



## **The London Borough of Barnet SPA Project**



## **Final Report Phase 4 of the SPA Consultation The Future of Church Farm and Cophall leisure centres**

**Opinion Research Services  
November 2015**



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### Opinion Research Services

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This version of the report will be deemed to have been accepted by the client if ORS has not been informed of any amendments within a reasonable period of time (1 month).

This study was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252:2012 and ISO 9001:2008.

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## Glossary

LBB	London Borough of Barnet. At times also referred to as 'Barnet Council' or 'the Council'.
SPA	Sport and Physical Activity
ORS	Opinion Research Services
VRG	Victoria Recreation Ground
Danegrove	Danegrove Playing Fields

## Acknowledgements

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At all stages of the project, ORS' status as an independent organisation consulting the public as objectively as possible was recognised and respected. We are grateful for that trust and hope this report will contribute to LBB's Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) Project.

# 1. Introduction

## Introduction to the consultation

- <sup>1.1</sup> The Sports and Physical Activity (SPA) project was set up in 2012 to review the council's provision of leisure services, with the aim of ensuring that its five leisure centres deliver an improved and integrated offer for sport and physical activity which can lead to increased participation and improve the health and wellbeing of all residents. Underpinning this work was the councils aim to;
- » Provide fit for purpose facilities for all residents
  - » Improve public health outcomes across the borough
  - » Deliver a service that is affordable.
- <sup>1.2</sup> Over the last three years the London Borough of Barnet have consulted and engaged with residents and stakeholders as part of the wider SPA programme. As a result of this previous work the Council are looking to re-provide the existing Church Farm and Copthall leisure centres with a focus on improving the health and wellbeing of Barnet's residents.
- <sup>1.3</sup> This 4th Phase of the SPA consultation process covered the following topics:
- » The proposed facilities within the two new leisure centres.
  - » The proposed locations for the new leisure centre in the vicinity of Church Farm, either at Dangrove Playing Field in East Barnet, or Victoria Recreation Ground in New Barnet.
  - » The proposed location of the new leisure centre within the Victoria Recreation Ground site.
  - » Additional services considered for future provision.
- <sup>1.4</sup> The consultation ran from the 30<sup>th</sup> June to the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015 and consisted of;
- » An open consultation questionnaire that sought respondents' views on topics related to the proposed changes.
  - » Focus Groups aimed at priority groups and those covered by protective characteristics that allowed in-depth exploration of the relevant topics.
  - » Public drop-in sessions which allowed all interested stakeholders and the wider public to hear more about the consultation, ask questions about and provide their feedback on the proposals.
  - » Written submissions from the public.



- 1.5 The main aim of the consultation were to gather the views and opinions of as many residents and stakeholders as possible then incorporating these into recommendations that will presented to the council in early December 2015. Following this the council will commission detailed designs for the two new buildings, one at Copthall and the other in the vicinity of Church Farm, and take both forward into a planning process.

## Opinion Research Services

- 1.6 Opinion Research Services (ORS) is a spin-out company from Swansea University with a UK-wide reputation for social research and major statutory consultations. ORS was appointed by LBB to facilitate aspects of the consultation process and to provide an independent report of the formal consultation programme.
- 1.7 As a research practice with wide-ranging experience of controversial statutory consultations across the UK, ORS is able to confirm that the formal consultation elements and processes undertaken by ORS on behalf of the Council as described below have been conscientious in eliciting the opinions of members of the public and other stakeholders.

## Consultation overview

- 1.8 In order to ensure that the project was informed by public opinion, LBB commissioned ORS to advise on, analyse and report the results of the Council's consultation questionnaire. The Council also commissioned ORS to design, recruit, facilitate and report 8 focus group discussions as well as help facilitate and report the 12 drop-in sessions at locations in East Barnet, New Barnet and Copthall.. This enabled the council to engage with a wide cross-section of Barnet residents during July and August 2015. In addition, ORS was commissioned to analyse and report any written submissions received from the public.
- 1.9 The consultation was designed to be open to all, but it was particularly targeted to include feedback from those that would be most affected by the changes, including local residents in the Copthall, East Barnet and New Barnet areas as well as users of the Church Farm and Copthall leisure centres..
- 1.10 The open questionnaire was made available online and in paper form and aimed to gather respondents views on the proposed facilities for the two new leisure centres, their views on the alternative locations at Danegrove Playing Field and Victoria Recreation Ground as well as where the new building should go if Victoria Recreation Ground was the preferred location. In addition the questionnaire wanted to draw out any views residents might have on what other services could be provided within a leisure centre setting. Overall, 958 respondents have provided responses to the consultation questionnaire and these results are discussed in subsequent sections of the report.
- 1.11 The drop-in sessions and focus groups were intended to supplement the findings of the open consultation questionnaire, and achieve extra understanding of the issues raised by facilitating a more open-ended discussion around the key themes. They also enabled LBB to engage with, and listen to, members of the public, including those with protected characteristics about a wide range of important issues relating to the consultation. In total, there were 80 diverse participants at the 8 focus groups and 365 people attended the 12 drop-in sessions – 185 at Church Farm and 180 at Copthall.

- 1.12 Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, drop-in sessions and focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings gave a wide range of residents the opportunity to participate. Because participants were diverse and the recruitment (for the focus groups) targeted populations with protected characteristics, the outcomes of the drop-in sessions and focus groups reported in this document are broadly indicative of, and are reliable examples for, the opinions and attitudes of different populations within Barnet.
- 1.13 ORS also analysed and reported 8 formal written responses including individual submissions and submissions on behalf of groups and organisations.

## Accountability

- 1.14 Consultation should promote accountability and assist decision making; public bodies should give an account of their plans or proposals and they should ensure that all responses are taken into account in order to:
- » Be informed of any issues, viewpoints, implications or options that might have been overlooked;
  - » Re-evaluate matters already known; and
  - » Review priorities and principles.
- 1.15 Nevertheless, a consultation is not a vote; and influencing public policy through consultation is not simply a ‘numbers game’ in which the loudest voices or the greatest numbers automatically determine the outcome, for all the various consultation methods have to be assessed.
- 1.16 All types of consultation responses are important – for example, in the current consultation we received a range of different responses from the public through the paper and online Open Questionnaire, the Focus Groups and Public Drop-in sessions and through the Written Submissions.
- 1.17 This report aims to identify where strength of feeling may be particularly intense while recognising that interpreting consultation is not simply a matter of counting responses.

## Interpreting the consultation outcomes: LBB’s role

- 1.18 Importantly, the different consultation methods cannot just be combined to yield a single point of view on the council’s leisure centre proposals that reconciles everyone’s differences and is acceptable to all stakeholders involved.
- 1.19 Whilst the consultation process highlights aspects of this information that the public considers to be important, LBB will need to consider the appropriate emphasis to be placed on each element. In this sense there can be no single ‘right’ interpretation of all the consultation elements and other information available to the Council in their decision-making process.
- 1.20 ORS is clear that its role is to outline and report the opinions and arguments of those who have responded to the consultation, but not to make any recommendations as to how the Council should make use of the reported results. Whilst this report brings together a wide range of evidence for the

Council to consider, the report does not provide a single, public point of view on the council's leisure centre proposals. It is for the elected members to take high-level policy decisions based on their understanding of the evidence presented.

## Report of the consultation outcomes

- <sup>1.21</sup> This report considers the feedback received through each of the consultation elements and provides a comprehensive evidence base to help inform LBB's decision-making process.
- <sup>1.22</sup> Where verbatim quotations are used it is not because ORS agrees or disagrees with them, but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse the statements made, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. Similarly, where submitted ideas are reported, ORS made no effort to validate any claims while no endorsement of these ideas as true or false is being suggested.

## 2. Executive Summary

### How results are summarised

- 2.1 Due to their nature, qualitative results are outlined in greater detail and provide an in-depth understanding of the topics explored with participants of the different activities. These results are outlined by themes, followed by the respective quantitative results for each theme. While quantitative results are outlined more succinctly, they represent a much larger number of responses for each question/topic that respondents were asked about in the questionnaire.
- 2.2 Hence, the executive summary presents the results from both methodologies under the same sections with the intention of providing the reader a more well-rounded understanding of the consultation results. The reader is advised to read the results of both methodologies before forming his or her opinion on the results.
- 2.3 The reader is also advised to read the full consultation report, including the detailed findings for both the questionnaire results and the findings from the focus groups and drop-in sessions before forming his or her opinions on the consultation outcomes.

### Are the new facilities needed?

#### Church Farm

- 2.4 It was overwhelmingly agreed that the existing Church Farm leisure centre has reached the end of its useful life and is in need of redevelopment. The Centre was frequently described as being too small, dated, in bad repair, inaccessible and too restricted (in terms of the activities it provides and the times at which it is available for 'general' swimming). In fact, the North East of the Borough was considered lacking in terms of sport and leisure facilities generally and the prospect of a new Council-owned centre locally was welcomed.
- 2.5 **Questionnaire results** suggest that 69% of respondents supported either Option A (Danegrove) or Option B (VRG) for the new Church Farm leisure centre, while only 7% disagreed with both options, hence it can be inferred that overall there is a firm level of public support for redeveloping this leisure centre elsewhere.

