

## **Appendix A - Initial stakeholder responses to feasibility options**

This Appendix includes the full written responses to the feasibility options from members of the Stakeholder Group received at the time of writing of this report.

### **A.1 Saxon Crown Swimming Club**

Thank you for providing an opportunity for Saxon Crown Swimming Club to respond to the Forest Hill Pools' construction feasibility summary.

As a key stakeholder in the future provision of swimming opportunities to the residents of Forest Hill, we are delighted that the scoping work has resulted in a clear recommendation for a leisure facility, including 25m pool and teaching pool.

Our preferred option, from the three short listed solutions (outlined in the 'Stakeholder Group Update' document of 6 February 2009), is option C - designed by PTEa.

Given the Saxon Crown mandate (endorsed by the LB of Lewisham), to continue to extend our high quality swimming teaching and coaching provision, we have long been concerned about the deterioration of swimming pool stock in the Lewisham Borough. This, coupled with the likely construction delay of the Loampit Vale facility and additional ASA 'Swim 21' requirements, means that our present swimming coaching program is severely restricted by our current pool stock. Also, required expansion into other aquatic activities, such as water polo and synchronized swimming, is almost impossible.

In addition, the re-opening of a pool facility in the Forest Hill area should expand our catchment area. Forest Hill, Honor Oak and Sydenham have historically, during the existence of the old Forest Hill pools, been fertile areas from which to recruit swimmers.

In order to ensure that we can continue to accept the LB Lewisham, and ASA, challenge to provide high quality teaching and coaching in swimming and other aquatic activities to all the residents of the borough, we believe that option C is the solution that will start to address our limited pool stock availability – in the shortest possible time.

I look forward to hearing the outcome of the presentation to the Mayor's office and thank you once again for considering the views of Saxon Crown.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Wheeler  
Secretary

## **A.2 Forest Hill Society**

The Forest Hill Society Executive has given careful consideration to the Options presented at the Stakeholder meeting on the 5th February and subsequently made publicly available. The issue was discussed in detail at the Forest Hill Society Executive meeting on the 10th February 2009 and those in attendance were unanimous in their view that:

- i) They strongly support the need to see swimming and leisure back in Forest Hill in the foreseeable future
- ii) Option 2 presents the best opportunity and scheme for Forest Hill
- iii) Option 3 is unacceptable

We would like the Mayor to ask his team to look at Option 2 and find ways of overcoming the issues which make it more difficult than Option 3. We are clear that Option 2 has many benefits and will gain acceptance of a very broad section of the community. We cannot accept that an option that was not even in existence several months ago should be so difficult as to be dismissed at this early stage. A re-analysis of the potential for cross subsidy, funding and costs needs to be undertaken.

The Forest Hill Society (FHS) believes that of the options presented, Option 2 is the right answer for Forest Hill. The Mayor needs to ask his team to look again at delivering it within a reasonable timescale.

It is important to state that the Forest Hill Society's position has been reached after a considerable amount of discussion amongst members of the Executive Committee, contact with many members of the Society and the Community and from various on-line discussions on the proposals. The FHS has also been in contact with a number of other amenity societies, residents groups and other local bodies in relation to this matter and are pleased that we, the Sydenham Society, the Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association and the Save the Face of Forest Hill Campaign are all in broad agreement on this issue.

### *THE BENEFITS OF OPTION 2*

Reasons why we are of the view that Option 2 is the best solution for Forest Hill and the surrounding area include the fact that:

1) It would bring swimming and leisure back to Forest Hill, something that a very great number of the residents want to see.

2) It would help regenerate Forest Hill town centre. This is a really important issue as the Town Centre is not in good shape at the moment and since the closure of the Pools, Dartmouth Road has been in sharp decline.

Reopening the Pools here would have significant economic and regeneration benefits that would in turn benefit the residents, the Council (through Business Rates etc.) and hence the whole Borough.

