

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

I was originally all for refurbishment of Forest Hill Pools, as I love swimming in Victorian baths, looking up at the windows and watching how the light changes with the weather outside. Even when Forest Hill Pools were at their grimmest, I swam there – and walked home for my shower rather than face the cold, smelly, cockroach-ridden, condensation-dripping showers and changing rooms. Just as I climbed the winding stairs to go to a great Pilates class when I was pregnant with my third child.

But now, like many people in Forest Hill who can no longer walk down the road to take themselves and their children swimming, I just want a pool and soon. My children are growing up and missing out. We swim a lot in our family and currently spend too much time and money getting to other places since the pools closed. My eldest two children love swimming and my youngest daughter is disabled and benefits hugely from being in the water. I'm not exercising as much as I should because it's so much more hassle to get in the car and drive somewhere.

And yet I don't want a new leisure centre at any cost. I'm not surprised at the number of people who have told me they would be happy to go with option 3, because they believe that's the quickest way to get a swimming pool (incidentally, most of them live in Sydenham...). But I think it would be a real shame if the pools were moved away from their present site on Dartmouth Road. With the library (and hopefully Louise House, if it becomes the arts centre that is proposed and which I whole-heartedly welcome and support), we could have a fantastic community hub, with something for all ages to do. (Drop one child off at a drama/art club at LH, another at judo or trampolining in the leisure centre and take the third swimming – wonderful!) If the three buildings could be linked, even better. It would also bring a much-needed facelift to tired old Forest Hill and hopefully improve the lot of the many businesses that must have suffered since the pools closed.

Apart from anything else, Willow Way is a fairly depressing place to put a leisure centre. I don't know if I would feel safe walking there at night.

All of which is why I prefer option 2. Surely, there must be another site in Lewisham to put housing? Willow Way can't be the only option. There's talk of using the Kirkdale Adult Education Centre in some way and that seems like it could be a good solution: put housing on the Kirkdale site, a brand-new AEC on Willow Way and an inspiring leisure centre

where the existing one continues to crumble.

Fi Redpath

Chair of Sydenham Pre-School Parents' Committee

Parent at Eliot Bank School

Mother of three (including a two-year-old who is disabled)

Thorpewood Avenue resident

13.2.09