



Appendix 2

Whitchurch Swimming Centre: Feasibility Study

Shropshire Council

March 2021 – Draft Version 1



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Shropshire Council appointed Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) to prepare a headline feasibility study for the Whitchurch Swimming Centre in February 2021.
- 1.2. The rationale for undertaking this high-level feasibility study is the fact that the existing facility has now been closed for over 12 months due to a leaking pool tank, as well as other deterioration in the fabric of the building.
- 1.3. This feasibility study focusses on the options for replacement of the existing facility, the capital costs of this and the consequent revenue implications.
- 1.4. The capital costs for the identified options have been developed by a qualified Quantity Surveyor and benchmarked against similar facility mix options and developments. The facility options will need to be reviewed by an architect and developed into specific plans at the appropriate time.

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2. Background Context

2.1. Built in 1972, Whitchurch Swimming Centre comprises a 5-lane x 25m pool and changing facilities. Its location is shown on Map 1:

Map 1: Location of Whitchurch Swimming Centre



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2.2. In the SC Built Facility Strategy (2020) the quality of the facility was highlighted as an issue:

Whitchurch Swimming Centre	35% Score due to pool tank failing	Poor	Significant investment now needed in the pool tank which is leaking badly. The facility is at the end of its useful life.
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2.3. The above assessment updated that in 2017 which identified the need for investment but assessed the facility as average. The pool tank started leaking in 2020 and has not re-opened since closure in March 2020 as a result of Lockdown 1.

2.4. As a consequence of the deterioration in the building and the inability to operate it as a functional facility there is a need to consider the options for its replacement moving forward. The swimming pool no longer provides an appropriate quality of provision, and an environment conducive to increasing participation in physical activity for health benefits.

2.5. If the Whitchurch Swimming Centre is to be replaced, a further consideration is the current cost of the facility and how this might be improved. The existing facility requires a £10k per month subsidy; this is paid by SC as part of the overall leisure management contract with Serco.

2.6. Section 3 of this report identifies and analyses the options for development of a replacement facility in Whitchurch.

Headline Assessment of Need

2.7. As set out in the Built Facility Strategy, Evidence of Need 2020:

Shropshire is a large, rural, and sparsely populated county, covering a land area of 319,736 hectares, which is approximately ten times that of all the inner London Boroughs put together (31,929 hectares). With a population estimated at 317,500¹, this gives a density of only 0.98 persons per hectare.

Around 39% of Shropshire's population lives in villages, hamlets and dwellings dispersed throughout the countryside. The remainder live in one of the 17 market towns and key centres of varying size, including Ludlow in the south and Oswestry in the north, or in Shrewsbury, the central county town.

¹ Source: ONS mid-year estimates, 2017

2.8. There are some key factors influencing what Shropshire will look like in the future:

Rising Numbers of Older People

- **Shropshire has an older population than England; 24% of its population aged 65 or over and 1.2% aged 90 or over, in comparison to 18% and 0.9% in England.**
- **The 65+ population set to raise by 48% from 75,600 to 112,100 – this projection will mean this age group will increase from 24% to 33% of Shropshire’s total population.**
- **26% of the female population are aged 65 or over, compared to 22% of men.**
- **In the same period, the 85 and over population will raise by 135% from 10,000 to 23,500, taking it from 3% of Shropshire’s population to 7% in 2037. 6,407 of those over 85 are women (64%).**
- **The 65 and over population increase between 2017 and 2037 is similar for men (51%) and women (45%), but the change between 2017 and 2037 for 85’s and over is greater for males (169%) than females (114%).**
- **Shropshire’s 65 and over population will increase more than the West Midlands, and the over 85 population will increase above the West Midlands and also England. ²**
- **Amongst West Midlands local authorities, Shropshire has the second highest percentage of its population that is aged 65 or over, and of all England authorities, Shropshire has the thirteenth highest.**
- **The Place Plan areas with the highest percentage of those aged 65+ are Bridgnorth (9.1%), South Shrewsbury (9%), North- East Shrewsbury (7.2%), Ludlow (6.6%), Market Drayton (6.5%) and rural Shrewsbury area (6.2%).**
- **Of the 9,978 people that are aged 85 and over, the place plans with the highest percentage are South Shrewsbury (10.3%), Bridgnorth (8.8%), West & Central Shrewsbury (7.9%), Ludlow (7.6%) and North East Shrewsbury (6.2%). In contrast, Highley (1%), Broseley (1.3%) and Much Wenlock (1.4%) have a smaller percentage of the 85 and over population.**

