

Consultation document

The future of Church Farm and Cophall leisure centres

Sport and Physical Activity Review
Summer 2015

Aiming to improve the health and
wellbeing of all of Barnet's residents

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Summary

Background

The Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) project was set up in 2012 to review the council's provision of leisure services, with the aim of ensuring that its five leisure centres deliver an improved and integrated offer for sport and physical activity in Barnet which can lead to increased participation and improve the health and wellbeing of all residents. Underpinning this work was our need to:

- provide fit for purpose facilities to our residents
- improve public health outcomes across the borough
- deliver a service that the council can afford.

Over the last three years we have consulted and engaged with residents and stakeholders as part of a wider SPA engagement programme. The consultations have helped us to understand residents' views on the current leisure centres and their facilities. It also enabled us to identify barriers that get in the way of increasing residents' levels of physical activity and established what facilities residents would like to see in the future. This feedback, together with a Needs Assessment in 2012 and a Feasibility Study in 2014, have enabled us to develop a proposal for improving our leisure centres (all reports are available on Engage Barnet, engage.barnet.gov.uk).

Summary of what is being proposed

The council's oldest leisure centres are Church Farm (built in the 1960s) and Barnet Copthall (built in the 1970s). Although both centres are fully functional they are currently expensive to run and will require immediate investment to bring them up to modern, cost-efficient standards that will meet the needs of an increasing population.

With this in mind, and as a result of what residents have told us already, we are looking to re-provide the Church Farm and Copthall leisure centres and procure a new leisure management contract that will focus on improving the health and wellbeing of all Barnet's residents.

The Church Farm Leisure Centre

Church Farm leisure centre currently has an ageing 18 metre swimming pool with no other on-site fitness facilities. The building is in a generally poor condition, specifically the roof which has recently been patched to extend its serviceable life for up to three years.

In the last phase of consultation, residents told us that they wanted better swimming facilities and an additional fitness suite. Listening to this, the council is proposing to enhance the Church Farm leisure offer encompassing a 25 metre pool, a learner pool, studio space and a fitness centre. However, alongside the issue with the roof, the current site is too small to accommodate a building with this scope of services.

The previous consultation exercise explored several alternative sites, and two locations were highlighted as suitable; Danegrove Playing Field in East Barnet and Victoria Recreation Ground in New Barnet.

The Copthall Leisure Centre

Copthall leisure centre was originally built as a premier regional swimming facility, but has evolved to include a gym and studio space. The current building is expensive to run and maintain due to its ageing pool tanks, water filtration system and heating room. A much more efficient facility could be constructed if modern building techniques and materials were utilised. Following consultation with residents and key Copthall stakeholders, we are proposing to redevelop the existing centre on the same site with better swimming facilities as well as additional gym and studio space.

What are we consulting on?

Before making any recommendations we are asking you to consider the two alternative sites for the relocation of the existing Church Farm leisure centre, and comment on what facilities we should include in the two new facilities we propose to build.

The aim of this consultation is to gather as many of your views and opinions as possible, and then incorporate these into recommendations which will be presented to the council in early December 2015. These enhanced proposals will enable us to commission detailed designs for the two new buildings and give us one alternative site for Church Farm to take forward into a planning process. The two leisure centres will remain operational until any new buildings are open in 2018.

The council has no plans or proposals for the future of the existing Church Farm site and discussions continue about the wider Copthall estate. When these are formalised, further consultation will follow.

To support this document planning briefs have been prepared for Danegrove Playing Field and Victoria Recreation Ground, which can be found on Engage Barnet.

In particular we want your views on three things:

1. where should the new Church Farm leisure centre be located?
2. what facilities should the new Church Farm leisure centre contain?
3. what facilities should the new Copthall leisure centre contain?

How can you give your views?

The consultation will run from **30 June –23 September 2015** and there are a variety of opportunities for you to have your say. The consultation will feature a questionnaire and drop-in sessions (see below).

The questionnaire can be completed online on Engage Barnet. Paper copies will be available at Church Farm, Copthall, Finchley Lido, Burnt Oak and Hendon leisure centres, the council's libraries and at all drop-in sessions.

In addition, you can request a paper copy of the questionnaire by email: leisureservicesreview@barnet.gov.uk providing your name and address.

Alternatively, write to us at SPA Team, B17, Floor 2, NLBP, Oakleigh Road South, N11 1NP.

If you require more help in understanding our plans and completing the questionnaire please visit one of our drop-in sessions.



If you would like someone to help you to complete the questionnaire on your behalf please contact the SPA Team on tel 020 8359 2859 or email leisureservicesreview@barnet.gov.uk.

