

<b>MAYOR AND CABINET</b>		
<b>Report Title</b>	Redevelopment of Forest Hill Pools – Implications of Louise House Listing and Results of Further Feasibility Work	
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes	Item No. 5 Appendix B
<b>Ward</b>	Forest Hill	
<b>Contributors</b>	Executive Director for Regeneration/ Executive Director for Resources/ Executive Director for Community Services/ Head of Law	
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	Date: 25 February 2009

Responses to Forest Hill Pools Stakeholder Group Update Feb 2009 – 26 replies

“Again, it seems that the information provided is biased towards a big housing development on the existing pools site (option 3). Why is option 3 considered 'Affordable', and Option 2 'Unaffordable', if they are basically the same facilities provided in the opposing sites? The Scope and Objectives section also states: 'estimated construction cost of leisure centre similar for all options'.

Being a resident of Derby Hill Crescent, and backing onto the site, I am against the proposals to build housing developments which are in effect (in terms of height) extensions of Salcombe House. This would severely overlook (and practically border) our and other neighbouring properties. Previous 'proposed views from Derby Hill Cres' illustrations were inaccurate in how these flats would be seen from our houses, and there certainly isn't the jungle of trees in our gardens that they insist would obscure this development from view.

Option 2 seems to be the best solution in that we get new pools for old pools, and the shortfall in funds is met by a development at a more suitable site. However they have not suggested a suitable site. Why is Willow Way the only possible option? We are not even told the sqm of housing that would be provided on Willow Way, but they do not forget to say how much they can cram onto the existing pools site.

Option 1 is ridiculous, and as with the last consultation (where that Option 3 included a tower block), I think this kind of proposal is made so that it is automatically rejected by many people, leaving it as a toss up between the other two options.

If there were to be a large housing project on the pools site, are they still expecting it to be occupied by 'people who don't have cars' as was previously suggested?

I won't even go into the other areas, such as the devaluing of our houses if overlooked by a block of flats, or the fact that our road floods (and as a result, some houses) in heavy rain, because the drains can't cope with the current level of housing...” - David.

“I’m against any new flats/block on the pool site, if it can be avoided. Fine for Louise House to be developed into flats, but presumably that’s fairly limited in terms of preserving

the original building, etc. I would prefer option 2 - pool reinstated alone on old pool site, Louise House residentialised and housing development down Willow Way (where there is better access, scope for some parking, not loads of housing already, and lots more reasons)." - Tabby

"My overall reaction to the 3 options for the redevelopment of Forest Hill is a disappointment. I do not feel that any of the 3 options fit, but feel very strongly that Forest Hill pools should stay in Forest Hill, not Sydenham. Willow Way is in SE26, which is Sydenham. I also feel the Pools should stay on the site next to the Library and near the schools.

I do not think that having flats on the top of the Pools (option 1) is in keeping with the surrounding buildings and would look very strange. It would also cause increased problems with traffic and parking in the area.

Option 2 is preferable, but I would prefer that the pool should remain where it is, and that housing should be on the Willow Way site." - Jacqui

"My choice would be option 2. Would it be a way round the commercial usage restriction to use Willow Way as live/work units, eg, artists studios like the Peckham experiment?" - Felicity

"I just want the pool back! I wonder how open the committee is to different ideas. Obviously, if a revenue needs creating they might not want to provide flats, as property isn't doing too great! I heard that someone local is presently trying to obtain permission to convert a listed building into an ARTS CENTRE. What a great idea. A venue for music, dance, theatre, film, art, etc, and with a small cafe/bar would be a cracking little business round here. It doesn't have to cost the earth to do either. Why don't we ask for something like that in case the other one doesn't come off? Is this feasible?" - Jane

"I am for option number 3. I love the design of the leisure centre in Willow Way and the openness and greenery of the redevelopment of the Forest Hill site. I am concerned about the height of the new buildings and that the open spaces could be used for nefarious activities, but that's Forest Hill's history, I guess." - Colette

"My view is that Option 2 is the best available. A retained frontage would be in keeping with the fantastically restored nearby library. I also like the fact that the housing would be kept separate. It seems a bit bizarre to me to have housing above a leisure complex (for what it's worth!). I don't like the idea of high-rise housing either. Also, I've heard that the architect for Option 2 was responsible for the Horniman Museum's extension, which I really like." - Debbie

