

Leisure Centre FAQs

1. Can the council refurbish the existing Leisure Centre?

Parts of the existing Leisure Centre were built in the 1960's and it was later extended in the late 1980's. It is now nearing the end of its useful life. Condition surveys have indicated that a considerable amount of investment would be needed to extend its life much beyond 2021, which is just not cost effective and would cause major disruption to current users.

A refurbished centre would have a more limited lifespan (approx. 15-20 years), be less energy efficient and not offer the same range of facilities as a purpose built new-build centre which can deliver the required facilities mix. The site is not large enough by itself to provide the range of facilities now needed to meet current and future customer leisure requirements. We therefore need to progress plans to build a new future proofed flexible facility that is fit for purpose and meets user expectations for the next 30-40 years. In order to meet modern day standards in terms of energy efficiency and minimising the site's carbon footprint, it is necessary to improve the building's fabric. This helps in improving the thermal efficiency (air tightness, heat loss and cooling) of the building and reduces the need for higher levels of energy consumption. This could not be achieved through refurbishing the existing premises. In fact it is both time consuming and often more expensive to adapt existing buildings particularly when significant mechanical, electrical and technological changes need to be made. The pool replacement is a major example. Also, if the existing centre were to be refurbished, it would need to be closed down for at least 18 months and this would lead to a major loss of amenity to Spelthorne residents; there are over 500,000 visits to the centre each year. Ultimately, we want to build a facility that minimises energy consumption, provides flexible facilities which can be expanded to meet the needs of today's and future generations.

2. Will we still be able to access the existing Leisure Centre and car park during construction?

We are planning a phased development approach, with the new Leisure Centre being built first on the proposed new site and the new car park then being developed following the demolition of the existing centre. It is our intention to ensure the current Leisure Centre remains operational until the new one opens. There is a possibility that some of the current car parking may be affected when the existing centre is demolished. The exact details of this will only become clearer once a main contractor has been appointed to undertake the construction works.

3. How long will construction take/when are you planning to start?

Construction is anticipated to take 18-20 months from when we start on site. If we are successful in obtaining planning permission later this year, we would anticipate works starting on site around the end of this year and finishing in late 2022.

4. Where are Leisure Centre users and construction workers going to park during construction?

The work will be phased to ensure that the current Leisure Centre car park can remain open for as long as possible, however some of the current car parking may be affected, during construction of the new centre and demolition of the old buildings. The existing Leisure

Centre will need to be demolished once the new facility is completed and before the existing car parking area can be extended. Therefore there is a possibility of some disruption and a reduction in capacity for a few months. Any development will be subject to a construction and environmental management plan (CEMP) which will set out good construction practice which the development will need to be carried out under.

5. How will the construction affect access to the current Leisure Centre and Council Offices?

There will be increased traffic movements with workers and deliveries during the construction process. However, deliveries in particular will be coordinated through a construction management plan to minimise impacts at peak times. The busiest periods for users of the current Leisure Centre are typically outside normal working hours so the prospects of clashes with construction traffic will be minimised.

6. Will a new Leisure Centre cause an increase in traffic?

The enhanced facilities offered may generate more visits and result in a little more traffic. However because of its central location it is close to good public transport links, so the impact should be minimal. The Green Travel Plan will include details on reducing the carbon footprint of visitors by encouraging more sustainable forms of transport, plus walking and cycling and ensuring that there is adequate and safe cycle storage. It can also include encouraging car sharing by visitors. We will be working to ensure it does not affect residents in adjacent residential roads by ensuring that the increased parking provision meets the needs of any increased car based visitors. The Highways Authority will be consulted as part of any planning application and a traffic assessment undertaken. As with the current Leisure Centre, vehicle access will only be from Knowle Green. A Transport Statement will be provided as part of the planning application.

7. Has any of the information from the previous consultation been used to inform the new proposals?

Yes; very much so. The data we received from over 2,300 respondents was used to inform the proposed facilities mix.

For example, responses showed that the most supported facility was for flexible squash courts and our plan includes three new squash courts with moveable walls so they can be used for alternative uses. Other core preferences included the swimming facilities and parking. We also received feedback from disability empowerment and access groups indicating a significant need for improved facilities. Therefore we propose making the facility dementia friendly as part of our efforts to optimise access and make it fully inclusive. 62% of those questioned would like improved facilities for children and young people which aligned with our plans to propose a soft play area, interactive climbing facility and a splash zone pad.

8. Why are you still putting in sports pitches when the previous consultation responses indicated that people did not want them?

The initial customer consultation showed there was less interest in artificial grass 3G pitches in any new Leisure Centre. However, independent studies have shown a clear need for such pitches in the borough. Although we are unable to incorporate full size 3G pitches on the

proposed site, we have designed the new centre so that we can still incorporate 4 small 3G pitches to help meet this demand.

The benefits of 3G pitches are: that they provide an all-weather surface, are environmentally friendly, can be used frequently with less maintenance required and reduce the risk of injury to users through their surface design. In line with the FA (Football Association) vision for football we see this as a “radical new approach to grassroots football”. Third generation or 3G artificial grass pitches are recognised as durable, safe, year-round playing surfaces, able to withstand intensive use and all kinds of weather. They mean more people can benefit from all the associated social and health benefits of physical activity. These pitches will also bring financial benefits and are needed to assist with the viability of the proposed new centre.

9. Are the tennis courts and basketball area across the road going to be retained?

Yes – we have no intention of removing them. These have in fact only recently been upgraded.