² Reference JSNA Older people’s needs assessment 2019

Ageing Well

Ageing is inevitable but suffering ill health in later life is not. It is never too late to adopt a healthier lifestyle and take steps to prevent ill health. It is just as important for people in older age to have a balanced diet, remain physically active, not smoke, and maintain a positive attitude. By doing this older people are more likely to avoid health problems and may be able to manage existing problems more effectively. ³

Population Growth:

Shropshire's overall population is projected to grow from 313,700 in 2017 to 337,300 by 2037, there will be 21% more houses built by 2036; a third of these are already built.

Long Term Health Conditions:

The ageing demographic across Shropshire has rising health and care costs. Older people in Shrewsbury and the wider County suffer from:

- **rising dementia (Dementia recorded prevalence (aged 65+) – Based on 6-monthly returns, Shropshire was similar to England in April 2017, but by September 2017, Shropshire was significantly higher at 4.51% compared to England at 4.33% ⁴;**
- **a high level of hypertension (16.2%), higher than the West Midlands and England (JSNA Older people's needs assessment 2019);**
- **rising levels of depression (9.9%), significantly higher than either England or the West Midlands ⁵; and**
- **increasing levels of obesity (9.8%), significantly higher than England but lower than the West Midlands.**

³ JSNA Older people's needs assessment 2019

⁴ JSNA Older people's needs assessment 2019

⁵ JSNA Older people's needs assessment 2019

Younger People

Younger people in Shropshire suffer from high levels of childhood obesity, mental ill-health issues and, where found, severe child poverty. More accessible, better quality physical activity provision could contribute to improved quality of life to help combat these challenges.

Starting well and developing well

Ensuring that children have the best start in life is vital for reducing health inequalities. Much of a person's future health and wellbeing is determined by early years development.

2.9. Other key influences on future leisure provision include:

The current level of participation in physical activity in Shropshire is 63.8% (Active People April 2020). 12% of the population is fairly active and 24.2% i.e., nearly a quarter of the population is inactive.

Levels of deprivation in the County are relatively low, but where there is deprivation it is significant. Rural deprivation is a key issue, relating to poor access, isolation, and loneliness.

The Full Objectively Assessed Housing Need for Shropshire' (FOAHN) has been published to assess the future level of housing need in Shropshire between 2016 and 2036. The 2012 Sub-national Population / Household Projections (ONS / DCLG) are used as a starting point for this assessment. This FOAHN estimates that 25,178 new dwellings are required to meet future housing need (around 1,259 dwellings per annum). The first ten years of this FOAHN coincide with the next ten years of the period addressed within the Development Plan housing requirement (2016-2026). Over this period the housing need identified within the FOAHN is comparable, but less than the current housing requirement.

Scale and Rurality- the size of Shropshire and the fact that the County is so rural means that public transport is limited, journeys can take longer, and access is impacted. There are fewer large urban areas and more smaller communities which means services and infrastructure provide for a wider area.

Car Ownership- 14.9% of Shropshire residents do not have access to a car

The most important and effective health interventions are those which address inequalities and health behaviours in a child's early years.⁶

There is a need to increase sport and physical activity across Shropshire to enable communities to reap the benefits it brings by raising aspirations, improving physical and mental health, growing the economy, reducing inequality, and supporting social interaction and strong and resilient communities is at the heart of this revised Strategy. It will be delivered in the context, and in support, of the Council's interlinked Corporate priorities (Innovate to Thrive :

1. **More people in a suitable home**
2. **Care for those in need at any age**
3. **A good place to do business**
4. **A healthy environment**
5. **Sustainable places and communities**
6. **Embrace our rurality**

⁶ JSNA Young people's needs assessment 2019

Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM)