3) It would restore the 'civic focus' of this key Town Centre site and importantly encourage dual use of the library and other nearby facilities, making them all more sustainable in the long term.

4) It would maintain the Pools frontage as part of the trio of Civic Buildings. Whilst this is not important to everyone, it will minimize arguments about the impact of any development on the setting of the listed Louise House and Library. It will receive broad support across a wide spectrum of residents who variously want a Pool or want to keep the frontage, or both.

5) Maintaining the trio of Civic Buildings will facilitate consideration of planning issues should this area become part of the Conservation Area in the future.

6) It would support the objective for high quality contemporary design as a key part of this new public building. There is a high degree of trust in the abilities of Allies and Morrison, based in particular on their work at the Horniman Museum. They are seen to have the skills and experience needed for this sensitive project.

7) It would be close to a wide range of public transport. Forest Hill is one of the busiest commuter stations in London, it has a large number of bus services passing through it and it is well located for pedestrians and cyclists using the Town Centre.

8) It would have the least negative impact on the houses to the rear and for this reason would be much less likely to attract objections at Planning.

9) It would help reinforce the openness and strong character of Dartmouth Road. The Pool frontage would remain set back leaving space for landscape and public realm improvements in front of the building. These could be combined with providing level access to the front of the Library.

10) Redeveloping the Pools in a prominent and accessible location would attract people from a considerable distance (particularly from the north (Honor Oak, Brockley and south west Lewisham) and north west (East Dulwich and Dulwich) where there is no modern public pools provision)

aiding the long term viability of the project.

11) It would allow the Willow Way site to be redeveloped for some form of employment led mixed use. This could include residential above (as long as there was no net loss of employment potential), or for proper live work units. The consideration of the site for alternative uses is supported by the London Plan, could form part of the emerging LDF strategy if supported by an Employment Land Review, or it could even be test marketed for employment uses and if there is no interest this is further evidence that the a broader mix of uses should be considered. The redevelopment of this site for an appropriate use will also benefit the area around the secondary centre at the northern end of Dartmouth Road, but a major public use is not appropriate.

We are convinced that there are ways of looking at the project which will make Option 2 deliverable despite the difficulties identified in the presentation. Willow Way site can be rezoned for residential use in time if there is the political will to do it. In reality, if achieved through the emerging Lewisham Core Strategy / LDF it should not take any longer than it will to sell a large apartment led scheme in FH Town Centre, when we already have a half built one of those blighting the area. It seems Although the FHS wants to see the Pools provided within a reasonable timescale, the Society believes that it would be acceptable to wait a little longer if this is necessary to deliver Option 2. However, the Society does want to see progress and are not willing to see the project put 'on hold'.

#### *WHY OPTION 3 IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE*

- 1) Option 3 is not an acceptable alternative as it relocates the Pools out of the Town Centre and fundamentally threatens the viability and vitality of the area. It would be the nail in the coffin for Dartmouth Road.
- 2) Many people in Forest Hill see the Civic Hub as an important part of the Town Centre and the loss of this would be very unwelcome.
- 3) Willow Way is not the site for a prominent leisure building. It is closer to The Bridge and the new Crystal Palace Pools Facility and would be a much less attractive a destination for those living in the north of SE23 and beyond.
- 4) Relocating the Pools to Willow Way and providing only housing on the Pools site would result in a net loss of employment overall as the only site that provides employment would be Willow Way. At the moment both sites have the potential for employment. This cannot be the intention of Lewisham's Planning Policies. In fact the Town Centre is an important location for employment that would be further eroded by this loss.
- 5) Housing, and particularly more apartments, is not the right proposal for the Pools site. Option 3 proposes large, bulky buildings that would seriously

impact on neighbours. It does not provide any clearly identifiable public space to replace the lost pocket park (the spaces around the buildings would feel more like they belonged to the flats than anyone else).

6) There is particular concern that Option 3 would mean that the Pools site would remain semi-derelict and empty for the next 3-10 years, whilst the Town Centre slides even further downhill and the Council are pressured to fund regeneration projects to help it recover.

