

Appendix A – Feedback from Groups

Full comments from the Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups on the Warwick District Council Leisure Development Programme briefing on Castle Farm Recreation Centre and Abbey Fields Swimming Pool.

The Green Group

The answers to your questions are mainly to do with the Pool proposals. We are broadly happy with the completed Warwick District developments, but take into account Andrew Day's comments for future developments given in May.

Green Party concerns lie in these areas:

- 1) consultation and transparency
- 2) sustainability and futureproofing in the light of the Climate Emergency Motion
- 3) integrated non-Carbon Transport in the town: optimal access to both sites by bike and foot given the happily compact nature of Kenilworth and the appalling congestion on Brookside Road adjacent to Castle Farm.
- 4) when the design comes along we want to see Abbey Fields Pool sitting as unobtrusively as possible in its surroundings.

1. Which elements of the Proposals at Castle Farm and Abbey Fields are the most appropriate:

- Full refurbishment/rebuild of a very tired and dated building of unsympathetic design/materials within Abbey Fields.
- At present, we do not have any issue with the Castle Farm proposals but are uninformed and do need a briefing on this at Kenilworth Town Council, see below.
- The viewing area looking over Abbey Fields Lake/National Trust style cafe.
- The opening glass system which gives an impression of swimming outside.

Thank you for providing the drawings and costs of the "In/Out Option as requested further to our meeting of 18/6/19, and we take on board the uneconomic operational costs of this for the reasons given to us on 10.7.19.

2. About which elements do you have concerns:

- a)** Consultation: We fully appreciate Culture and Leisure's assurance that a correct and usual consultation was completed (Oct/Nov '18) according to the Guidelines.
- Nonetheless, this is a Public Relations problem because it is a far more sensitive development than others in the District and this may not have been fully understood at the time. Only a small fraction of residents' views were asked for and the response rate was low.
 - We strongly hold the view that consultations at grassroots level must occur much earlier, with a broader ask of residents on their views using simple diagrams/plans, e.g sampling users as they enter the pool with 3-4

questions, the voluntary providers of swimming lessons, etc, in addition to the bigger players to avoid later dissent.

- As a way forward and to resolve this issue, it may not be too late to devise a cost-effective, more democratic information sharing exercise. For example:
 - a) Consultation could be considered by a small but broader group of Stakeholders to dilute the influence of one particular group (a couple from RKL, school users, volunteer swimming instructors, Cycleways, Sustrans, swimming clubs and others tbd). Perhaps at Jubilee House and facilitated by, though not attended by, Councillors.
 - b) A MORI style poll in an effort to be properly representative (to the best of our recollection, Andy Jones suggested this on 18.6.19 at our briefing)
 - c) WDC public information "stall" at a busy place with simple plans and pictorials

Could we as Councillors offer to facilitate a meeting?

- b)** Access and disruption issues to Abbey Fields when building commences.
- c)** Disabled access given the difficulties of the present arrangements at St Nicholas Warwick.

3. What other matters relating to these proposals are particularly important to your Group

- Sustainability and Futureproofing in the light of the Climate Emergency Motion July '19
- Transport Infrastructure: Children should be able to access both sites more independently. Must be linked to healthy travel options and be part of an integrated non-carbon travel plan. The missing Sustrans 52 cycle link should be completed. Car Parking: should not be extended on the Abbey Fields Site. Good links to the Castle Farm Development – in fact it is only a couple of hundred metres away. Good low carbon transport links from the new railway station to make a proper active family day out
- Carbon Neutral Energy Usage: Executive recommendation is "carefully considered" only and needs to be updated and extended to consider eco-standard environmental building standards and energy performance.

4. What other information would you like to receive?

- We have a Town Council of which only 4/19 are previous incumbents, and who have not seen anything of the plans of either Castle Farm or Abbey Fields, so we would appreciate a briefing.

- The plans and pictorial views in order to share between ourselves to discuss in depth prior to the above.

5. What other considerations do you think officers should investigate in relation to these proposals

- Alternative semi-wild swimming provision in Warwick District (cf. Chagford Pool, Devon, Beckenham Place – (council run) see Guardian 13.7.19)
- BAUM system of pool cleaning
- Elements of Design – sympathetic to the surroundings, especially the roof materials which are visible from everywhere given the topography of the site.
- Ecologically sound design and construction (discreet, modern PVs eg tiles, air pumps, a “green” roof)
- A National Trust style café/restaurant.