- 2.10. The Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) for pools in Shropshire was produced in July 2019. This reflects 2019/19 data.
- 2.11. All three of Shropshire's main market towns – Ludlow, Oswestry and Shrewsbury provide a main swimming pool, or the equivalent of this (minimum 25m x 6 lane) and a learner pool or a learner function. All communities in Shropshire are within 30 minutes of one of these facilities, with the exception of the communities in the north.
- 2.12. Currently, swimming pools in Market Drayton and Whitchurch address this gap in accessibility. The Market Drayton facility also provides a learner pool.
- 2.13. Swimming pools offer more scope than any other indoor sports facility type, to contribute to an active and healthy lifestyle by residents. They are the only facility type which provides for participation by all age groups and from cradle to grave. Also, swimming is one of the few indoor activities where female participation is higher than male participation and it is also a family-based activity.
- 2.14. There are 29 individual pools located at 22 swimming pool sites across Shropshire county (2019). The total supply of water space available for community use in the weekly peak period is 4,121 sq. metres of water. (Note: for context a 25m x 4 lane pool is between 210 and 250 sq. metres of water, depending on lane width).
- **There is weekly demand in the peak period for 3,111 sq. m of water space; given there is an existing 4,121 sq. m, there is a theoretical over-supply of 1,010 sq. m of water space in the county.**
 - **Of the 89% of overall demand for swimming from Shropshire residents, 85% is met within Shropshire; for 8 out of 10 visits to a pool, this is therefore a pool in the county.**
 - **Future need for swimming pools (based on the Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC)) equates to 234.34 sq. m to meet the needs of the 23,600-population growth in the county, much of which will be in and around Shrewsbury. Existing community accessible provision equates to 4,121 sqm. Therefore, even taking into account future demand by 2037, there would remain an over-supply of water space of 775.66 sqm (4,121 – (3,111 + 234.34 sqm)). This is roughly equivalent to 3 x 25m x 4 lane pools (225 sqm).**
 - **This means there is the opportunity to look at the future scale of any swimming provision, given the theoretical over-supply across the county. It is not unusual for there to be at least a slight over supply in a rural area with a dispersed population, where people travel further, and longer to access a range of services. It is also important to highlight that Shropshire has a growing population, particularly in and around Shrewsbury, and this will increase demand for all community services, including access to swimming pools.**

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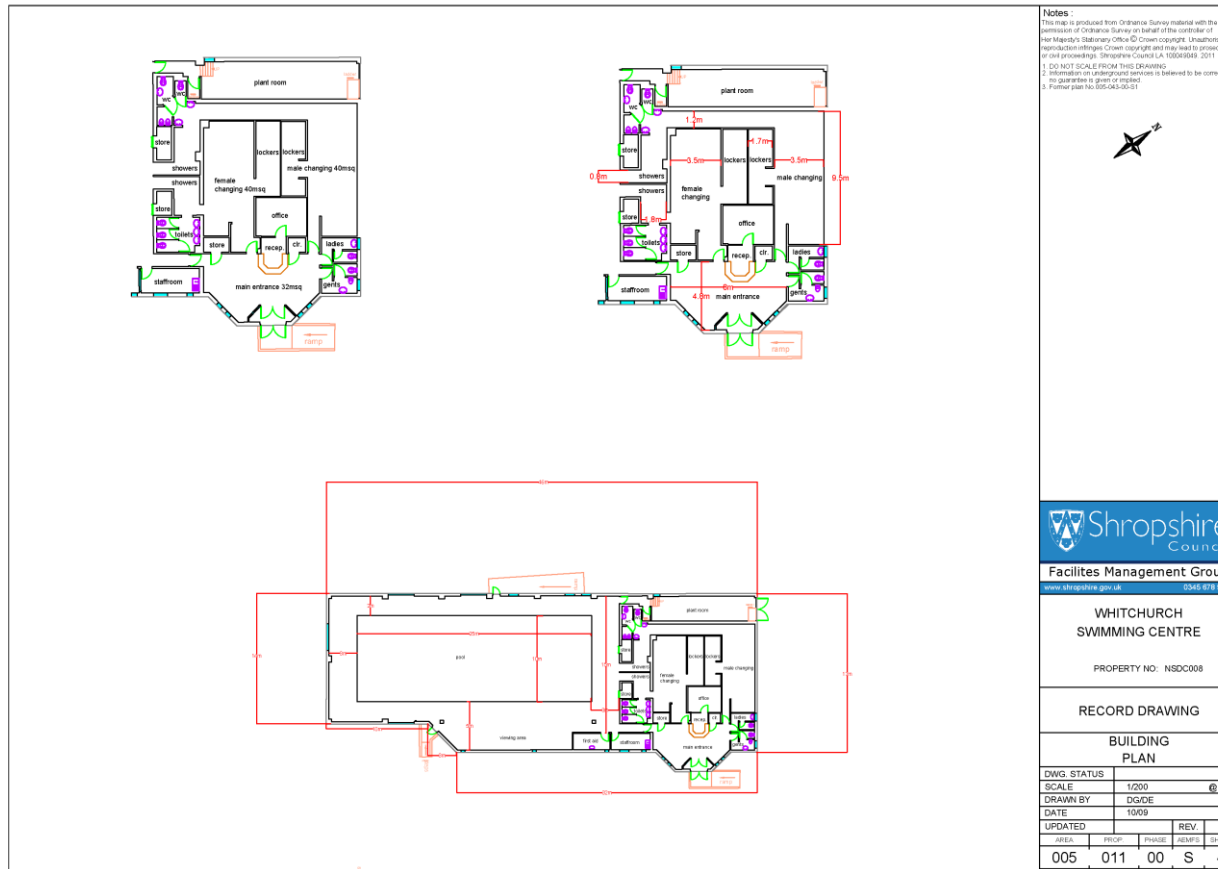
- **The real issue in Shropshire is not the level of provision, but the age and quality of swimming facilities, particularly those providing for community access.**

