

Appendix 1

Deal Leisure Centre Project

Public Engagement Summary Report, November 2024



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Executive Summary

During the 4-week engagement period which ran from 23/09/24 – 20/10/24 the Major Projects Team held nine public engagement events and spoke to 979 people about the Deal Leisure Centre project. Data received from the 977 completed Teams Surveys informs us that our engagement programme:

- Reached a good cross section of the community both in terms of the age groups who responded and whether respondents were users of existing leisure facilities at Tides or Dover District Leisure Centre.
- 69% of respondents support the project to build a new leisure facility at Deal.
- 63% of respondents indicate that they are very likely/or likely to use the new leisure facility.
- The most popular facility mix from the proposals, in descending order, are:
 - Café
 - Water-based family friendly activities such as inflatable sessions
 - Health & fitness stations
 - Accessible changing facilities
 - 5-lane 25m swimming pool
 - Multi-activity studio(s)
 - Spin studio
 - Toning tables

Many of the families that engaged with us told us they were disappointed that our proposals meant a loss of slides and flumes as a permanent fixture at the leisure centre. Many believe that the leisure water facilities attract families from all around the district and beyond.

We also received many representations from residents at Deal that either do not use the existing centre or are members at other facilities because the centre does not offer them what they want or need.

There is support for the development of a lane swimming pool at this location from local swimming clubs and members of the public that cannot swim in the existing pool.

People told us that the existing centre is ready for an upgrade, it is tired and poorly set out.

Many of the respondents advised us that they think Deal Leisure Centre should have a different offer to Dover District Leisure Centre. The new centre should not replicate what is available at Dover.

A strong theme through all the survey responses was a wish for us to retain as many facilities for children as possible at the new centre. This sentiment was echoed in both the respondents that support the project and the ones that do not.

Disability Groups told us that they welcome the project proposals, and they will be engaged with further as detailed plans for the centre are developed.

Local swimming clubs told us that they prefer the 6-lane option as there is a shortage of available lane swimming in the district. They would like us to consider pool depth and profile as this influences the future use of the pool. For example, a water depth of 1.5m is required to teach diving skills.

1.0 Background and Methodology

1.1 Consultation – summer 2022

Proposals for a new leisure centre for Deal were first initiated in 2018 but then progress was significantly disrupted by COVID-19 as the leisure industry began to recover and rebuild. Plans were further developed in 2022 when a series of consultation events were held to share early design concepts. A report was considered by Cabinet in November 2023 to provide a project update and consider financial viability issues, when it was agreed to explore further options that might enable the project to move forward.

1.2 Further public engagement – summer/autumn 2024

A Cabinet meeting was called on 29 July 2024 to discuss this in more detail, where it was agreed that the Tides Leisure Centre Project Advisory Group be requested to review design options and consider the cost implications of increasing the lane provision from five to six lanes and of adding leisure water provision, such as a splash pad, to the proposed Alliance Leisure Services Revised New Build Scheme.

The newly developed plans look to develop a range of exciting new facilities for the area, while working to ensure the project remains affordable and deliverable.

The key proposals would see a new five-lane 25m pool, as well as new health and fitness stations, toning tables, multi activity and spin studios, and café area. The new build facilities, if approved, could potentially be delivered by summer 2027 and would be integrated with the retained existing sports hall and indoor tennis centre.

1.3 RIBA stage 2

The latest proposals have been developed to an early feasibility stage and could still be subject to change. They include plans for flexible pool provision with a five-lane pool that could be used for recreational swimming using inflatables, learning to swim and advanced training. The lane pool could also be used to facilitate leisure activities during holiday seasons with inflatable aqua fun sessions, but the latest proposals do not include a dedicated splash/leisure pool.

1.4 Next steps

Your Leisure operates Tides Leisure Centre under a lease arrangement expiring on 31 March 2025. The wet and dry side facilities would be closed for up to two years while construction is underway, however it is intended that services will be provided as far as possible in the sports hall and indoor tennis centre which are newer buildings and will not be affected or included in the new build works.

