of the town. Site owned by West Sussex County Council, who have earmarked it for residential development, but there is the potential for a land swap with the ADC-owned Daisyfields site. Ground conditions unknown.
- Greenfield site on Seafront in prominent location. According to ADC planning team, there is likely to be considerable political opposition to the development of the site. Similar to the current leisure centre site, it is somewhat remote from the main Littlehampton catchment. Likely to be an expensive ‘iconic’ design due to its location.
- No capital receipt achievable and service would be withdrawn for 12-18 months during build phase. Site is somewhat remote from the main Littlehampton catchment. Likely to receive political opposition for the development of an open space already used for leisure. Site is somewhat remote from the main Littlehampton catchment.
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- Land owned by Littlehampton Town Council and unlikely to be supported due to removal of the majority of the allotment space which is likely to need to be replaced elsewhere in the town.
- Would enjoy prominent position in the town centre on land owned by ADC. Would remove the majority of parking spaces in a well-located town centre car park.
Site Options Appraisal

Preferred site – WSCC land adjacent to Daisyfields

Initial consultation we have undertaken with Planning has been positive regarding the potential for a leisure centre on the site.
6. Financial Modelling and Affordability
Revenue Projections and Affordability

Operating Business Plan Summaries

TSC undertook a detailed modelling exercise to indicate the likely future financial implications of each option over a ten year operating period. This indicated that building a new centre would provide an average annual financial benefit to the Council of around £500,000 compared to Option 1 (Do Nothing) and Option 2 (Refurbishment) largely due to an expected increase in user numbers, as well as the lower costs associated with operating a new and more efficient building. The extension option was expected to improve the annual financial position by £300,000 compared to Do Nothing.

Capital Costs

The cost of building a new leisure centre with the recommended facility mix is estimated to be £11.5m, including an allowance for contingency and professional fees.

Affordability

The only affordable option is building on an alternative site as the anticipated capital receipt from the sale of the Littlehampton Leisure Centre site will be required to part-fund the construction of a new building. Moreover, building on the existing site is not possible without closing the centre, which will leave residents without access to leisure facilities for around 18 months.
9. Recommendations & Next Steps
Recommendations and Next Steps

• This report recommends that Littlehampton Swimming and Sports Centre be replaced with a new facility on a site adjacent to Daisyfields caravan site, just off the A259. Neither the Do Nothing nor Refurbishment options are considered viable medium or long-term solutions given the age of the facility. Extending the existing building is unlikely to represent value for money, and rebuilding the centre on its existing site is not affordable. Moreover, these latter two options do not allow continuity of service whilst development work is being undertaken.

• The recommended facility mix is based on a detailed needs assessment and compromises:
  - 25m 8-lane swimming pool (representing an additional 2 lanes compared to the current provision)
  - A larger learner pool with a moveable floor (to allow for greater flexibility and to optimise usage)
  - 80-85 station health and fitness gym
  - Café
  - Spinning studio and dance studio
  - Multi purpose / meeting room.

• Our research indicates that there is an overprovision of sports hall space in the catchment and it is not recommended that one is provided in the new centre. Moreover, a scheme with a sports hall is not affordable, based on the assumptions we have used to base the operating business plan and the capital costs.

• However, the option of potentially including multi-purpose hall space could be considered if other funding streams (e.g. Section 106 contributions) were identified for this project.

• Given the benign competitive market in Littlehampton, and the strong demand for leisure, it is expected that a new leisure centre will attract significantly more users and operate at a profit, whilst providing high quality leisure opportunities for the district’s population; a significant improvement on the current facility.