2.15. **Whitchurch Swimming Centre** has an estimated used capacity of 82% in the weekly peak period, this is over the 70% 'comfort level' recommended by Sport England. This demonstrates that when open, Whitchurch Swimming Centre had a very high level of use. Accessibility is a challenge in the area if one does not have access to a private car; bus services are limited and do not always enable sufficient time to access the nearest pool which would be in Market Drayton, Wellington, or Newport. The provision of a pool in Whitchurch is particularly important for older people, given the physical activity benefits of swimming, but also for younger children for whom learning to swim is a critical life skill.

3. Facility Development Options

3.1. The site plan of the existing Whitchurch Swimming Centre is shown below.

Map 2: Site plan of the existing Whitchurch Swimming Centre

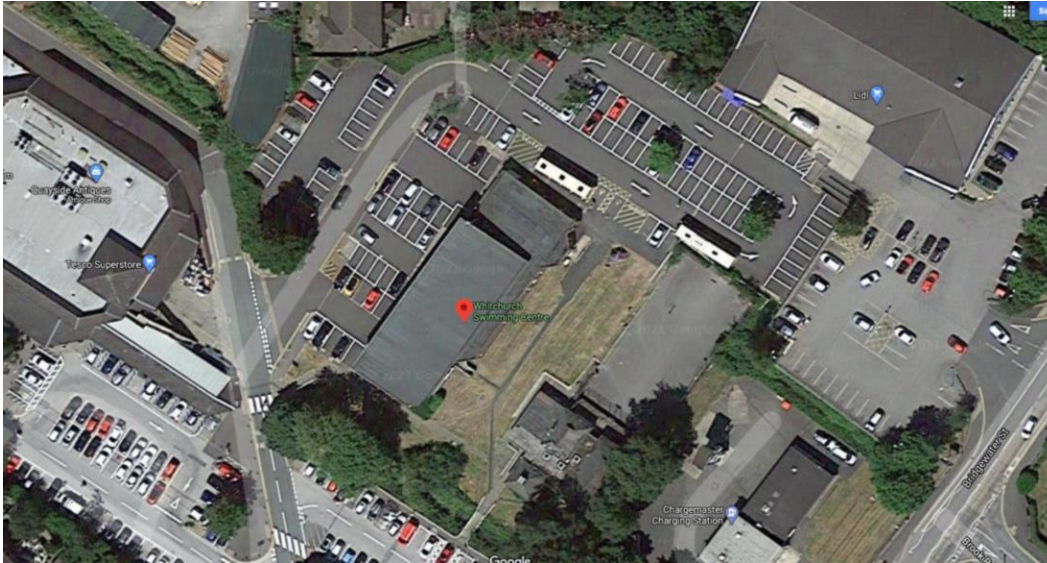


3.2. The existing centre is c.780m² in floor area.

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Fig 3.1: Existing Whitchurch Swimming Centre



3.3. The site plan illustrates the potential of the existing site if the adjacent Youth Centre land is taken into account. It is understood that this land could be developed as part of a replacement facility. This is reflected in the identified development options below.