"I consider 1 or 2 to be the best option. I like the idea of the leisure centre remaining on the current site - it is prominent and an ideal location for the local community and those living in the surrounding area who wish to make use of it. It would also be a much-needed building improvement to boost the area. However, on the down side, parking in Thorpewood Avenue (where I live) would probably increase, which would be a problem for residents. Has this been considered?" - Sue

"Option 3 looks the best bet to me, although issues like parking there don't seem to be addressed (not sure it is on any of them) or maybe I just missed it." - Mark

- “1. What happened to local (ie for Forest Hill residents) democracy?
2. What have our local representatives been doing to allow this situation to develop ie relocation/ replacement of the pool with social housing on the Forest Hill site?
3. Unelected entities/ accountable to nobody/ from outside Forest Hill (Sydenham Society/ Victorian Society/English Heritage) have been allowed to highjack the original proposal to provide a new pool or refurbishment on the original site.
4. The elderly members of these outside entities have been grossly underestimated in their guile to utilise the planning process to obtain their own selfish ends, however they have been aided and abetted in this by the supine posture of our current elected representatives. End result is that the younger age groups and local school children have lost the use of a pool for the past 4 years and it looks as if they will now have to travel further to swim. The electors of Forest Hill have not been represented effectively at Council level.
5. Why do we need more housing? People now need work, desperately, and the council should invest in a training centre to teach the practical skills that the young people will need to get employed - on the already designated industrial site at Willow Way and by utilising the Kirkdale Adult Centre more effectively.
6. The silence about the utilisation of Louise House is disgusting, particularly as it is well known that the council have mooted this site for various social purposes (as it resides in the Social Services Dept), for which government grants are available, eg, English courses for asylum seekers. They have also allegedly been linking the change of use for Louise House with the proposed sale of the Kirkdale Learning Centre to provide funds for the refurbishment of Louise House. Another local amenity would be lost.
7. Overall, the situation appears to have been taken over by the apparatchiks in the planning department conniving with/or under the restrictions of the bean-counters at Town Hall. The Sydenham Society has led a very effective campaign on the Bell Green derelict site against the planning dept - skills acquired in this exercise have been put to good use in keeping the Pool site derelict.
8. Who influenced the Council depts to create 3 spurious options? The cost comparison table is scandalous - showing guess what? Willow Way as the cheapest and quickest option! Is that why Tesco Express took that lease on Kirkdale/Willow Way a few months ago?
9. The lack of local (Forest Hill) democratic accountability is appalling. Is the ombudsman the next step?” - Mel

“If having the leisure centre at Willow Way is what it takes to get a new pool, then why not? It's only five minutes down the road.” - Claire

“I would like to see the old pool buildings razed to the ground – they're a total eyesore! I'd be quite happy to have a new pool at the old council depot and housing on Dartmouth Road – just get something done.” - Rob

“I have no great attachment to the frontage of Forest Hill Pools and I am in favour of more affordable rented homes being built so any option will suit me. My main concern is that

something is actually done – I am really missing the pool, it was lovely to walk to a pool rather than having to drive, as I do now, down the high street to the Bridge. Overall, if I am pushed, I think option 3 is good. We can get a modern leisure centre and those that love the frontage (and there are lots of these people about) can see that preserved and those that want more housing can have that, and those that don't want more flats will feel better because at least a little bit of heritage has been saved!" - Ann

"Love that building and am all for keeping its original features. It seems from the info received that the best option is 3." - Lorraine

"I don't have a preference - all I wish is that it could go ahead ASAP so that we can get a new pool before our children are grown up!" - Margaret

"Being purely selfish, I think the Willow Way site is closer to my house, so I'd go with that one. But if they do manage to secure using LH as an arts etc venue, it would seem sensible to have them both in the same place." - Colette

"I think I prefer option 2 because it means the area will be getting more facilities. It takes a long, long time before anything gets done, so I feel it's best to get it all while there is an option." - Henh

"I don't understand why there is a need for housing as well? There seem to be a million new-build flats around FH and Sydenham that haven't been sold. If it's meant to be council housing, can't the council go and buy some of those unsold ones (I'm sure they'd get very good deals at the moment!) instead of building more bad-quality, ugly stuff? Or are these flats meant to finance the build of the leisure centre? In which case, I think this needs proper rethinking...