Any new build of the Deal Leisure Centre will take place on the existing site.

1.5 Aims of the public engagement:

- To carry out a planned engagement from 23 September - 20 October 2024 with a variety of stakeholders.
- To ensure shared information was factual and carefully managed so that it didn't significantly raise expectations at this early stage of the project.
- To explain what the revised proposals (following the original consultation) are for a potential new leisure centre in Deal, explaining what the layout will look like, what the proposed mix of facilities will be (compared to what's there now) and what will happen while the work is being done (what will be open, what are the alternatives in the interim).
- To explain the rationale for the proposed facility mix and how it's underpinned by the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and business case.

1.6 Communication channels used

- Press release issued to launch the engagement
- Web page on www.dover.gov.uk
- Microsoft Teams Survey via www.dover.gov.uk
- Your Leisure website linked to DDC's consultation page
- Keep me Posted email
- Promotional posters and postcards
- Social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Face to face consultation in Walmer and Deal including a stand at Deal Market, Tides Leisure Centre, Dover District Leisure Centre and Deal Library
- Identified user group visits (accessibility groups and Deal networking groups)
- Community Roots Van in various locations with Community Development Officer and project officers

1.7 Engagement Period: 23 September – 20 October 2024

- Week one: Workshops at Tides (morning, afternoon, different days of the week and weekend mornings as advised by Your Leisure to meet key user groups).
- Week two: Deal Market and Deal High Street
- Week three: Dover District Leisure Centre
- Week Four: Deal Library and Tides Leisure Centre (unmanned)
- Consultation closed on 21 October to enable responses to be processed and a report to be prepared for Project Advisory Group and Cabinet Members.
- Design workshops/accessibility
- Dover District Disability Association
- Jo Highgate at Kingsdown (Headteacher) Temporary pool

1.8 Target audiences

- Regular users and non-users of Tides Leisure Centre
- Deal and Walmer residents of all ages
- Local sports groups
- Those listed in stakeholder list as appended to this plan.

2.0 About the Engagement Programme

The engagement period for the Deal Leisure Centre Project ran from 23 September until 20 October 2024.

An exhibition of the latest project visuals and information about the project scope was created to support the engagement events. A set of exhibition boards was left on permanent display at the Tides Leisure Centre throughout the 4-week period and a copy of the exhibition was also left at the Deal Library.

We communicated with 200 stakeholders representing community groups, disability groups, local interest groups, schools & nurseries, parish councils, local sports facilities and clubs, national sporting bodies, healthcare providers, Kent County Council, charities, and the Police about the project inviting them to engage with us.

2.1 Public Engagement Calendar

The project team, with help from colleagues in the Community Team, held nine public engagement events at various locations and times. In total we engaged with 979 people at these sessions. The engagement calendar below shows how many people were spoken to at each event.

Engagement Calendar		
Date	Location	Number of People Engaged
23.09.24	Tides Leisure Centre	74
26.09.24	Tides Leisure Centre	63
28.09.24	Tides Leisure Centre	77
02.10.24	Tides Leisure Centre	52
05.10.24	Deal Saturday Market	272
08.10.24	Deal High Street	98
10.10.24	Dover District Leisure Centre (am)	90
10.10.24	Dover District Leisure Centre (pm)	123
18.10.24	Deal High Street	130
		979

2.2 Targeted Engagement

In addition to the public engagement events, we held several discussions with local disability groups and local swimming clubs.

Members of the Project Team met with representatives from the Dover Disability Forum on 14 October to discuss the project proposals and get feedback on accessibility design.

A follow-up Design and Accessibility Workshop was held on 24 October with the Project Team and representatives from the Kent Association of the Blind and Dover Disability Forum to consider accessibility in the design.