3.4. The identified facility development options identified for the site are:

- **Option 1** – 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways)
 - Café 15 covers
- **Option 2** – 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways)
 - 35 station fitness suite
 - Café 20 covers
- **Option 3** – 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways)
 - 35 station fitness suite
 - 1 x studio – large divisible into 2 studio areas
 - Café 20 covers

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3.5. Redevelopment of a larger facility, offering an increased range of facilities will:

- **Encourage increased participation in physical activity;**
- **Deliver increased health benefits (physical and mental) to more people as a result of taking part in physical activity;**
- **Contribute to a more active environment at local level; and**
- **Be more cost-effective and efficient to operate; a stand-alone pool requires a high level of subsidy.**

3.6. These options have been developed to illustrate the potential of the site and a larger facility, delivering increased participation, social and physical activity benefits. The inclusion of a moveable floor in the main tank increases programming flexibility which impacts positively on capacity levels.

3.7. The rationale behind the above facility mix options is:

3.8. To illustrate the participation and revenue impact from a slightly larger pool; the existing operator has identified significant potential for increasing swimming lessons in the area based on demand. The existing facility delivered 600 swimming lessons per month. Equally there is potential to increase the existing number of swim memberships from the existing 180.

3.9. A facility offering both fitness and swimming is likely to appeal to a wider range of participants; this provides the opportunity to offer a new swim and gym membership.

3.10. Increased water space also facilitates an increased capacity for casual i.e., pay and play swimming.

3.11. Swimming lessons and gym memberships are very important revenue generators in any leisure facility.

3.12. Section 4 sets out the implications of each option in capital and revenue terms.

4. Capital Costs and Revenue Impact

Capital Cost

- 4.1. The full capital cost report is set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.2. The Estimated costs for the proposed options are detailed in the table below;

Option 1 - £6.3m excl VAT

Option 2 - £6.9m excl VAT

Option 3 - £7.7m excl VAT

Whitchurch Leisure Centre		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
GIFA		1,300m ²	1,515m ²	1,760m ²
1	New Build Leisure Centre	4,250,000	4,740,000	5,400,000
2	Moveable Floor	290,000	290,000	290,000
Base Construction Sub-total		£4,540,000	£5,030,000	£5,690,000
3	Incoming stats connections/diversions -allowance	100,000	100,000	100,000
4	External Works - allowance	250,000	250,000	250,000
5	Attenuation allowance	50,000	50,000	50,000
6	Construction Contingency @ 10%	500,000	550,000	610,000
7	Demolition - allowance	200,000	200,000	200,000
Construction Sub-total		£5,640,000	£6,180,000	£6,900,000
8	Prof Fees @ 12% of Construction Sub-total	680,000	750,000	830,000
TOTAL HIGH LEVEL BUDGET COSTS (excl VAT)		£6,320,000	£6,930,000	£7,730,000

Option 1: 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways)

4.3. To establish an approx. floor area, we have considered the following;

- **The Leisure Local Concept Option B provides a 20 x 8m pool, studio and small fitness offering.**
- **Removing the health and fitness offer and increasing the pool hall to reflect the requirements of the 25m x 6 lane size provides a revised GIFA of 1215m².**
- **The Sport England Affordable Swimming Pool documentation provides a 6-lane standalone pool with a GIFA of 1135m² plus plant of 357m² = GIFA of 1529m².**

4.4. For the purpose of this exercise Abacus have utilized the Leisure Local concept design with enhanced pool, making additional allowance for increased filtration plant, an office and first aid room.

4.5. This provides a GIFA of approx. 1300m².

4.6. As you would anticipate with an accommodation mix of predominantly wet side facilities, the new centre is generating a relatively high Base Construction Cost of c. £3,269/m² inclusive of MC OH&P. There may be future variances to these areas and rates as the design develops - for example; envelope treatments dictated by planning requirements or the substructure design due to ground conditions - these would be addressed as the design progresses.