#### Copthall

- 2.6 Although positive about their current leisure centre in terms of most of the services provided there, the majority of Copthall drop-in attendees agreed that the building itself has run its course and is in need of re-provision.

## Facilities mix

### Proposed core facilities

#### General

- 2.7 Most drop-in and focus group participants were pleased with LBBs proposed core facilities for the two new leisure centres, though many of those with views on Copthall felt they should represent the bare minimum in terms of provision (albeit with some acceptance of financial constraints).

#### Swimming Pool

- 2.8 A replacement **swimming pool** was at the top of the list of desired facilities for those in the locality of Church Farm leisure centre, who were particularly pleased to learn that this will be the standard 25m in length (though in terms of width, some desired eight lanes rather than six). Indeed, only a very small minority in the BME focus group felt the area requires a longer pool: they suggested that a 33m combined full and learner pool facility with a dividing wall could offer more flexibility and be more attractive to wider range of swimmers.
- 2.9 With regard to Copthall, the main point of debate was whether the water space should include a **50m pool** (with a dividing boom) as opposed to 2 x 25m facilities. There was significant support for the former on the grounds that it would: offer good value for money and a future-proofed amenity; ensure the centre is viewed as top-class regional facility that could host international competitions and attract competitive swimmers from a wide area; and allow these swimmers to train in an environment that prepares them for events such as the Olympic Games.
- 2.10 However, there was also a good deal of preference for the current configuration of **2 x 25m** pools on the grounds that: 50m pools are more expensive to build and run; it is preferable to keep competitive and non-competitive swimmers apart; having two pools is better practically as they can be built to the different requisite depths, set to different temperatures and one can remain open for the community during competitions, school lessons and if something goes wrong with the other; it is easier to provide single sex swimming sessions in two separate pools; and it would be more suitable for the community as a whole (especially given there is a 50m pool relatively close by at the Olympic Park).
- 2.11 Overall, despite the support for a 50m pool among many drop-in attendees and focus group participants, most would be prepared to accept 2 x 25m facilities at Copthall providing the water space as a whole is not reduced there.
- 2.12 At the New Barnet /East Barnet drop-ins, several people desired a **wider** community pool at Copthall: eight (or even 10) lanes as opposed to six. They argued that the current facility is very overcrowded at certain times - and that a wider pool would help alleviate this in what they presumed would be a busier re-provisioned leisure centre.
- 2.13 **Questionnaire results** suggest that the 25m swimming pool is the most important facility for the new Church Farm leisure centre, as respondents ranked it 1<sup>st</sup> out of 7 possible priorities.
- 2.14 Similarly, the 2 x 25m swimming pools were identified as the most important facility for the new Copthall leisure centre, as respondents ranked them 1<sup>st</sup> out of 8 possible priorities.

- 2.15 The mean ranking score for this facility, when asked about both leisure centres, is notably lower (i.e. ranked as notably more important) compared to all subsequent ranks - showing that the strength of conviction regarding the importance of swimming pools at both new sites is particularly strong; respondents ranked this facility as 'the most important by far'.

### Learner pool

- 2.16 The proposed learner pools were praised by many as a means to teach young children to swim away from the general public, and to offer swimming opportunities to adults who are not confident within a larger facility. Furthermore, the moveable floor was considered crucial in allowing the space to be used flexibly for a range of activities (such as water-based exercise and diving classes) and offering accessibility to a swimming pool for people with disabilities.
- 2.17 Some questioned the need for two separate swimming pools at the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-ins - instead suggesting that a **33m** facility with a dividing wall could offer more flexibility and space-saving opportunities, and be more attractive to larger range of swimmers.
- 2.18 **Questionnaire results** suggest that the learner pool is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important facility for both the new leisure centres, as shown by the ranking question for facilities at both sites.

### Splash zone

- 2.19 Finally in terms of the 'wet side', a few people suggested a need to timetable some **water/splash play** at the proposed new leisure centres in order to appeal to children and young people and those who like to swim for fun.

### Gym

- 2.20 A gym was supported as an essential facility that people would expect to see in a modern leisure centre - though it was repeatedly said that such provision would have to be **competitively priced** to allow the new leisure centres to successfully compete with the area's private facilities.
- 2.21 **Questionnaire results** suggest that the fitness centre/gym facility is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important facility for both new leisure centres, as shown by the ranking question for facilities at both sites. Hence this somewhat traditional facility is seen by many as one of the three most relevant sport and leisure facilities that should still be found in new and modern leisure centres.

### Fitness studios

- 2.22 Most people across the drop-in sessions and focus groups agreed that dance and fitness studios are **essential** given the popularity of exercise and dance classes currently. The studios must, though, be sufficiently flexible and multi-purpose as to allow a variety of activities to be held within them.
- 2.23 With reference to Copthall, several people suggested that the proposal for two studios may be insufficient - and that three may be required to cater for existing demand, and indeed to offer more and varied classes in future. Furthermore, there was a sense that the studios should be separate entities and not separated by a partition insofar as: *"you get noise with music and stuff...which isn't good when you're doing yoga or Pilates"*.
- 2.24 There was support for the inclusion of a **spinning studio** at Copthall to ensure the proposed new centre could offer this increasingly popular activity and attract a younger audience.

- 2.25 **Questionnaire results** suggest that fitness/dance studios are seen as a 'medium' priority/importance facility, i.e. not as important as the swimming pools or fitness centre/gym facilities, but more important than a Café or a Crèche.
- 2.26 These results are however slightly different across the two leisure centres. When asked about the new facility in the vicinity of Church Farm, respondents ranked Fitness/dance studios as 4<sup>th</sup> out of 7; However when asked about Copthall, respondents ranked this facility 6<sup>th</sup> out of 8, i.e. less important than the diving pool facility (ranked 4<sup>th</sup>) and the sports hall (ranked 5<sup>th</sup>).

## Café

- 2.27 There was almost universal support for hosting cafés within the new leisure centres. They were seen as an **important** means of revenue generation and would, it was felt, offer excellent socialising opportunities for centre users and non-users. That said, a couple of people at the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-in sessions said that they would only be prepared to support a café at a leisure centre within Victoria Recreation Ground, with the rationale being that a café facility at Danegrove Playing Field could be to the detriment of other existing cafés in East Barnet village.
- 2.28 The current café at Copthall leisure centre was frequently criticised for its lack of ambience and poor range of food and drinks (particularly healthy options). It was claimed to be not well-used for these reasons - but people also felt that improved provision - with Wi-Fi access - within a new leisure centre would be very welcome.
- 2.29 **Questionnaire results** however, suggest that cafés are seen as a low priority/importance facility, as they were ranked 6<sup>th</sup> out of 7 for the new centre near Church Farm and 7<sup>th</sup> out of 8 for Copthall. This is perhaps not surprising when considering the context of the question that requested respondents to prioritise this facility with others which are more directly associated with physical activity in a traditional sense; hence these findings do not necessarily contradict the above noted findings from the focus groups and drop-in sessions.
- 2.30 Comments gathered through the questionnaire also indicate the need to offer a varied menu with healthy eating options, as well as vending machines and water fountains throughout.

## Extra facilities?

### Sports hall

- 2.31 As for the possible added 'extras', drop-in attendees were **somewhat divided** on the need for multi-purpose sports halls in the two centres. Some - especially at Copthall - described them as much-needed, revenue-generating facilities that would attract footfall and provide a large space for community use (a view echoed by the vast majority of focus group participants) - whereas others felt they would take up too much space and worried that demand would not be sufficient to ensure their cost-effectiveness.
- 2.32 **Questionnaire results** suggest that sports halls are seen as a 'medium' priority, as they were ranked 5<sup>th</sup> out of 7 for the new leisure centre near Church Farm and 5<sup>th</sup> out of 8 for Copthall.

### Crèche

- 2.33 Parents of young children were keen to see a crèche at the proposed new leisure centres, suggesting that this would **encourage** them to be much more active than they are currently. Indeed, even many of

those without children acknowledged that such provision would be **useful** in attracting a younger audience to the centres and in allowing parents to undertake higher levels of exercise. There was also a sense that facilities such as a crèche are important in terms of revenue generation and ensuring the centres eventually become self-sustaining - and in enticing people away from private sector facilities.

- 2.34 At the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-in sessions though, a few people were aware of other forthcoming provisions in the Victoria Recreation Ground area and urged LBB to avoid duplicating facilities by providing a crèche in the proposed new leisure centre if it is sited there.
- 2.35 **Questionnaire results** suggest that crèche facilities are perceived as the least important for both leisure centres, ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of 7 for the new centre near Church Farm and 8<sup>th</sup> out of 8 for Copthall.