The Project Team met with representatives from Deal Tri and Dover Lifeguard Club to discuss the project design proposals.

2.3 Social Media Stats

Facebook post *impressions 21,751

Reach 19,666 residents

Engagement 1047

* Impressions are the total number of times your content is displayed, whether it was clicked or not. Reach is the total number of unique users who see your content.

The Leisure Centre project was covered in the Residents' Newsletter with 6,906 coverage

Keep me Posted on Deal Leisure Centre topic – 1,881 coverage

Press Release 3,894 coverage

LinkedIn (press release) – 3798 followers

Engagements: 8

Impressions: 467

Clicks (on link): 21

Instagram – 2,225 followers

Post impressions: 1,850

Reach: 1,743 residents

Engagement: 25

Twitter – 10.2K followers

Post impressions: 2,455

Engagement: 112

Reach n/a

3.0 Team Survey

A Teams survey was hosted on our website during the engagement period to collate opinions on the project and to gauge support for the project proposals. A total of 977 completed surveys were received by the Project Team in the period. The respondents were asked a number of questions to assist project development.

1. Tell us where you live by entering your postcode?
2. What age group are you in?
3. Are you a current member of – Tides Leisure Centre, Dover District Leisure Centre or other?
4. Do you agree with/support the construction of a new Leisure Centre in Deal?
5. How likely are you to use the new Deal Leisure Centre?
6. Please explain why? (answer to question 5)
7. Which of the proposed facilities are you/your family looking forward to using?
8. When are you most likely to visit the facility?
9. What would encourage you to use the new facility?
10. Which mode of transport would you be most likely to use to visit the new Deal Leisure Centre?
11. If you have any comments on the proposed design & layout including accessibility, please provide them below?

The data from this survey has been used to identify key themes coming out of the engagement process, and the full data from the survey is appended to this report.

Working with Alliance Leisure and the IT department, the Major Project Team has launched a dedicated micro-site which is hosted on the Council's web page for the project.

3.1 Team Survey Results

The responses from the Teams Survey have been collated and downloaded into this report.

Survey for the New Deal Leisure Centre Proposals 23 September - 20 October 2024

977
Responses

10:10
Average time to complete

Active
Status

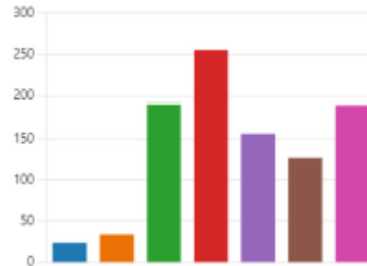
1. Tell us where you live by entering your postcode

977
Responses

Latest Responses
"CT14 7BU"
"CT6 8LJ"
"CT14 9QX"

2. What age group are you in?

Under 18	24
18-24	34
25-34	191
35-44	255
45-54	156
55-64	127
65+	190



3. Are you a current member of

Tides Leisure Centre	442
Dover District Leisure Centre	208
Other (please state)	142
Other	320



4. Do you agree with/support the construction of a new Leisure Centre in Deal?

Strongly agree	488
Agree	189
Neither agree or disagree	61
Disagree	64
Strongly disagree	175



5. How likely are you to use the new Deal Leisure Centre?

Very likely	434
Somewhat likely	181
Neither likely or unlikely	72
Unlikely	90
Very unlikely	200