7) Whilst Option 3 maintains the Pools frontage, it would not be accessible to the public in any way. Although not everyone agrees that keeping the Pools frontage is a priority, if its retention facilitates a scheme that more people can support then that is a good thing and a further reason for Option 2.

### *OPTION 1*

Apart from being undeliverable in the current climate the Society does not support Option 1 as it would cause a considerable split in the Community and threaten the deliverability of the project further. There is specific concern about the proximity to Dartmouth Road and the impact of the new access road on the frontage. It proposes almost no open space in the location of the existing pocket park and its impact on the setting of the adjacent Listed Buildings is a further concern.

### *LOUISE HOUSE*

The FHS strongly supports the need for a non-residential use for Louise House and ideally one that is Community focused. We would ask that the Council supports the emerging proposals for an Arts Centre on the site in any way that it can.

### *DESIGN COMPETITION AND CONSULTATION*

The Society still supports the principle of a design competition as part of the OJEU procurement process for the Pools site as they believe that this is the most effective way of delivering high quality design, that also involves the Community in the decision making process. However, if the Council could find a way of delivering Option 2 and ensuring that Design Quality would be a key consideration then they could accept that this may not be needed. We are clear that proper consultation with residents is needed for the Pools site. This should not be about ticking an option or nothing (as was the last consultation in the summer of 2008); it should be about engaging with local residents and finding out their priorities and objectives for the development so as to inform the project and ensure that people understand and buy into the process as it progresses.

Forest Hill Society

12 February 2009

(Additional letter sent following this submission advocating the use of live/  
work units on Willow Way.)

### **A.3 Sydenham Society**

Thank you for arranging the Forest Hill Pools Stakeholders Meeting last Thursday (February 5) and for showing us the 3 options contained within the Feasibility Study. Having looked carefully at the options, the Sydenham Society has taken the following decision:

#### Option 2

The Sydenham Society has decided to support Option 2, along with both the Forest Hill Society and the Save the Face of Forest Hill campaign. The Forest Hill Society Executive met on Tuesday and expressed their strong preference for Option 2 as it maximises the leisure offered and keeps swimming in its current location in Dartmouth Road. The FHS are pleased that this option retains the frontage block of the Pools and believe that the scheme will benefit both Forest Hill town centre and the Kirkdale area close to Willow Way. They particularly disliked Option 3 which proposes building a new pool on the site of the former Council depot in Willow Way and housing on the Dartmouth Road site (with both Louise House and the Pools' frontage block used for residential). This would leave the library isolated in a residential area and have a detrimental effect on Dartmouth Road.

Option 2 is supported by the majority of residents who have voted in an online poll on SE23.com – 93 responses over 5 days has resulted in 76% supporting Option 2, 19% supporting Option 1 and less than 5% supporting Option 3.

We believe that the overwhelming majority of residents in SE23 and SE26 will support the retention of swimming and leisure facilities on the current site at Dartmouth Road.

Annabel McLaren/Pat Trembath

#### **A.4 Forest Hill Traders Association**

Further to the recent stakeholders meeting and your request for a feedback. Please accept my apologies for sending in our comments at the last moment but we wanted to speak to several of our members.

The general feedback is for options 1 or 2, but all were against the third option of the leisure centre being in Willow Way. We feel that the Forest Hill Pools should be sited in Dartmouth Road as it has been for over 120 years. Traders have been affected by the closure of the pools and feel that the pools sited in Willow Way will not be beneficial for Forest Hill, and Dartmouth Road in particular. In our opinion option 1 would be our favourable choice as we feel that this could give us a community space and a square, (like the original ideas) as this is badly needed in Forest Hill.

Regarding a design competition. Our opinion is that this is not necessary and will only complicate matters and more importantly delay the process.

We have been without our pools for far too long and the sooner the decisions are made and reopen will help footfall into the Town Centre and can only help businesses.