4.7. Allowances for project specific fixed fit out equipment have been included within the Base Construction Cost, specifically;

- 1. Pool Pod Access**
- 2. Reception desk**
- 3. Signage**
- 4. Lockers (30nr)**
- 5. Changing Places fit out**

Option 2: 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways) with 35 station fitness suite

4.8. To establish an approx. floor area, we have considered the following;

- **The Leisure Local Concept Option B provides a 20 x 8m pool, studio and small fitness offering. Removing the multi-purpose studio offer and increasing the pool hall to reflect the requirements of the 25m x 6 lane size provides a revised GIFA of 1390m².**

4.9. For the purpose of this exercise Abacus have utilized the Leisure Local concept design with enhanced pool, making additional allowance for increased size fitness suite (35 person @ 175m²), filtration plant and added an office and first aid room. This provides a GIFA of approx. 1515m².

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4.10. The new centre is generating a Base Construction Cost of c. £3,129/m² inclusive of MC OH&P. There may be future variances to these areas and rates as the design develops - for example in envelope treatments dictated by planning requirements or the substructure design due to ground conditions - these would be addressed as the design progresses.

4.11. Allowances for project specific fixed fit out equipment have been included within the Base Construction Cost, specifically;

1. Pool Pod Access
2. Reception desk
3. Signage
4. Lockers (40nr)
5. Changing Places fit out

Option 3.

4.12. To establish an approx. floor area, we have considered the following;

- **The Leisure Local Concept Option B provides a 20 x 8m pool, studio and small fitness offering. Resizing the health and fitness offer and increasing the pool hall to reflect the requirements of the 25m x 6 lane size provides a revised GIFA of 1470m².**
- **For the purpose of this exercise Abacus have utilized the Leisure Local concept design with enhanced pool, making additional allowance for increased filtration plant and added an office and first aid room. This provides a GIFA of approx. 1760m².**

4.13. The new centre is generating a Base Construction Cost of c. £3,068/m² inclusive of MC OH&P. As the other options there may be future variances to these areas and rates as the design develops - for example in envelope treatments dictated by planning requirements or the substructure design due to ground conditions - these would be addressed as the design progresses.

4.14. Allowances for project specific fixed fit out equipment have been included within the Base Construction Cost, specifically;

1. Pool Pod Access
2. Reception desk
3. Signage
4. Lockers (50nr)
5. Changing Places fit out
6. Studio wall dividing wall

(3) Connections/diversions - An allowance has been included for incoming services works, however this is a notional allowance and assume capacity within the existing infrastructure – a sum of £100k is included. The provision of a new sub-station is not included given the existing centre.


(4) External Works, Carparking and Access – Given the external work requirements are unknown and the location of the building on the site is unknown a notional allowance is included of £250k. If the existing centre is to be retained during the construction phase of the proposed, it is likely parking provision will be required to the area of the existing building following its demolition.

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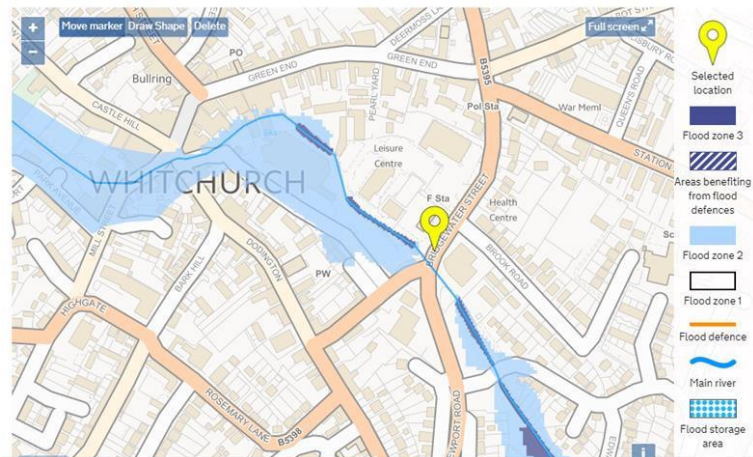
(5) Flood / Attenuation – Following a desk top review of the EA flood map it is noted that the new facility appears to fall within Flood Zone 1 (albeit close proximity to flood zone 2). A notional allowance of £50k is included for attenuation, as given experience on other new build facilities some attenuation is likely to be a planning requirement.

Likelihood of flooding in this area

You can move the marker  on the map to identify a specific location.
Alternatively draw a shape to identify an approximate site boundary.