6. Please explain why

884
Responses

Latest Responses

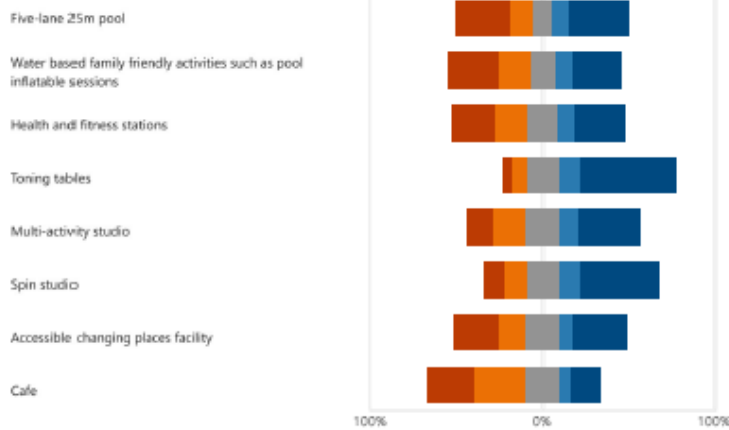
"Important to get regular exercise."

"We need a kids pool, flumes etc"

"To be able to swim. Adult swim sessions are now too busy to accommodate bo..."

7. Which of the proposed facilities are you/your family looking forward to using? (please indicate below)

Very likely Somewhat likely Neither likely nor unlikely Somewhat unlikely Very unlikely



8. When are you most likely to visit the facility?

Weekdays - early morning	287
Weekdays - daytime	390
Weekdays - evenings	361
Weekends	594
School holidays	466



9. What would encourage you to use the new facility?

904
Responses

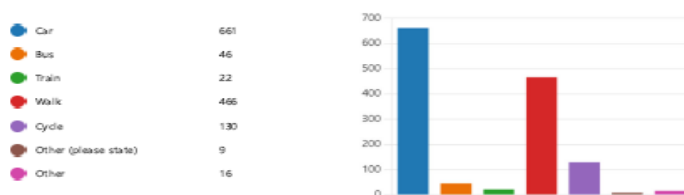
Latest Responses

"Good spin instructors, plenty of weights."

"Kids' activities"

"More space for swimming. More sessions being added to timetable. To be able ..."

10. Which mode of transport would you be most likely to use to visit the new Deal Leisure Centre?



11. If you have any comments on the proposed design & layout, including accessibility, please provide them below.

688

Responses

Latest Responses

4.0 Key emerging themes from the engagement programme

Tides Leisure Centre has been open since 1987 and the slides, flumes and beach pool are remembered fondly by parents and their children alike. As a result, the response to our engagement programme has been strong, particularly from families. The local community have shown they are interested in this project, and most people who responded to our survey support the development of a new leisure centre in Deal.

Not surprisingly, members of the public have expressed their disappointment at the loss of fixed leisure water facilities at the new centre such as the slides and flumes. We were told that families travel from outside of the district to use the beach style pool at Tides due to its unique offer. Families told us that there is not enough child friendly activities or facilities locally, and so the addition of a splash pad and pool inflatable sessions would be welcomed by future users.

There is strong support for a lane swimming pool in Deal amongst the people we spoke to. During the engagement events at the Dover District Leisure Centre, we met many people that live in Deal but travel to Whitfield for the facilities there. We also engaged with local swimming clubs based in Deal and they told us they are struggling to get enough time in the swimming pool in Whitfield due to high demand. The use of removable inflatables in the pool would allow the greatest flexibility of use whilst satisfying strategic swimming lane need.

The Project Team gave a consistent message around the project viability, scope, and the difficulties in delivering leisure centre projects in the current economic climate. In general, this message was understood by the people we spoke to although many people told us that they think the new centre at Deal should not offer the same things as the leisure centre in Whitfield.

5.0 Next Steps

A summary of findings from the engagement programme was shared with the Project Advisory Group on 7 November 2024. Following on from this, the full Communications report will be appended to the Cabinet Report to be considered on 13 January 2025.

The data collected from the survey and engagement events has been shared with the Project Team to inform the project design where relevant. Ongoing informal engagement with disability groups will be undertaken as the detailed plans emerge for the new centre.

The Project Team will update the dedicated micro-site with the latest developments relating to the project once it has been through internal governance processes. The published Frequently Asked Questions will be updated with any new questions that came out of the engagement events.

Appendices

- Stakeholder list redacted for GDPR