

Q&A – DOVER LEISURE CENTRE

Why do we need a new leisure centre in Dover?

Built in the 1970s the Dover Leisure Centre needs major investment but has limited room to expand.

What other sites did you consider?

Alongside the current location, we looked at sites on the seafront, Maison Dieu, Buckland Mill, and in Whitfield.

Why can't you build it in the town centre?

The town centre sites are all limited. We're proposing a bigger leisure centre with more facilities.

How can we get to Whitfield if we don't drive?

There are existing bus and cycle routes serving Whitfield. We'll work with bus operators to develop services.

Did you look at sites in the wider district?

Replacing the Dover Leisure Centre is a priority because it serves the largest town in the district. Aylesham, Deal, and Sandwich have more modern leisure centres.

Why don't you build a swimming pool in Sandwich?

The Sandwich Leisure Centre is not owned by the Council. We are assisting the Trust which runs it to look at the feasibility of their ambitions for a pool in Sandwich.

Why can't you build a 50m (Olympic size) pool?

A 50m pool would be a risky and costly option. Our plans will deliver the only county standard competition swimming pool in Kent.

Why are you reducing the size of the sports hall?

Five-a-side is the biggest user of the sports hall at the existing leisure centre. We're proposing a smaller, four court sports hall with two outdoor, artificial (3G) pitches for five-a-side.

Why are there two squash courts?

We've based this on current usage, availability of courts elsewhere in the district, and affordability.

What about facilities for young people?

Alongside an 8-lane main pool we're proposing a bigger learner pool with a moveable floor so that the depth can be changed. There will be a clip-and-climb wall (from age 4), and three multi-purpose studios to deliver a wide range of uses for all age groups.

How much will it cost to build?

We're still working on the detailed costings. The total investment, including land, will be in the region of £18-20 million.

Will Council Tax be going up to pay for it?

The project will be paid for through a combination of Council reserves, borrowing, and a land swap for the existing leisure centre. The new centre will generate revenue that can be reinvested. Some potential operators may also invest.

How will you borrow money?

The council can access a range of borrowing at very competitive rates.

What are the next steps?

A final decision on the plans will be made by DDC's Cabinet on 5 September. A further round of consultation will then be held.

When will the new centre be built?

Detailed timescales will be agreed once the decision to proceed has been made by Cabinet. We expect construction to take around 18 months with a planned opening in 2018/19.

What are you going to do with the existing leisure centre?

We are looking at options for redeveloping the site given its proximity to the St James development.

Who will run the new leisure centre?

We have spoken with a number of operators about our plans, and will tender for the management of the centre once the plans are agreed.

Will the prices go up?

Pricing will be for the operator to determine.

Will the new centre be accessible for users with disabilities?

Yes, we're designing access for all. The swimming pool, changing rooms and toilets will all be accessible. There will be lifts between the two floors and parking for blue badge holders.