June Olney and Michael Davey  
Forest Hill Traders Association

#### **A.5 Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association**

I am writing to provide the response of the Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association to the proposals for Forest Hill Pools as presented to the Stakeholder Group on 5 February. We would like you to ensure that our views are included in any submission to the Mayor and Cabinet on 25 February. As you will be aware, the Association represents residents in around 650 homes of whom the majority are members of the Association. This submission is made after consultation with representatives of the Association.

We totally reject the proposal to move the Pools to Willow Way, a site in Sydenham. We believe that this is contrary to Mayor Steve Bullock's long held position that he is committed to the provision of swimming facilities in Forest Hill. The move increases the provision for swimming in Sydenham at the expense of Forest Hill and, in the medium term, threatens the viability

of Sydenham's swimming facility at the Bridge. From the viewpoint of our members, the Willow Way site is about 3 times further from the centre of Forest Hill and thus would be less accessible, particularly since there is no parking provision in the immediate area.

We believe that moving the Leisure Centre to Sydenham would leave the Library isolated and reduce its attractiveness to users. By reducing footfall in the area, it would further threaten the numerous small businesses in this area of Dartmouth Road.

We are completely unconvinced by the argument that planning considerations zoning the Willow Way site for employment use mean that the site cannot be used for housing. The site could be developed with mixed use or, taking note of the London Plan, could be re-zoned for housing. We draw your attention to the London Plan which after saying that Boroughs should promote policies that seek to exceed housing targets provides policy 3A.2:

DPD policies should:

- identify new sources of supply having regard to:
  - to secure mixed use residential development
  - change of use of surplus industrial or commercial land to residential or mixed use development, while protecting land supply for projected employment growth and required waste facilities (see also Policy 3B.5)
  - redevelopment in town centres

We believe that such a policy provides full support for the use of Willow Way for housing, particularly since additional employment will be being created on the Forest Hill Pools site. It is apparent that the development options for the site are greatly constrained by the decision to retain the Laundry Building. Although this building is mentioned in passing in the listing of Louise House it is clearly not central to the listing decision and English Heritage should be approached to clarify this point. If the architects consider that they could offer a better solution to the Community by demolishing the Laundry Block, then we believe that it should go.

We believe that Option 1 in its fully developed form with housing on the Pools site is an unacceptable over-development of the site. We accept the argument that it is unlikely to be built in the current environment. However, we fail to understand why, if Option 2 can be considered with a housing subsidy from Willow Way, the same consideration does not apply to Option 1. Indeed, although not clearly stated at the Stakeholder Meeting, such a subsidy appears to have been considered in the Cost Summary table on page 34 of the presentation which shows the same

(low) receipt from Willow Way for Options 1 and 2. We believe that Option 1, without the housing on top as illustrated on page 10 of the presentation is a valid option for consideration.

With the level of detail available at present we are not able to make a considered judgement as to whether unacceptable compromises have been made to preserve the old Pools frontage. The Option 2 proposal appears sympathetic but may not make best use of the site. We would like to see the more detailed plans, including those for the upper floors of both Option 1 and Option 2, before making a judgement between these options. We are assuming that if A&M are seen to be the better architects for this project, they could be asked to undertake a design for Option 1 since the options are only preliminary at this stage.

In summary, we wish to see a new Leisure Centre on the existing site. If retaining the existing Pools frontage excessively compromises the quality of the facility to be provided then we are prepared to lose it. We are unable to decide between option 1 (without housing) and option 2 on the basis of the information available to us at present.

Yours sincerely  
Irene Greene  
Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association

#### **A.6 Save the Face of Forest Hill Campaign Group**

The Save the Face of Forest Hill Campaign Group exists to prevent the demolition of Louise House and the frontage block of Forest Hill Pools. We presented a petition to the Mayor on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 with 2,109 names on this issue and have regular contact with about 450 supporters. Our main contentions are that the group of buildings in Dartmouth Road (the Library, Louise House and the Pools) are aesthetically attractive, historically important and form a significant civic group in terms of both form and function.