A timetable of the drop-in sessions is attached at Appendix 1. If possible, please pre-register on Engage Barnet. This will enable us to effectively manage the drop-in sessions. Each pre-registration will be entered into a prize draw to win one of six, three-month memberships for any one of the council's five leisure facilities.

Church Farm Leisure Centre – background information



Constructed in 1960, Church Farm Leisure Centre accommodates a non-standard, 18 metre, three lane swimming pool. A Conditions Survey in 2012 showed that the building is generally in a poor condition with significant and costly defects likely to become more frequent in the future. The Feasibility Study showed that financial performance is weak and it is unlikely to improve given the overall condition of the building and the lack of health and fitness offer. Although there is a strong swimming programme at Church Farm the centre does not provide the environment or services to cater for future local needs. The current site is physically constrained and not visible from the main road. It offers no possibility for expansion or redevelopment and car parking is also limited.

In 2014, we ran a series of workshops with the aim of gathering more in-depth views on the future of all five leisure centres across the borough; these events were conducted as part of a wider SPA engagement programme. Participants for all workshops were recruited at random by an independent social research company. During these meetings, residents told us that they would like a more modern, larger facility at Church Farm but understood that the current site is too small to accommodate such a building; thus supporting the relocation of the centre. Residents also indicated that good transport links and parking facilities at a new leisure centre are important.

Findings from the Feasibility Study and Needs Assessment supported this feedback and confirmed that there is a need in the area for additional water space and a bigger gym.

Copthall Leisure Centre – background information



The Copthall leisure centre hosts the Copthall Swimming Club which is one of the top five swimming clubs in the UK with 1,300 club members and 1,500 learners. A member of the club has participated in every Olympic Games since 1980.

However, as a centre which is 40 years old, Copthall is inefficient and expensive to maintain. A modern facility will reduce the overall running costs and provide a more comfortable environment for users. The Feasibility Study shows that the predicted population increase in the area will require an additional health and fitness provision which could be integrated through the new centre. This would help to enhance Copthall's leisure offer and maintain its attractiveness.

Residents told us in previous consultations that they feel the need to maintain and even enhance the water space at Copthall, due to some overcrowding during busy periods. Further conversations with the Copthall Swimming Club and the Amateur Swimming Association showed that having two 25 metre pools in one building is crucial to maintain Copthall's regular competitive success.

During the Copthall resident workshops, conducted as part of a wider SPA engagement programme, the diving provision was rated below the need for 25 metre pools, and a learner pool. Residents considered that it was too niche and specialist for a council run centre but supported a 'fun' diving facility. The Feasibility Study indicated that diving would demand greater capital investment with no corresponding benefit to income generation and would therefore decrease the affordability of a new centre. As well as questions around the location and future facilities, this consultation will be asking you to consider how important diving might be to you in a new Copthall Leisure Centre.

Our proposals

The consultation findings in 2013 and 2014 together with the Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study were vital in enabling us to update our proposals for the services and facilities that will go into the proposed new leisure centres.

This information has been used to identify the most popular facilities, which included additional swimming facilities and fitness space at both Church Farm and Copthall.

We recognise the need to continue providing leisure services during the construction period of the new centres. Our proposal ensures continuity of service by keeping the existing Church Farm and Copthall leisure centres running until any new buildings are open.

Proposed facilities for the new Church Farm leisure centre

We are proposing to include additional wet and dry space in the design of a new Church Farm leisure centre with the following key facilities:

- 25 metre, six-lane pool
- learner pool with moveable floor
- 70-75 station gym
- two dance studios
- café.

In addition we are seeking your views on whether crèche facilities and a sports hall are important to you, and whether they should be included in the new facility. The final mix of facilities and the building design will be influenced by where the new leisure centre is built, feedback from this consultation and what the council can afford.

Proposed locations for a 'new' Church Farm leisure centre

In autumn 2014 we asked residents to comment on six alternative options for a replacement Church Farm facility. These included: the existing site, Oakhill Park, New Southgate Recreational Ground, Victoria Recreation Ground, Brunswick Park and Danegrove Playing Fields. In addition, an options appraisal was undertaken to establish appropriate locations based on a series of factors, such as catchment area, planning context, site availability, nature of location and accessibility.

Resident feedback and the options appraisal identified two suitable locations, namely Danegrove Playing Field and Victoria Recreation Ground. These options are outlined below.

Danegrove Playing Field

Danegrove Playing Field is located on the corner of Park Road and Cat Hill. The site currently provides a grassed open space surrounded by mature trees and vegetation on three sides, with a single point of access for vehicles at its northern end.