If that isn't an option, I'd personally go for option 3 of the proposal as it does seem to be the most feasible and probably the quickest way to get anything done!" - Damaris

"I think I feel like most parents do, in that they would just like a swimming pool as soon as possible. Option 3 seems like a good idea, although I was all in favour of knocking down Louise House and the old pools, and building a new one in its place." - Hannah

"I think 2 or 3 are the better options. But as the council seems to think 3 is the more feasible, will this just happen anyway? I think public opinion is that something should be added to the Forest Hill site, and hopefully bring Forest Hill back to life. I must admit I have never have liked Willow Way and to put the swimming pool there seems like it is being taken away from Forest Hill because it is in Sydenham." - Jenny

"On balance, we think Option 2 is the preferable one. We thought we'd offer some feedback on each option, though, if that helps.

Option 1. Whilst it doesn't keep the pool frontage (which I thought was the main reason for the opposition to the original plan), it looks like a fairly sympathetic construction on the Forest Hill site. It wasn't clear from the powerpoint which design was the one that would be used and obviously we would prefer the lower-rise one as it is more in keeping with the streetscape. Don't understand why they've kept an option which doesn't incorporate the frontage as it's not going to be acceptable to many residents of Forest Hill.

Option 2. This seems like the most sensible option and one which preserves the best of

the old with a new facility near the town centre. It satisfies those who want a leisure centre on the site with those who want to retain the Victorian facade. It's obvious from the way the presentation is written that this is the least favoured option by the council (but it's not clear why the cost is potentially so much higher) and it feels like they have already decided to favour option 3 on grounds of affordability. However we think option 2 provides a better amenity for the community of Forest Hill and is most accessible to the highest number of people (and more likely to improve the tired-looking Dartmouth Road!).

Option 3. This option is a bit of a mess. The leisure centre gets hidden in a back street behind some shabby retail units and is less accessible by public transport (and not very enjoyable to walk to and from at night for most residents of Forest Hill). On the pools site we get to keep the facade but the cost is yet another uninspiring and brutal block of flats that seem way out of keeping with the Victorian buildings. It replaces an amenity site with a greater concentration of housing which doesn't seem sensible.

I wonder why they didn't look at options for a smaller leisure complex on the site with no housing but keeping the pool frontage. I know people said they wanted two pools but then they also said they wanted to keep the facade and we have an option which doesn't include that." - Mark and Yaz

"I like option 2 best followed by 3. I think we definitely need to keep something of the original building as it is of historical interest. Isn't it the oldest pool in London? Not quite sure why housing has to be linked to a swimming pool. Most of all, I think, like many people, I wish they would just get on with it!" - Caroline

"I like the second one, because I want the library and the sports centre and the arts centre to be next to each other, so my sisters and I can walk there easily." - Jack, aged 5

"I think Option 2 is the best choice, because then everything is together and easy to get to and I can walk there from my house. I miss going swimming at the pools and I really wish they would hurry up and build a new sports centre, so I can do lots of sports, keep fit and learn new things. Also, I would really like there to be an arts centre next to the library, because I like art and making things and drama and there isn't much to do around here that doesn't cost lots of money." - Molly, aged 8

"I think it's important that the pools form part of the wider community facilities along Dartmouth Road and near to Forest Hill centre, and I do not favour the option of moving them to Willow Way, as I think this is far less suitable and will lead to an isolated 'pools only' facility. With the current site, there is the library and other potential facilities that make it much more of a hub, and contribute to the regeneration of Forest Hill." - Tom

"I grew up in Forest Hill and learned to swim at the pools when I was about four or five. I now have three daughters and my eldest learned to swim there, too. Swimming is a big part of our lives (my eldest has a real talent and swims three times a week) and we bounce between Crystal Palace, Beckenham Spa and Norwood. How much easier our lives would be if we could use a single great facility at Forest Hill. I feel strongly about keeping the pools on Dartmouth Road, not just for history's sake, but because of the great community focus of the area, particularly with the library and the possibility of Louise House becoming an arts centre. Forest Hill drastically needs a facelift and the pools will provide that. I choose option 2." - Matt