### Climbing wall

- 2.36 Mixed views were expressed on the inclusion of a climbing wall at the drop-in sessions. Some considered it an innovative, cost-effective activity that would attract people - especially younger people - to the new leisure centres. Others, though, were concerned about usage levels, instructor availability and the supervision costs it would incur.
- 2.37 The possibility of including a climbing wall was spontaneously mentioned at the focus groups for people with physical disabilities and young people, who felt that such non-traditional activities are essential in attracting new audiences to the proposed new leisure centres.

### Spa facilities (sauna, steam room, jacuzzi)

- 2.38 There was significant support at the drop-in sessions (especially at Copthall) and across all focus groups for incorporating a spa-type facility - including a sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi - within the proposed new leisure centres. This, it was felt, would enable the Council-owned facilities to successfully compete with private centres, providing they are maintained to a high standard.
- 2.39 It was suggested that LBB investigate the possibility of replicating the set up at Swiss Cottage leisure centre, which has a GLL-run Spa London facility on-site that attracts a significant number of visitors and apparently gives the Council-owned leisure centre the feel of a private facility.
- 2.40 **Questionnaire results** suggest that spa facilities are indeed in demand, with comments requesting such facilities repeating a number of times for both new leisure centres.

### Diving pool

- 2.41 Most of those who commented on the issue supported the retention of the diving pool at Copthall - though reasoning was sometimes based more around nostalgia and the fact 'it's always been there' than any knowledge of usage levels and demand. More specifically though, diving was perceived as becoming more popular as an activity and it was considered unreasonable that a community the size of Barnet should be left without a facility to encourage people to take it up.
- 2.42 Moreover, if the future Barnet Copthall leisure centre is designed to be an elite facility, it was considered important that it includes additional, somewhat niche facilities such as diving pools, and they should be sufficiently flexible to allow other activities to take place in them (and could, in fact, be incorporated into one of the proposed swimming pools).
- 2.43 A small minority felt that a diving pool would be inefficient in terms of both space and cost and should thus not be included within the facility mix at the proposed new Copthall leisure centre.



- 2.44 **Questionnaire results** suggest that a diving pool is seen as a medium priority/importance facility for the future Copthall leisure centre; it was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of 8.

## Other suggestions

- 2.45 **Children's soft play** was a popular suggestion for an added value facility that would generate significant revenue - and one person at the Copthall drop-in sessions suggested a trampoline park as an innovative, attractive provision that would appeal to a diverse range of people.
- 2.46 **Questionnaire results** provide more information on facilities not mentioned above that were suggested by participants to be included in the new buildings. For both leisure centres, 74% of respondents did not state any other suggestions. Key suggestions that were made by respondents to this question are outlined below.
- 2.47 For the new leisure centre near Church Farm, the more common suggestions included spa facilities (sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi), more children-related activities and facilities, parking facilities (including spaces for bicycles), a diving pool/facility, tennis courts and outdoor courts/facilities.
- 2.48 For Copthall, the more common suggestions also included spa facilities as well as more 'swimming orientated' facilities such as good and adequate changing facilities (including separate ones by gender, for families etc.), a 50m swimming pool and a swimming pool with a movable floor.

## Site preferences: The new leisure centre near Church Farm

### Danegrove Playing Fields or Victoria Recreation Ground?

- 2.49 Several people were prepared to see a new leisure centre sited at either Danegrove Playing Fields (henceforth Danegrove) or Victoria Recreation Ground (henceforth VRG) 'as long as it is built' and includes all of the requisite facilities. Most people, though, expressed a preference for one site over the other - and the cited merits and drawbacks of both are reported below.

#### Danegrove Playing Fields

- 2.50 The Danegrove site was thought to have some considerable merits, namely: its current lack of usage (especially in comparison with VRG) and the corresponding lack of impact building a leisure centre there would have on useable green space; its prominent location; its existing transport infrastructure and nearby amenities; its proximity to the current Church Farm site; and the fact it could be used by local schools.
- 2.51 The site was also thought to have some notable drawbacks, namely: its difficult topography and drainage; its comparatively small size; the implications a new leisure centre there would have on local traffic volumes and management; its location on a busy junction; its lack of access; its current designation as a school playing field; and the probable objections from residents, especially on Park Road. The primary issue for drop-in attendees, though, was the lack of parking in the immediate vicinity and the apparent lack of opportunity to provide much on-site provision in future.

## Victoria Recreation Ground

- 2.52 The VRG site was thought to have some considerable merits, namely that: it is a large, flat space with potential for wide range of facilities and future expansion if required; it is within an increasingly residential area and thus has a growing catchment; it is already a recreational space and could thus become a 'destination' where individuals and families could spend the day; it has good public transport links; it has some existing parking provision and a number of access points (or potential access points); it could be used by several local schools; it is an enclosed space where a leisure centre will have minimum visual impact; and siting a leisure centre there will have less of an impact on residents (in comparison with Danegrove).
- 2.53 One other apparently very important consideration in terms of locating a leisure centre at VRG is that it could act as a catalyst to developing what is presently a somewhat run-down park and wider area. Indeed, many people commented that VRG can feel unsafe after dark and suggested that siting a leisure centre there would result in improvements in this regard.
- 2.54 The VRG site was also thought to have some notable drawbacks, namely: the difficult road infrastructure immediately surrounding it (many comments were made about the narrowness of adjacent roads); the implications a new leisure centre there would have on local traffic volumes and management and parking on surrounding streets; a lack of safety and security currently that would have to be rectified to increase usage, especially among young people; and its 'hidden' nature meaning many people are unaware of its existence.
- 2.55 A small but significant minority of drop-in attendees and some focus group participants rejected the idea of a leisure centre on VRG because they did not want to lose any park space: they argued passionately for Danegrove on the grounds that it is unused space currently, whereas VRG is a functioning park. As aforementioned though, most others agreed that VRG is underutilised and that siting a leisure centre there would act as a catalyst for improvement and increased usage. Furthermore, most of the focus group participants tended to be reassured when informed that the leisure centre would only take up a very small proportion of the site.

## Victoria Recreation Ground: Site A or Site B

- 2.56 People were asked for their views on whether they would prefer to see a new VRG-based leisure centre sited towards the north of the site (Option A) or on the existing hard courts (Option B). Many did not consider the exact location to be particularly important, providing the facility is built somewhere.
- 2.57 Of those who expressed an opinion one way or the other, a small majority instinctively chose Option A (towards the North of the site) on the grounds that it is larger and thus more flexible in terms of the potential range of facilities. Other reasons for choosing Option A over Option B were that it is more discreetly located within VRG and retains its 'open-ness'; it would improve a somewhat neglected area of the park; and it does not result in the loss of apparently well-used hard courts.
- 2.58 Those supporting Option B (over existing hard courts) over Option A did so on the grounds that: it would impact fewer local residents; it is an already paved over area of the park with better drainage; less green open space would be lost; and accessibility is better.
- 2.59 Several drop-in attendees and focus group participants suggested LBB consider a larger leisure centre footprint by combining Options A and B - and others felt the Council should look at other options within

VRG to ensure the right area is chosen, primarily in terms of size, access, parking provision and potential residents' objections.

- <sup>2.60</sup> **Questionnaire results<sup>1</sup>** suggest that respondents overall prefer Option A (towards the North of the site, 48%) over option B (over existing hard courts, 28%). For those respondents who use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre, a similar breakdown of results can be noted (51% of them prefer Option A, while 31% of them prefer option B).
- <sup>2.61</sup> Finally, whatever is ultimately decided, many people wished to see any lost facilities (such as the children's playground and the hard courts) re-provisioned elsewhere within VRG.

### Overall balance of opinion

- <sup>2.62</sup> Though there was a large degree of support for siting a new leisure centre on Danegrove Playing Fields, a majority of drop-in attendees and focus group participants favoured Victoria Recreation Ground for the reasons outlined above. Within that site, Option A (building the new facility towards the north of the site) was typically preferred to Option B (building it on the existing hard courts) primarily on the grounds of size - which suggests that, if people could be reassured that the latter is large enough to accommodate a well-provisioned leisure centre, it would be acceptable to them.
- <sup>2.63</sup> **Questionnaire results**, however, show that respondents overall had very similar preference levels for either site, as 35% supported Option A (Danegrove) and 34% supported Option B (VRG). A further analysis of these results showed differences by certain groups of respondents; respondents who use the current Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre (approximately a quarter of overall respondents) prefer Option A (Danegrove, 53%) over Option B (VRG, 35%); in contrast, the majority (34%) of respondents who don't use the centre as often (approximately three quarters of overall respondents) prefer Option B (VRG), while 29% of them prefer Option A (Danegrove).
- <sup>2.64</sup> Further findings from the focus groups and drop-in sessions showed that a small minority rejected both sites on the grounds that open space should not be built upon and that more consideration should be given to brownfield sites - and a few others declined to give an opinion on the two possible locations: they desired sight of more detailed information (such as traffic and ecology survey results) prior to doing so.
- <sup>2.65</sup> Participants' concerns about parking provision and access should be re-iterated at this stage. The worries in relation to each site have been outlined above, but many people were of the view that both sites will be problematic in this regard and that careful consideration must be given to how adequate parking provision and proper site accessibility can be achieved. In this context, several people suggested that consideration be given to underground parking (or even multi-storey parking if at VRG) - while others saw a need for more pro-activity in encouraging people to visit the centre on foot, by cycling and by public transport.