The site presents a number of opportunities and constraints having regard to its location and key features. Key advantages and disadvantages are listed below. For more information please see the planning brief, available from Engage Barnet.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site is owned by the council and there will be no additional acquisition costs • No changes to service continuity • Sufficient space • Highly visible location at the junction of two main roads • Potential opportunities for Danegrove School to use the facilities • Infrastructure, transportation links and amenities already in place • Improved usage – site is currently under used due to the pronounced slope, poor drainage and lack of amenity • Current Church Farm Swimming Pool is just under one mile away. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site is designated as a school playing field and there are some doubts over developing on it • Located on the corner of a busy junction • Site elevation means that any development on it would have a high visual impact on residents, especially those located on Park Road.

Victoria Recreation Ground



Victoria Recreation Ground is a public park on the edge of New Barnet Town Centre, positioned a few hundred metres from the High Street and New Barnet station.

Access to the Victoria Recreation Ground is gained from Park Road (by car), Victoria Road, Lawton Road, and by a footpath and footbridge from Cromer Road.

The Victoria Recreation Ground is of a mainly grassed flat surface. In the north of the site there is a children’s playground. In the south there is a formal landscaped area known as the Rose Garden. The Victoria Recreation Ground provides football pitches, tennis and basketball courts as well as a bowling green with associated pavilion and small car park. The Pymmes Brook Trail runs through the eastern part of the Victoria Recreation Ground. Adjoining the south west corner of the park is the East Barnet Shooting Club and Nightingdale Day Nursery, both in council ownership. Church Farm Leisure Centre is over a mile away to the south.

The site presents a number of opportunities and constraints having regard to its location and key features. Key advantages and disadvantages are listed below. For more information please see the planning brief, available from Engage Barnet.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes to service continuity • Sufficient space • Good transport links close to New Barnet station and bus routes • Set within a wider development, and thus potential for future investment • Support for the development within the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site is a public park • Site is located much further north, further away from the existing Church Farm leisure centre (1.6 miles) and closer to less populated areas (smaller catchment size) • Location is not clearly visible and therefore might not be prominent to users.

Potential leisure centre locations in Victoria Recreation Ground

There are two options for the new Church Farm leisure centre to be located within the Victoria Recreation Ground. These are presented below:



Proposed facilities for new Copthall Leisure Centre



The new leisure centre will be located to the immediate south west of the existing facility. This means the loss of one pitch, which could be re-provided to the north of the new leisure centre or to the west of the Allianz Stadium.

We propose to keep the same amount of water space at Copthall and to increase health and fitness provision.

The proposed list of core facilities for the new centre is:

- two x 25 metre pools (eight and six lane)
- Learner pool with moveable floor
- 110-115 station gym
- two dance studios
- Spinning studio
- café.

The diving pool is considered as an optional facility; its inclusion will depend on the level of investment required and your feedback as part of this consultation.

Detailed designs for the replacement leisure centre have not yet been commissioned, but the new facility should be of a similar size to the existing centre and built over two storeys.

Appendix 1: Drop-in sessions timetable (June – August 2015)

East Barnet Library		
85 Brookhill Road, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN4 8SG		
Dates	Session Type	Time Slots
Tuesday 14 July	Morning	8 – 9am
		9 – 10am
		10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
Thursday 16 July	Afternoon	1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm
		3 – 4pm
		4 – 5pm
		5 – 6pm
Saturday 18 July	Weekend	10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
		1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm

St James Church		
71 East Barnet Road, New Barnet, Hertfordshire EN4 8RN		
Dates	Session Type	Time Slots
Wednesday 22 July	Morning	8 – 9am
		9 – 10am
		10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
Thursday 23 July	Afternoon	1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm
		3 – 4pm
		4 – 5pm
		5 – 6pm
Saturday 25 July	Weekend	10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
		1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm

St James Church		
71 East Barnet Road, New Barnet, Hertfordshire EN4 8RN		
Dates	Session Type	Time Slots
Tuesday 4 August	Morning	8 – 9am
		9 – 10am
		10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
Thursday 6 August	Afternoon	1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm
		3 – 4pm
		4 – 5pm
		5 – 6pm
Saturday 6 August	Weekend	10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
		1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm

Copthall Leisure Centre		
Champions Way, Hendon, London NW4 1PX		
Dates	Session Type	Time Slots
Tuesday 18 August	Morning	8 – 9am
		9 – 10am
		10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
Thursday 20 August	Afternoon	1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm
		3 – 4pm
		4 – 5pm
		5 – 6pm
Saturday 22 August	Weekend	10 – 11am
		11am – 12noon
		12noon – 1pm
		1 – 2pm
		2 – 3pm

For more information:

tel: 020 8359 2859 email: leisureservicesreview@barnet.gov.uk
or visit engage.barnet.gov.uk