The Labour Group

Whilst I can see how impressive the plans for Abbey Fields are, I cannot help have some doubts about how the “open doors” aspect at the smaller pool will really work when it is an area also open to the main pool.

There will be many times when to maintain heat, protect from windy conditions etc. will be used as reasons not to open doors. It will become a point of complaint either way. There will be those wanting doors open and not. EA will also have control over this so decision may be made for financial reasons. Lots of possibilities for conflict of interest.

I am supportive of a full-sized lido that becomes a major attraction for Kenilworth. Historically it was an outdoor pool and would be a unique and positive draw to the park. Having lived in Germany where direct swim into lidos are very common and an attraction all year round I can definitely recommend it as a wonderful leisure activity even in the snow! A health & wellbeing experience I still remember fondly. Costs of running a 25 x 10 m pool and methods of heating that hit our new ‘climate emergency’ policies as they emerge will need to be considered.

The survey to ascertain the wish to retain the outdoor pool was a little confusing. The current pool would not be as attractive a prospect to visit so it is currently a little difficult to compare. Current usage figures would be difficult to rely on, my daughter has travelled to Kenilworth on the train with friends specifically to visit the outdoor pool and been refused entry. This was a good weather day a couple of months ago. My faith that EA will produce valid attendance figures is somewhat challenged.

For Castle Farm, again your plans are exciting and positive, brimming with major improvements. My concerns lies with access through residential streets that has always been busy when I attend football games and more often than not difficult to park. This area will become even busier for residents. I live in Leamington so did have to travel by car to away games as many people will in the district. These days are now over for me but the nature of football leagues has not

changed I am sure. With increased attendance to the improved facilities on the site this will be a continued contentious point.

I would like to thank you for the very professional and detailed briefings and information.

The Liberal Democrat Group

Which elements of the proposals at Castle Farm and Abbey Fields are the most appropriate?

We are pleased that the Leisure facilities within Kenilworth are recognised as being in need of development. Both sites are now quite old and are showing considerable wear and tear and are in need of redevelopment.

Whilst we have concerns about the proposals for the Abbey Fields site in particular we are pleased that the proposals have taken into account the sensitive nature of the surrounding site and its position within Kenilworth.

We are also supportive of the need to conduct the Castle Farm project as a 'Rebuild' rather than 'Redevelopment'.

About which elements do you have concerns?

Castle Farm Development

The immediate concern with Castle Farm has been the lack of engagement with the community, in particular the immediate neighbours. From our conversations many are in general supportive of the development but have concerns and questions which as yet they do not feel are being answered.

One of the primary concerns is traffic. Castle Farm sits within a residential area which is already used as a cut-through for traffic trying to bypass the main Warwick Road. Fishponds Road itself is also comparatively narrow for a residential road with a sharp turn prior to the current site entrance. Residents already concerned about traffic are understandably worried about the potential for increased traffic both during and after the development phase.

In addition to the main leisure centre we are also concerned that other key site users e.g. of the Petanque Facility, Skate Park and the Scouts & Guides are properly consulted with and considered throughout the process. These are all heavily used and will be impacted by any development.

Where car parking is adjacent to or near to property boundaries proper consideration needs to be given to air quality, traffic (people and vehicles) and lighting.

The move of the Kenilworth Wardens Cricket Club should also be considered as part of the development rather than being handled separately. There are particular concerns about the following areas:

- Potential increase in traffic
- Impact on flooding given the development on green space
- Lack of community engagement
- Continued access to the site for walkers, dog owners, joggers and horses etc.
- Fencing off large parts of the site would be contrary to the Kenilworth Neighbourhood Plan and the requirement to retain access to pitches for general recreation and use by Kenilworth Town Juniors play here regularly

Abbey Fields

Our primary concern with Abbey Fields is the lack of an outdoor pool in any form in the final design contrary to the wishes of many residents within Kenilworth. Within the consultation of October 2018 the retention of outdoor swimming was the most popular of the options presented and the option for a new 25m Lido gathered considerable support despite not being presented as one of the formal options.