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<sup>1</sup> The sites for VRG were named differently in the consultation document and the questionnaire. To minimise confusion, the naming convention used in the questionnaire was adopted when reporting the results in the executive summary so that it matches the naming convention used to report the findings from the focus groups and drop-in sessions.

## Other services

- 2.66 **In principle, many people supported** the inclusion of services such as GP surgeries, pharmacies, health and wellbeing advice provision, libraries and nurseries within leisure centres. They would, it was felt, attract people to the facility (including those who may not normally visit), thus increasing footfall and possibly usage and revenue generation - and increase convenience for the community by providing a 'one-stop-shop' for a range of activities. In practice though, there were some important concerns, chiefly around the space available and the need to retain this for the main purpose of a leisure centre; that is, to provide sport and leisure opportunities.
- 2.67 Most of those who commented did not consider GP surgeries to be necessary within any new leisure centre, though there was significant support for the provision of allied services such as: health (including mental health) advice; midwifery and health visiting services; and specialist clinics and complementary therapies such as osteopathy, acupuncture, podiatry, chiropractic services, massage, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy etc.
- 2.68 Many people at the Copthall drop-in sessions also endorsed the idea of a **GP outreach service** whereby local doctors and/or nurses could base themselves in leisure centres say one or two afternoons a week on a drop-in basis for consultations and clinics.
- 2.69 While some people (especially those at the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-in sessions) were against anything that might lead to a 'reduction in library space', many focus group participants - and indeed several other drop-in attendees - were **positive about the possible co-location of libraries** and leisure centres insofar as both facilities would be more sustainable and cost-efficient and it would enable individuals and families to undertake several activities under one roof. There was also support for a small 'reading lounge' for those wishing to visit the facility with others or to socialise, but not partake in any sporting activity - and for a small library of sorts for children to be able to do some homework between activities or while waiting for their parents to collect them.
- 2.70 **Questionnaire results** suggest that the highest proportions of respondents indicated that they would be willing to access library services and health advice/consulting services (65% and 60% of respondents respectively) in future leisure centres. Other services were met with lower levels of acceptance.

## Other comments or suggestions raised

### Site preferences: Copthall

- 2.71 Very few people objected to the re-provision of Copthall leisure centre on a different site, and the only comments made regarding the proposed new adjacent location were around the need to re-site the rugby and Gaelic football pitches (including during the construction phase).
- 2.72 Several drop-in and focus group participants commented on the need to view this as an opportunity to reconfigure the Copthall site as a whole to ensure it becomes a premier indoor and outdoor sporting and leisure destination for North London. As one person commented: *"it would be nice to regenerate it all into a sport, health wellbeing site for people to come and enjoy themselves and do lots of different things"*. In this regard, a few people suggested that LBB examine the possibility of relaxing green belt regulations in an attempt to increase the footprint of the proposed new leisure centre and make it 'the best it can be'.

2.73 Finally, one significant issue raised in relation to the Copthall site was that it is very poorly served by public transport. Many people were strongly of the view that LBB should lobby Transport for London for a re-routed bus through the site, particularly if Copthall is intended to become a 'destination' facility for the whole community.

#### Accessibility

2.74 The need for both proposed new leisure centres to be accessible and welcoming for disabled users was raised by numerous participants (Copthall was particularly heavily criticised for its poor configuration in this regard currently).

#### Other comments and suggestions from the questionnaire

2.75 Respondents to the **Questionnaire results** also provided further comments and suggestions. While 71% of respondents did not provide any other suggestions or comments, some of the key suggestions that were made by respondents to this question are outlined below:

- » The need for adequate access – by public transport, car, bicycle or via other means of transport
- » The need for adequate parking – including enough spaces in general as well as allocation for people with disabilities, small children etc.
- » The need for adequate facilities – especially changing rooms (including separation by gender, for families etc.), showers and toilets
- » The need for a wide range of activities and facilities – including for diving, classes and lessons on offer etc.
- » The need for reasonable prices – including membership, concession tickets etc.

## 3. The Consultation Questionnaire

### Overview

- 3.1 As part of the engagement process, a **consultation document** covering the proposed changes was produced and made publicly available on the Council's consultation website (Engage Barnet<sup>2</sup>). The website also included detailed information about the processes undertaken by the Council so far, including links to the relevant Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study papers, a summary presentation, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, Planning Briefs and an outlined Business Case.
- 3.2 The **consultation questionnaire** included an introduction to the consultation and a summary of its key points. The following topics were covered in the consultation questionnaire:
- » The proposed facilities within the two new leisure centres.
  - » The proposed locations for the new leisure centre in the vicinity of Church Farm, either at Danegrove Playing Field in East Barnet, or Victoria Recreation Ground in New Barnet.
  - » The proposed site for the new leisure centre within the Victoria Recreation Ground Option.
  - » Additional services considered for future provision.
- 3.3 The open consultation questionnaire was designed by LBB (with limited advice from ORS) and made available online through the Council's consultation website and the URL was also printed on the paper copies.
- 3.4 Paper copies were made available in locations identified as relevant, including Church Farm, Copthall, Burn Oak, Finchley Lido and Hendon leisure centres; the Council's libraries; at all drop-in sessions; New Barnet Sainsbury's supermarket and upon request. Respondents then had the option to submit their questionnaire via FREEPOST to ORS' office.
- 3.5 This chapter details the methodologies and responses to the consultation questionnaire. This questionnaire can provide considerable information about the views of particular groups and individuals at local levels; however it is important to note that it was open to any interested stakeholders, individuals or organisations both within and outside of Barnet regardless of their affiliation with, or usage of, Council-run leisure centres or other leisure facilities in general.
- 3.6 The results therefore are not representative of any particular population, including that of the LBB authority area. However, within the context of the consultation it provides an appropriate and important opportunity for the public to provide their opinions.
- 3.7 Of course, it is for LBB to determine what appropriate emphasis to be given to different elements within the consultation, while bearing in mind that the outcome of the consultation should not be just a

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<sup>2</sup> <https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/adult-social-services/sports-and-physical-activity-cf-copthall>

‘numbers’ game. In other words, the question is not *‘Which findings should determine our decision?’* but *‘What evidence or considerations have emerged that should influence our deliberations about the future provision of the two new leisure centres?’*

## Questionnaire responses

- 3.8 The questionnaire was made available for respondents (both online and in paper form) between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015.
- 3.9 All questionnaire responses in which at least one of the consultation questions was answered and received by ORS or LBB at any of the contact points made available by the close of the consultation period were included in the analysis.
- 3.10 For online questionnaires, ORS analysed the IP addresses and demographic variables and concluded that no systematic attempt to skew the questionnaire results was attempted by respondents through submitting multiple identical responses. Hence all online questionnaire responses were included in the analysis of results.
- 3.11 A total of 958 questionnaires were analysed, of which 446 were paper questionnaires and 512 were online questionnaires.

## Profile of respondents to the questionnaire

- 3.12 Table 1 (overleaf) provides a breakdown of results for demographic variables that were collected on respondents from questionnaires completed online or via paper versions. Percentages are based on valid responses<sup>3</sup> for each question and may not sum due to rounding.

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<sup>3</sup> Valid responses exclude those who did not answer the question or answered ‘Don’t know’ or ‘Prefer not to say’

Table 1: Breakdown of demographic variables for responses to the consultation questionnaire

Characteristic		All Responses	
		(count)	% Valid
Gender	Male	317	38%
	Female	526	62%
	Not Known	115	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100%</b>
Age	34 and under	101	12%
	35 - 44	180	21%
	45 - 54	190	22%
	55 - 64	196	23%
	65+	180	21%
	Not Known	111	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Ethnicity	White	716	89%
	Non-white	92	11%
	Not Known	150	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100%</b>
Disability <sup>4</sup>	Disabled	63	8%
	Not disabled	770	92%
	Not Known	125	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100%</b>
Working Status	Working	557	64%
	Retired	203	23%
	Otherwise not working	116	13%
	Not Known	82	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100%</b>
Religion	Christian	354	48%
	Non-Christian	154	21%
	No religion	235	32%
	Not Known	215	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>4</sup> For respondents who indicated that they have a disability, the following descriptions of disability have been recorded: Reduced physical capacity (44%), mobility (42%), hearing (19%), learning difficulties (14%), mental illness (14%), physical co-ordination (10%), vision (5%), speech (3%), severe disfigurement (3%) and other disabilities (24%).