We thank the Mayor of Lewisham for commissioning the Feasibility Study, which has enabled the debate to be broadened. We are grateful for the sharing of the outcomes of the study prior to the Mayor and Cabinet's meeting and we thank the officers of Lewisham Council for their work in preparing the study. We note that two of the three options presented include retention of the pools frontage block.

We have consulted with our supporters in the days since the Stakeholders' Meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and the publication of the Council's Feasibility Study containing three options. Of the responses received, 93% have been in favour of Option 2. At a meeting of the steering committee of the campaign on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009 a clear and unanimous decision was taken to support Option 2. In so doing we agree with and support the positions adopted by both the Forest Hill and Sydenham Societies.

Option 2 retains and reuses the frontage block of the pools as an integral part of a new leisure complex. This proposal chimes well with the Mayor's public commitment to the retention of swimming at the Forest Hill Pools site and guarantees the conservation and ongoing civic use of this group of buildings. We believe that this design gives due respect to a premier site of outstanding quality and maximises the civic function of the location. The construction of this design could be started immediately and see the much-sought return of leisure facilities to Forest Hill in short order. We believe that the proposed design is high quality and attractive, using the heritage buildings in a coherent way, providing an attractive street elevation and with few overlooking problems to the rear. The architectural practice used is well regarded and has a track record in working with heritage buildings in Forest Hill. Such a new development would aid the regeneration of this part of Dartmouth Road and bring new users to the Library and local retail outlets.

If this option is proceeded with we would wish to make positive proposals regarding a more effective reuse of the frontage block, the arrangement of the entrances and the approaches to both the new public space to the North and the area towards Dartmouth Road to the East. More crucially, we believe that there is the opportunity within this option to optimise the building's footprint and so create a housing offer with the potential for cross subsidy on the Dartmouth Road site. In addition, we support the use of the Willow Way site for housing development as cross subsidy. We believe that the planning difficulties associated with this possibility have been over stated and are certain that there would be little significant local objection to this proposal. There would thus be a possibility of dual cross subsidy: some housing at Dartmouth Road and more, possibly with an employment element (such as live/work units or workshops with flats above), at the Willow Way site.

We reject Option 1. This design sees the unnecessary and unfortunate destruction of the pools frontage block, a building much loved by local people. This option would also entail delay, with a wait of unknown

duration before housing market conditions allow a developer to undertake the project. We also believe this design to be unattractive, poor quality, too tall and too close to Dartmouth Road. It seems unlikely that it would not be subject to substantial planning objection, particularly from residents to the rear of the site, who would find their properties heavily overlooked.

We reject Option 3. Although on the face of it, this option seeks to preserve the pools frontage block, we do not believe that such an outcome would happen. Although work could start on pools at Willow Way fairly soon, the site at Dartmouth Road might not be subject to housing development for some years. The people of Forest Hill would have to endure the spectacle of the old pools crumbling in the mean time. It seems likely that by the time the housing development took place, the pools frontage block would be beyond repair and would be demolished, particularly since any developer would have a financial interest in its removal and there is currently no statutory protection for the building. We also believe that moving the pools to a site in Sydenham, SE26 would be opposed by the residents of Forest Hill and that the Willow Way site is a small scale commercial area with inadequate road access, parking and other transport infrastructure for its new use. Hiding the new pools in Willow Way would be a waste of the Council's money. It is wrong in principle for the best civic site, in Dartmouth Road, to be handed over to private housing, which will do nothing in the short term and precious little in the long term to regenerate this area of Forest Hill.

With regard to Louise House, we support an ongoing community use and would prefer not to see this building used for residential housing, which would fracture the civic group of buildings in terms of their function. We support local people in their efforts to work with the Council to find a viable new community use for this building.

We urge the Mayor and Cabinet to select Option 2.

Tim Walder  
SFFH  
11<sup>th</sup> February 2009