[How to draw a shape](#)

[Download printable map \(PDF\)](#)



(6) Construction / Design Contingency / RISK - A contingency allowance of 10% has been included. Given the early budget nature of the costs and limited information available, this should be considered a minimum percentage at this stage, especially for a project of this nature. Close monitoring is required as the scheme design develops.

Client Contingency - No sum is included.

(7) Demolition – An allowance of £250k is included to demolish the existing pool facility located on the site. No allowance has been included for removal of any asbestos related material.

(8) Professional Fees - Professional fees have been included at 12%. This percentage is based on a Design & Build procurement route. As the scheme develops, this sum should be separated to reflect the Design & Build procurement route and novated fees.

Revenue Impact and Implications

4.15. Appendix 2 sets out the three revenue models for the three identified development options. The assumptions for each model are set out on the relevant tab for each model.

4.16. A headline comparison between the options illustrates:

Table 4.1: Summary of the three identified development options

Development option	Facility Mix	Capital Cost	Throughput	Income (YR3)	Expenditure (YR3)	Operational Surplus /(LOSS)(excludes below the line costs) (YR3)	Gross Surplus/(Loss)
Option 1	6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways) Café 15 covers	6,320,000	123,419	£566,732	£585,431	(£18,699)	(£434,555)
Option 2	6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways) 35 station fitness suite Café 20 covers	6,930,000	197,199	£851,931	£751,1000	£100,831	(£399,870)
Option 3	– 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways) 35 station fitness suite 1 x studio – large divisible into 2 studio areas Café 20 covers	7,730,000	313,261	£1,025,692	£806,495	£219,198	(£334,778)

4.17. Table 4.1 illustrates the following:

- **Option 1** has the lowest capital costs but also the lowest throughput level; it has the lowest income and expenditure but the highest subsidy.
- **Option 2** has the second lowest capital costs; its income and expenditure levels are higher than Option 1 but lower than Option 3. It has a lower level of subsidy than Option 1 but higher than Option3.
- **Option 3** has the highest capital costs; however, it delivers a significantly higher level of throughput and revenue generation. Expenditure is circa £55k higher than Option 2 but its overall subsidy is lower than both other options. This is because increased throughput generates more income which better offsets the operational costs and capital costs.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. Built in 1972, Whitchurch Swimming Centre comprises a 5 lane x 25m pool and changing facilities
- 5.2. The rationale for undertaking this high level feasibility study is the fact that the existing facility has now been closed for over 12 months due to a leaking pool tank, as well as other deterioration in the fabric of the building.
- 5.3. The identified facility development options identified for the site are:
- **Option 1** – 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways)
 - Café 15 covers
 - **Option 2** – 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways)
 - 35 station fitness suite
 - Café 20 covers
 - **Option 3** – 6 lane x 25m with and without moveable floor (half of pool tank, widthways)
 - 35 station fitness suite
 - 1 x studio – large divisible into 2 studio areas
 - Café 20 covers
- 5.4. Redevelopment of a larger facility, offering an increased range of facilities will:
- **Encourage increased participation in physical activity**
 - **Deliver increased health benefits (physical and mental) to more people as a result of taking part in physical activity**
 - **Contribute to a more active environment at local level**
 - **Be more cost-effective and efficient to operate; a stand-alone pool requires a high level of subsidy**
- 5.5. These options have been developed to illustrate the potential of the site and a larger facility, delivering increased participation, social and physical activity benefits. The inclusion of a moveable floor in the main tank increases programming flexibility which impacts positively on capacity levels.

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5.6. Table 4.1 illustrates the following:

- **Option 1** has the lowest capital costs but also the lowest throughput level; it has the lowest income and expenditure but the highest subsidy.
- **Option 2** has the second lowest capital costs; its income and expenditure levels are higher than Option 1 but lower than Option 3. It has a lower level of subsidy than Option 1 but higher than Option3.
- **Option 3** has the highest capital costs; however, it delivers a significantly higher level of throughput and revenue generation. Expenditure is circa £55k higher than Option 2 but its overall subsidy is lower than both other options. This is because increased throughput generates more income which better offsets the operational costs and capital costs.

5.7. Option 3 has the most impact on participation levels and revenue generation, which is important for the long term sustainability of both the individual facility and a new long term contract for the operational management of SC's leisure facilities.

5.8. Although a high capital investment is required the impact of this is greater in terms of community benefit and the subsidy required lower.