10. Will the new Leisure Centre pose a flood risk?

The site is situated in a location with medium risks of flooding, part of the site area is recognised as Flood Zone 2. It is not uncommon to develop in such areas. Any new buildings constructed will be designed to fully mitigate any additional risks of flooding. We will be working closely with the Environment Agency to ensure our proposals meet their criteria. A Flood Risk Assessment would be submitted as part of any planning application and this would demonstrate how the building would mitigate any impacts it may create.

11. Are there any biodiversity issues associated with the site? Has an environmental impact assessment been done?

Ecological surveys will be a part of the planning application. It is unlikely that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be required. However during design works we will be consulting with the planners. An EIA scoping will be submitted to the planners as a formality. However as this is a small project in terms of EIA needs, it is not likely to be a requirement. A ‘Habitats Survey’ is likely to be required as part of the planning application. The existing grass has limited biodiversity contribution, however studies will be done and the Council will consider ways of enhancing biodiversity following the survey as part of our planning application.

12. Has any analysis of current usage of the proposed site been undertaken?

Yes, we have undertaken a two week survey during term time and two weeks in the school holidays.

13. Will the Council be making a profit by selling the current Leisure Centre site?

No. The construction costs for the proposed new Leisure Centre will be significantly greater than the value of the current Leisure Centre site and we have no intention to sell this. As the plans indicate, this area will become the new car park for the centre.

14. How much is a new Leisure Centre going to cost?

We will know what the centre will cost once detailed design works have been completed and a full competitive tender process has been conducted. At this point in time, it would not be prudent for the Council to publicly divulge what it thinks the centre may cost before we have gone out to tender. That being said, it's our intention to ensure value for money is obtained.

15. How is the Council going to pay for the new Leisure Centre?

The cost of the Leisure Centre will be funded by the Council borrowing from either the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) at relatively low rates of fixed interest or from other sources. Whilst a modern Leisure Centre with a wide range of facilities will generate more income per annum than the current leisure centre, the additional income will not be sufficient to fully cover the annual financing costs of the loan. There will therefore be a net pressure on the Council's Revenue Budget as a result of the new Leisure Centre. The Council will look to offset any deficit by seeking to generate additional income streams from elsewhere in the Borough.

16. Do you have any other plans for the alternative sites you looked at?

No, the other sites have been ruled out and there are no future plans.

17. Will there be new homes built on the existing Leisure Centre site?

Under our plans the site will be used for a car park. The Council has recently closed its consultation on the proposed site allocations for housing for the next 15 years for the new Local Plan. Details of this can be found on www.spelthorne.gov.uk/localplan

18. Will the Council building be demolished?

Absolutely not. Our Council Office will remain where it is and will not be sold.

19. Will Knowle Green day nursery be affected?

No, this is not part of the proposals. As far as we are concerned, it is business as usual for them. We will do our utmost to ensure there is minimal disruption to them during the works.

20. Will the nearby NHS Centre be affected?

The NHS health centre is an important stakeholder. Our proposals do not affect these facilities in any way.

21. Will Staines Bowling Club be affected by the proposed new location?

No

22. Are you still going to be able to build the new centre by 2021?

As a consequence of having to review alternative sites, completion of the new centre will go into late 2022. However this does not present any issues in terms of loss of provision as the existing Leisure Centre will continue to operate until the new one opens.

23. Was this not the obvious site to build the Leisure Centre on in the first place, rather than proposing to build something on Staines Park?

The site we are now proposing to use for the new Leisure Centre had been considered as an option prior to our decision to consult on our original proposals for Staines Park. However it was discounted as it was too small to incorporate the wider mix of facilities we planned at that time, including the full size sports pitch. In order to open up more location options for the new centre we undertook a facility review process and as a result we are no longer proposing to incorporate the full-size 3G pitch. The proposed centre will now include four small-sided 3G pitches. The proposed design for the site makes best use of the more limited space we have, incorporating these pitches on the roof of the centre.

In addition to having to compromise on the facilities within the centre, building the Leisure Centre on this alternative site means that construction will now be more complex (due to having a phased development and having to keep open the existing on-site Leisure Centre) and it will take longer to deliver the new facility. We do, however, strongly believe that this is now our best option and that this proposal will address the main concerns raised by residents during the last consultation exercise.

24. Do we actually have a say in this or has the Leisure Centre been decided on?

We have listened to your feedback with regards to the preferred location and we have identified this site as the best option available because it is large enough to accommodate a new Leisure Centre with the modified facilities mix, that is close to the existing centre, easily accessible by public transport, owned by the Council and not on green belt land. We are welcoming comments on the proposals which will be fully considered before we decide how to proceed. We do however think it will be an asset that will benefit the community.

25. Is this site in the Green Belt?

No

26. Why haven't you offered us an alternative site?

Listening to the feedback from the last consultation – it was made clear that you did not want us to take away space in the park or other green space for a new Leisure Centre. The only possible alternatives to our current proposal that met the revised criteria are parks/recreation grounds and allotment sites. We believe it would be better to develop on the proposed site to meet residents' expectations and requirements, particularly as the usage survey demonstrates its use as very limited – at present it is primarily used as a short cut to the Leisure Centre for council workers.

It was necessary to identify a location which is:

- already owned by the Council;
- large enough to accommodate all the facilities required in the new centre;
- not within the Green Belt;

- centrally located, easily accessible by a large number of the borough's residents (on foot, by public transport and by car).

It was also necessary to consider a number of other factors which could affect the location of the site including:

- the site's proximity to the Council's Sunbury Leisure and the current Spelthorne Leisure Centre;
- other planning issues and environmental site constraints;
- any potential need to relocate existing site uses/occupiers;
- visibility of the site, synergies with surrounding land uses and the Council's regeneration plans;
- the sensitivity of the site to any proposed development.