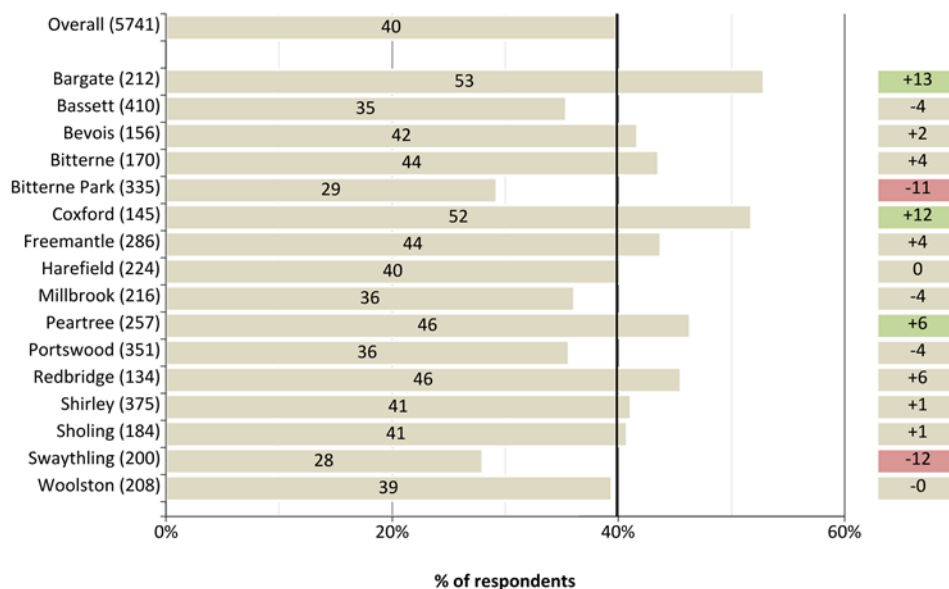
## Interpretation of the questionnaire results

- 3.13 In this report, where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” or “nothing stated” categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the volume an asterisk (\*) denotes any value less than half a per cent.
- 3.14 In some cases figures of 2% or below have been excluded from graphs.
- 3.15 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a ‘traffic light’ system in which:
- » Green shades represent positive responses
  - » Beige and purple/blue shades represent neither positive nor negative responses
  - » Red shades represent negative responses
  - » Grey shades represent ‘Don’t Know’ responses
  - » The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the ‘extremes’, for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied
- 3.16 Due to the nature of the open consultation questionnaire, results were not weighted to be representative of any particular population and no tests for statistically significant differences were undertaken.
- 3.17 This report includes the results of ranking questions, where respondents to the consultation questionnaire were asked to rank several alternatives in terms of their relative importance. A mean score (rounded to 1 decimal point) was calculated for each alternative. The mean ranking scores are then used to illustrate relative importance, such that the lower the score, the higher the importance. For illustration purposes, ‘Facility X’ (with a mean score of 1.7) would be considered more important than ‘Facility Y’ (with a mean score of 2.3), for example.

### Differences in results by sub-groups

- 3.18 For some questions, a further analysis revealed differences in responses by key demographic variables. Such analysis highlights how sub-groups within key demographic variables (e.g. within ‘age’, those aged 25-34) provided different answers compared to the overall average.
- 3.19 Where results are particularly higher (for certain sub-groups, in comparison to the overall score) they are highlighted in Green, whilst results that are particularly lower (for certain sub-groups, in comparison to the overall score) are highlighted in Red.
- 3.20 Whether results are highlighted or not may depend on various factors, including how different they are to the overall average and the base-size for each result (i.e. how many people who fall under each category answered the question).
- 3.21 Commentary text is then provided for those results which are particularly higher, as illustrated through the following example (data is independent to the findings discussed in this current report):

*‘Differences in agreement that savings should be made from the library budget by ward (Respondents who agree)’*



*‘Base: All respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)’*

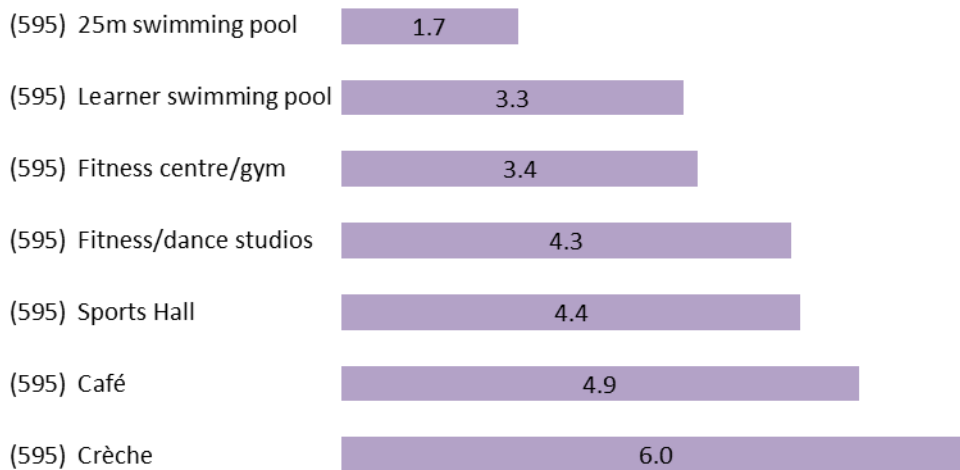
*‘Respondents who reside in **Bargate, Coxford or Peartree** wards are more likely to agree that savings should be made from the library budget to make Library Services more financially sustainable.’*

## 4. Detailed Questionnaire Results

### Section 1: The new leisure centre in the vicinity of Church Farm

*Please rank how important each facility is to you from 1 to 7, with 1 being most important and 7 being least important.*

**Figure 1: Please rank how important each facility is to you from 1 to 7, with 1 being most important and 7 being least important (Church Farm)**

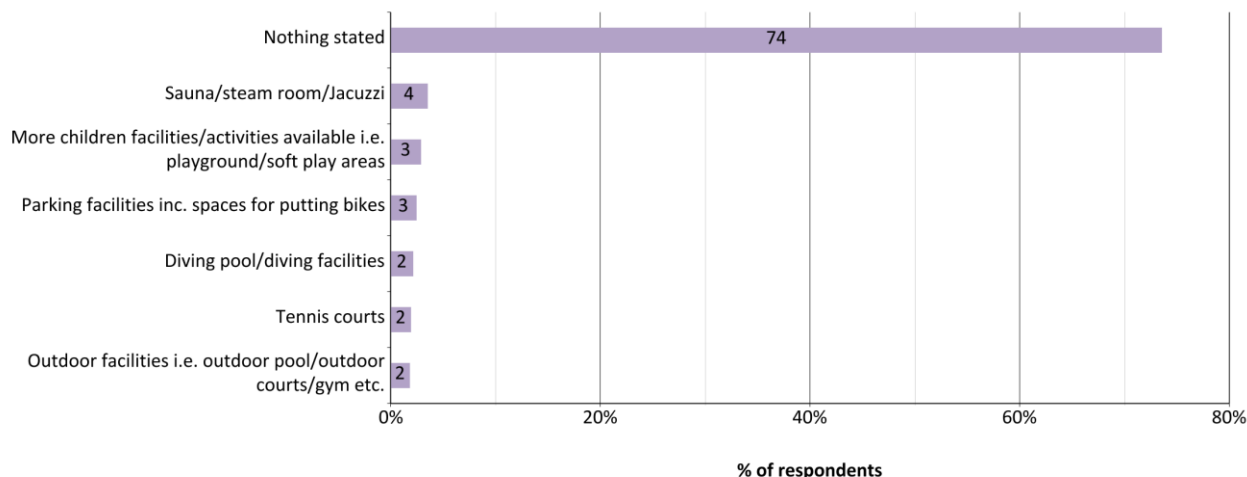


**Base: All respondents (noted in brackets)**

- 4.1 Respondents to the consultation questionnaire were asked to rank 7 facilities in terms of their relative importance to the new leisure centre in the vicinity of Church Farm.
- 4.2 The figure above shows the mean score (rounded to 1 decimal point) for each facility, such that the lower the mean score the higher the relative importance of that facility.
- 4.3 Results indicate that the 25m swimming pool is the most important for respondents (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), with the learner swimming pool and fitness centre/gym rated as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> most important respectively for the new leisure centre.
- 4.4 The crèche facility was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and least important to the new leisure centre.