We also continue to have concerns about the way that supply and demand has been calculated by the SLC Latent Demand Assessment. It is undoubtedly complex but there is at least one clear and significant anomaly. The model estimates the population in the catchment of Abbey Fields as being almost 100,000 rising to in excess of that figure by 2029. However this extension of the catchment area is not sufficiently recognised in the way that supply is calculated. If the same catchment area were used to calculate supply it would bring into play a number of additional pools including Warwick University and Hatton Country World. We also note that Thorns School has not been included in the calculation. Whilst this may be accepted methodology it does not appear to create a logical result.

With regards to the specific design of the building as presented, we are concerned about the current plan to move the café to the southern side of the building. This disconnects it from the current outdoor play facilities and means parents/carers won't be able to access it easily as at present whilst their children are using the outdoor play facilities.

Whichever option is pursued it is also vital that the final aesthetic design is sympathetic and in keeping with the surroundings.

What other matters relating to these proposals are particularly important to your Group?

Both potential developments should ensure that they recognise the following in their further development.

- Continued consultation and communication with the public is essential and in some cases has been insufficient to date.
- Any new building should achieve the best environmental standards including the reduction of carbon in its construction and performance in use to contribute towards the District target of achieving carbon neutrality. Any design needs to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the design in use
- The developments need to ensure that they are accessible and attractive to the whole community. This includes building a proposition which is attractive to groups who currently feel disengaged in particular our teenagers.
- Proper consideration needs to be given to the transport infrastructure that supports the development. This includes improving air quality and congestion by reducing the need to drive to either site. This should include integration into the current public transport system (e.g. better signage from the station) and full accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

What other information would you like to receive?

- We would like to develop a greater understanding of the supply and demand models. This has been offered by Council Officers and an appropriate time will be arranged.
- Further detail about the sustainability options that have been considered in the plan including the construction phase, materials, utilities and performance in use.
- For Castle Farm specifically an outline plan for how construction traffic will be managed during the build phase.
- An outline of the aesthetic options for each site in particular for the exteriors.

What other considerations do you think officers should investigate in relation to these proposals?

Castle Farm

A large amount of space has been allocated at Castle Farm for Café Space. We are unsure of the likely usage of any café facilities and would ask Council Officers whether a joint offering with the Wardens Clubhouse might be a better option to consider.

We would also like to consider the possibility of providing a shelter with power source adjacent to the Petanque pitches for the use of players.

Abbey Fields Swimming Pool

The arguments about the Swimming Pool have been well rehearsed particularly the consultation exercise and the conclusions about 'need' which have been reached by Council Officers. We do not in general wish to replay these but we believe that as a matter of policy the Council should revisit its objectives in the Leisure Development Project to recognise the unique asset that the Abbey Fields Pool in Kenilworth represents for the District. These should recognise:

Tourism & Commercial Potential - Tourism is a vital part of the economy of our region. In Kenilworth we have a significant number of tourists who visit the castle each year, however for many that is the only place they do visit within the town. It is vital that we enhance our Tourism proposition to retain visitors within the town and district for longer. We also see the potential for additional commercial exploitation of the facility. Whilst the natural pattern of usage will be influenced by the weather we see many examples of other outdoor pools which are creating interesting and profitable programmes that extend the usage of the pool outside the core summer months. We are frustrated that current discussion of both these possibilities is quickly dismissed and shut down without proper exploration and consideration.

Impact on Mental Health - As part of its consultation the District Council has engaged a number of Sports bodies for advice. Whilst these bodies are increasingly considering mental health as a benefit of sport it is not their primary aim. We feel that the District would benefit from seeking expert views who could provide further information on both the potential positive impacts on mental health of outdoor swimming as well as the potential of social prescribing as an emerging opportunity. This should include local GP practices.

The Heritage Value to the District - Thanks to the Abbey Fields Pool outdoor swimming has been an option for people within Warwick District for over 100 years. Sadly, as recognised by the Lido Guide the Midlands is now one of the areas least populated with Lidos despite the fact that we are the region of the country furthest from the sea. It is also recognised outside our district as a significant draw during the summer months and for many people has become something inextricably linked to Kenilworth and Warwick District.