*If you think there are other facilities not mentioned above that should be included at the new Church Farm leisure centre site, please provide more details.*

**Figure 2: If you think there are other facilities not mentioned above that should be included at the new Church Farm leisure centre site, please provide more details**



**Base: All respondents (958)<sup>5</sup>**

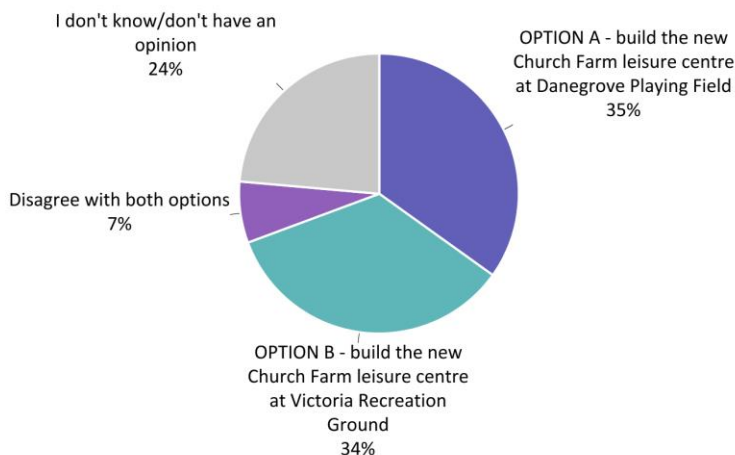
- 4.5 Respondents were asked what other facilities not mentioned previously should be included at the new leisure centre in the vicinity of Church Farm.
- 4.6 74% of respondents (n=705) did not state any additional facilities.
- 4.7 For the remaining respondents who answered this question, the more common mentions include spa facilities (sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi), more children-related activities and facilities, parking facilities (including spaces for bicycles), a diving pool/facility, tennis courts and outdoor courts/facilities.
- 4.8 Some of the other comments included requests for:
  - » A 33m swimming pool
  - » A café serving healthy food
  - » Rain-protected bicycle racks
  - » Early morning classes (e.g. boot-camp)
  - » Late evening classes (e.g. swimming, gender-specific)
  - » Gallery space for local artists
  - » A room available for studying/using computers
  - » Renting space for private businesses (e.g. massage, physiotherapy, beauty therapists)
  - » A shop selling swimming accessories (e.g. goggles)
  - » A wave machine

<sup>5</sup> For this question, ‘None stated’ answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

*Based on the information in the Consultation Document and your own knowledge please indicate which of the following options you think is most appropriate.*

**Part 1 - Overall**

**Figure 3: Please indicate which of the following options you think is most appropriate (the new Church Farm), overall**



**Base: All respondents (854)<sup>6</sup>**

- 4.9 Respondents appear to think that options A and B are equally appropriate, with 35% (n=298) preferring the new leisure centre at Danegrove Playing Field, and 34% (n=294) preferring the Victoria Recreation Ground option.
- 4.10 Almost a quarter (24%; n=202) of all respondents who answered this question indicated that they don't know or don't have an opinion on this matter.
- 4.11 Only 7% of respondents (n=60) disagree with both options. Some of the more common reasons provided by these respondents for disagreeing with both options included that they are happy with the existing Church Farm facilities and do not wish the centre to change, that it would suffice to expand/improve the existing facilities, that they disagree with building the new site on a green-belt area, or that they are happy with the current location of the centre or unhappy with the location of the proposed site. In addition, respondents appear concerned that the proposed plans will further exacerbate traffic congestion in the area.
- 4.12 A further analysis shows how results for this question vary for sub-groups by key demographic variables<sup>7</sup>.

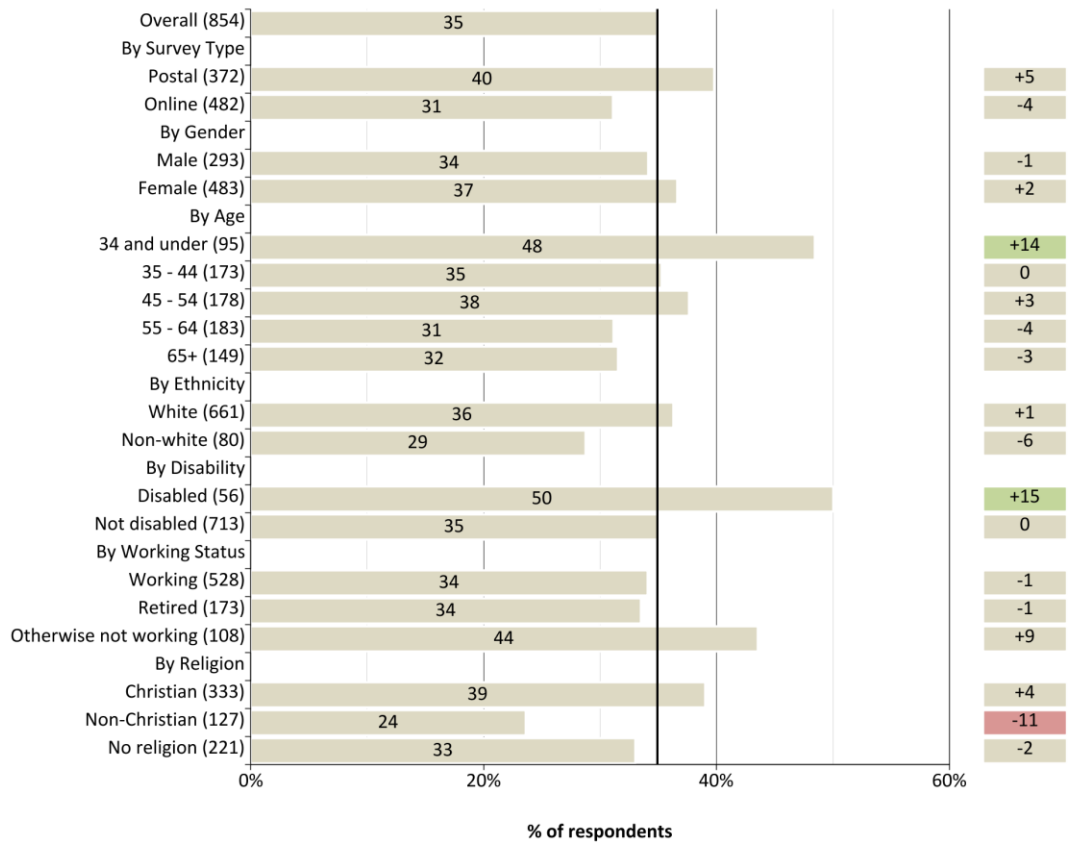
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<sup>6</sup> For this question, 'Don't know' / 'No opinion' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

<sup>7</sup> While no analysis to identify statistically significant differences has been conducted, results for these sub-groups do appear notably different in comparison to other sub-groups and hence they are reported.

Sub-group differences: respondents overall who prefer 'Option A' (Danegrove)

Figure 4: Sub-group differences: respondents who prefer 'Option A' (Danegrove)



Base: All respondents (noted in brackets)<sup>8</sup>

4.13 Those respondents to this question who are aged 34 and under or with a disability appear particularly likely to prefer Option A (Danegrove).

Sub-group differences: respondents overall who prefer 'Option B' (VRG)

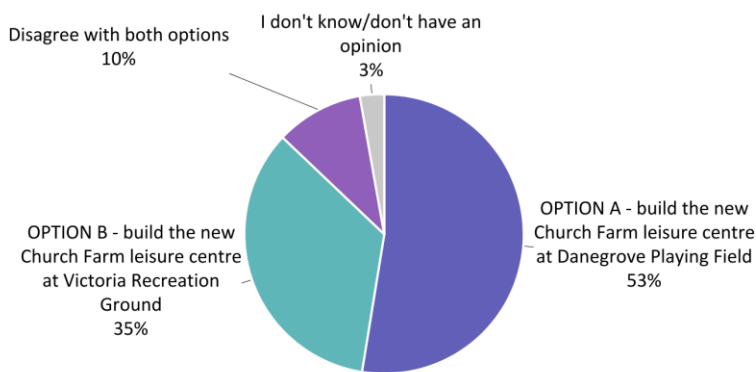
4.14 Respondents to this question who prefer Option B (VRG) are not particularly likely to be associated with any sub-groups by key demographic variables; the chart outlining this analysis is omitted from the report.

<sup>8</sup> For this question, 'Don't know' / 'No opinion' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

4.15 In addition, a further analysis provided insight into how results for this question varied between those respondents who use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre, and those respondents who don't.

**Part 2 – CF users<sup>9</sup>**

**Figure 5: Please indicate which of the following options you think is most appropriate (the new Church Farm), CF users**



**Base: respondents who use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre (217)<sup>10</sup>**

4.16 For those respondents who use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre, a higher proportion (53%; n=114) compared to respondents overall (35%; n=298) prefer the Danegrove option.

4.17 A similar proportion of these respondents (35%; n=75) in comparison to respondents overall (34%; n=294) prefer the VRG option, while only 3% of them (n=6) stated that they don't know or don't have an opinion on the matter compared to almost a quarter of respondents overall (24%; n=202).

4.18 Hence, respondents who use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre appear to prefer the Danegrove option by a notable majority, and are a lot more opinionated on this matter compared to other respondents.

**Sub-group differences: Church Farm users who prefer Option A or Option B**

4.19 A further analysis examined how results for this question vary for sub-groups by key demographic variables.

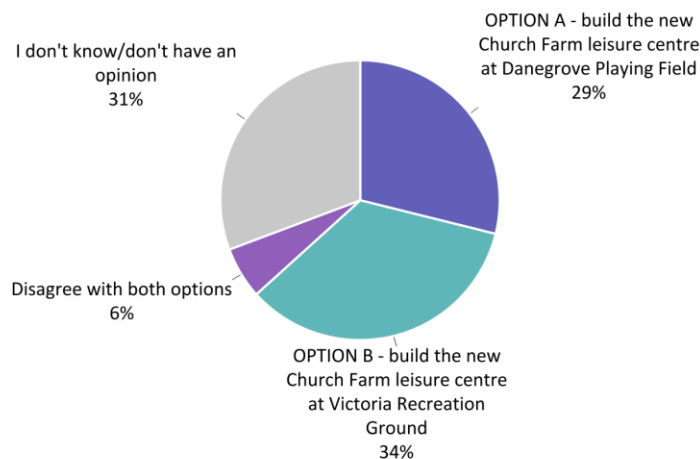
4.20 Church Farm users who indicated a preference for Option A (Danegrove), or Option B (VRG), are not particularly likely to be associated with any sub-groups by key demographic variables; the charts outlining this analysis are omitted from the report.

<sup>9</sup> Respondents who use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre

<sup>10</sup> For this question, 'Don't know' / 'No opinion' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

Part 3 – Non CF users<sup>11</sup>

Figure 6: Please indicate which of the following options you think is most appropriate (the new Church Farm), non-CF users



Base: respondents who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre (637)<sup>12</sup>

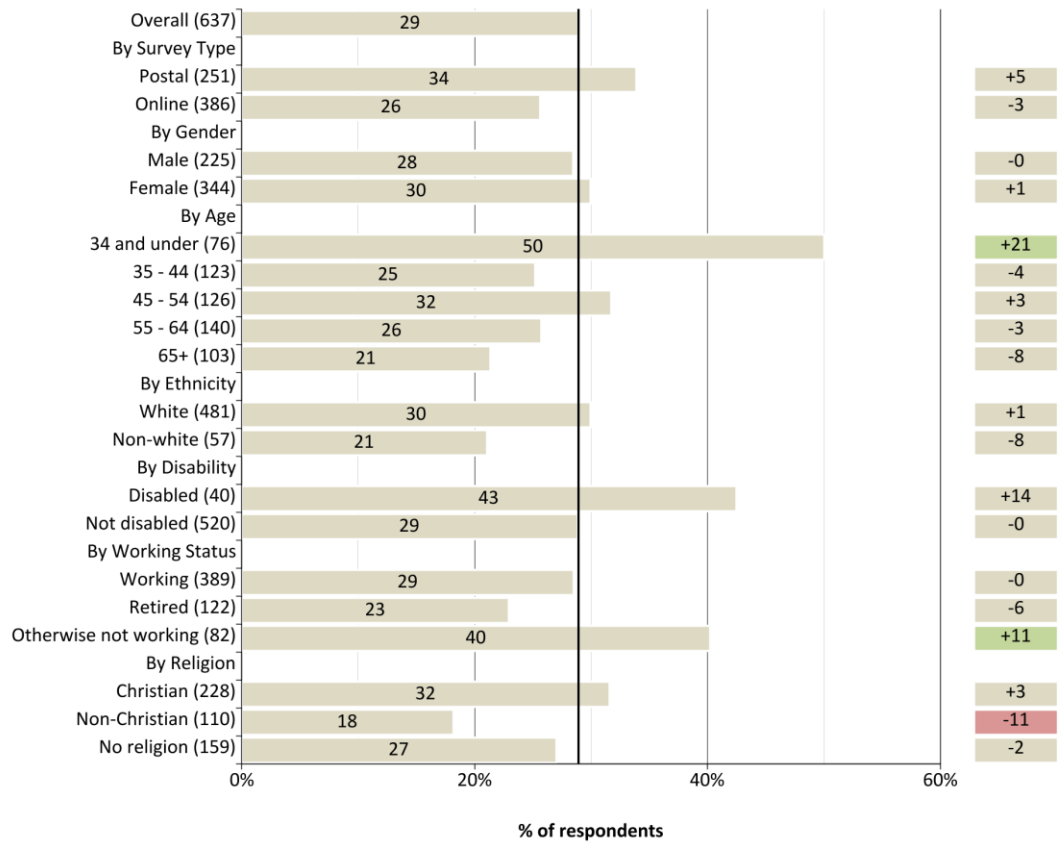
- 4.21 For those respondents who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre, a smaller proportion (29%; n=184) compared to respondents overall (35%; n=298) prefer the Danegrove option.
- 4.22 A similar proportion (34%; n=219) of these respondents compared to respondents overall (34%; n=294) prefer locating the new leisure centre at VRG, however 31% (n=196) of them stated that they don't know or don't have an opinion on the matter, which is a larger relative proportion compared to respondents overall (24%; n=202).
- 4.23 Hence, respondents who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre appear to prefer the VRG option, although almost as many of them don't know or don't have an opinion.
- 4.24 A further analysis examined how results for this question vary for sub-groups by key demographic variables.

<sup>11</sup> Respondents who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre  
<sup>12</sup> For this question, 'Don't know' / 'No opinion' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown. The respondents are those who indicated that



Sub-group differences: non CF users who prefer 'Option A' (Danegrove)

Figure 7: Sub-group differences: non CF users who prefer 'Option A' (Danegrove)



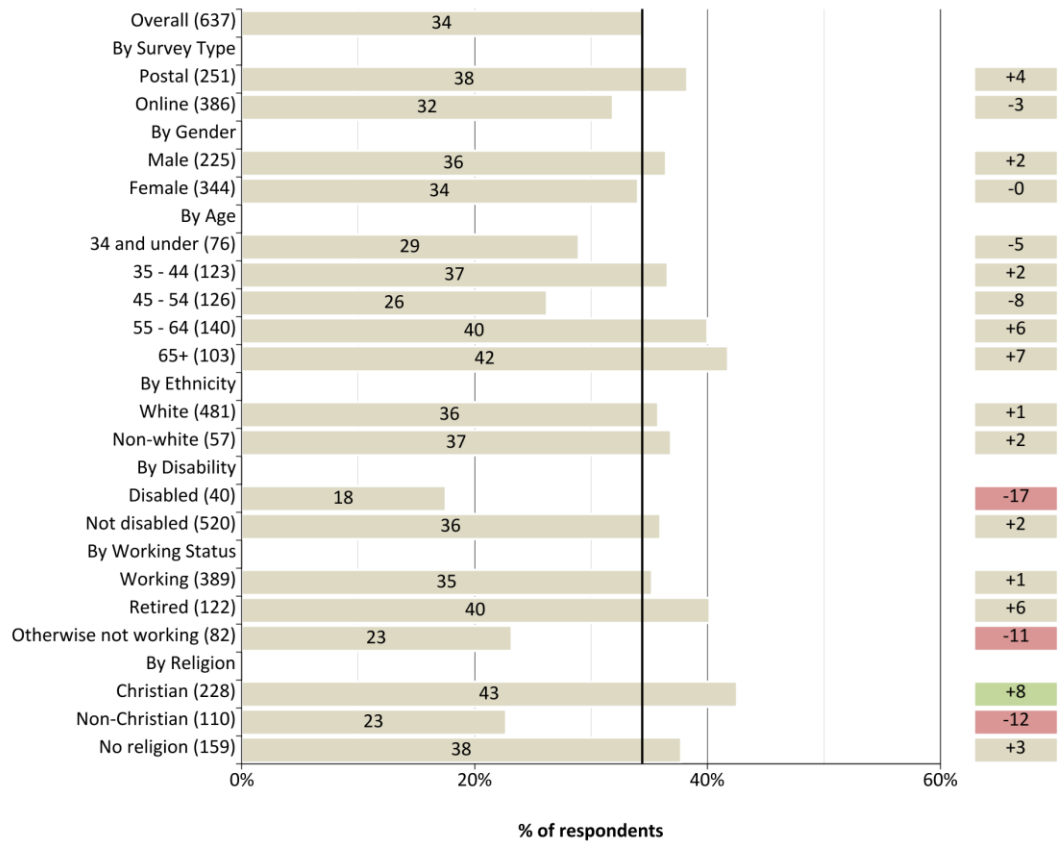
Base: respondents who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre (noted in brackets)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4.25</sup> Respondents to this question who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre and who are aged 34 and under or have indicated their working status as 'Otherwise not working' appear particularly likely to prefer Option A (Danegrove).

<sup>13</sup> For this question, 'Don't know' / 'No opinion' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

Sub-group differences: non CF users who prefer 'Option B' (VRG)

Figure 8: Sub-group differences: non-CF users who prefer 'Option B' (VRG)



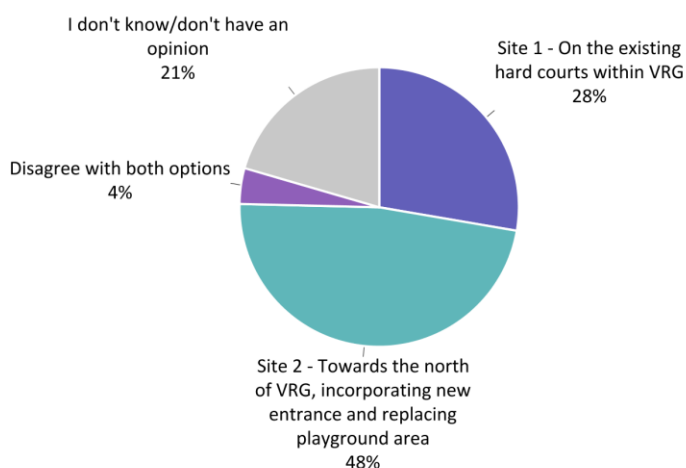
Base: respondents who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre (noted in brackets)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>4.26</sup> Respondents to this question who do not use the Church Farm leisure centre more than any other Council-run leisure centre and who are Christian appear particularly likely to prefer Option B (VRG).

<sup>14</sup> For this question, 'Don't know' / 'No opinion' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

*If the new Church Farm leisure centre was to be built at Victoria Recreation Ground which of the following sites do you think is most appropriate?*

**Figure 9: Please indicate which of the following options you think is most appropriate (the new Church Farm at Victoria Recreation Ground)**



**Base: respondents who preferred option B (VRG site) for the new Church Farm leisure centre (292)<sup>15</sup>**

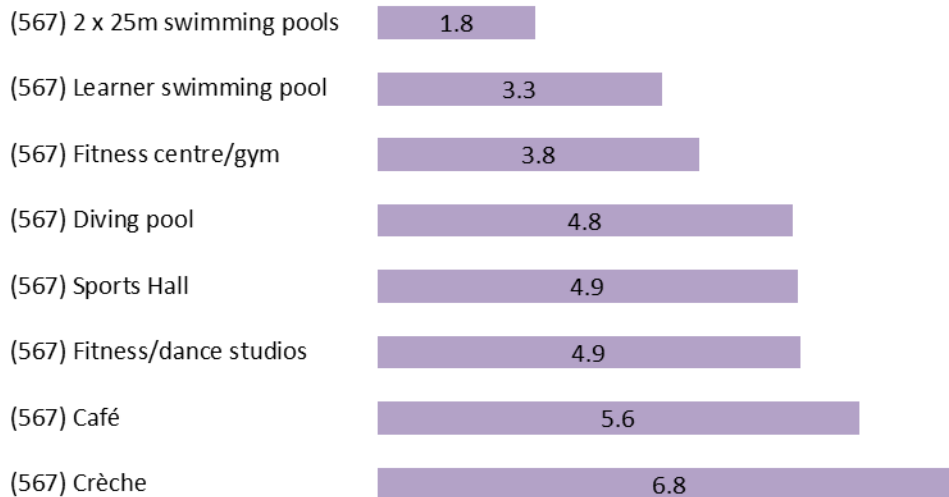
- 4.27 Respondents who indicated that they prefer having the new leisure centre located at Victoria Recreation Ground were asked to specify which site on the VGR they think is more appropriate.
- 4.28 Almost half (48%; n=139) of respondents to this question preferred to have the new Church Farm leisure centre built towards the north of Victoria Recreation Ground, incorporating the new entrance and replacing the playground.
- 4.29 It should be noted however that more than a quarter (28%; n=81) of respondents to this question preferred to have the new Church Farm leisure centre built on the existing hard courts, while 21% (n=60) did not know or did not have an opinion.
- 4.30 4% of respondents (n=12) disagree with both site options for the new leisure centre at the Victoria Recreation Ground. Some of the reasons provided for this included that the current VRG site should stay as it is, with a notable concern for losing the playground and for the negative impact on the environment (losing green space, noise/air/light pollution) as well as the expected traffic congestion.
- 4.31 Some alternatives suggested included purchasing brown-land nearby to build the new swimming pool on, and redeveloping the existing site to be more community orientated, e.g. without large new facilities but with an added café and community centre, bigger gardens, improved playground etc.

<sup>15</sup> For this question, 'Don't know' / 'No opinion' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

## Section 2: New Copthall leisure centre

*Please rank how important each facility is to you from 1 to 8, with 1 being most important and 8 being least important.*

**Figure 10: Please rank how important each facility is to you from 1 to 8, with 1 being most important and 8 being least important (Copthall)**

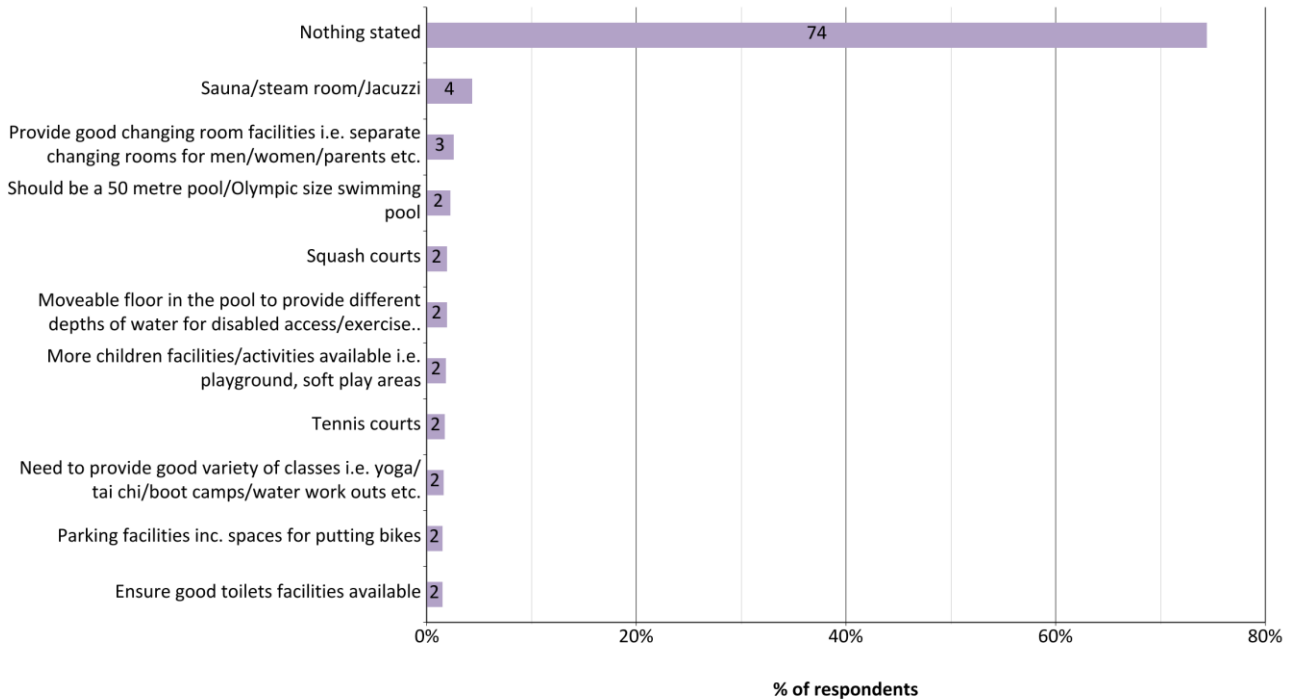


**Base: All respondents (noted in brackets)**

- 4.32 Respondents to the consultation questionnaire were asked to rank 8 facilities in terms of their relative importance to the new Copthall leisure centre.
- 4.33 The figure above shows the mean score (rounded to 1 decimal point) for each facility, such that the lower the mean score the higher the relative importance of that facility.
- 4.34 Results indicate that the 2 x 25m swimming pools are most important for respondents (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), with the learner swimming pool and fitness centre/gym rated as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> most important respectively for the new Copthall leisure centre.
- 4.35 The crèche facility was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> and least important to the new Copthall leisure centre.

*If you think there are other facilities not mentioned above that should be included at the new Cophall site, please provide more details.*

**Figure 11: If you think there are any other facilities not mentioned above that should be included at the new Cophall site, please provide more details**



**Base: All respondents (956)<sup>16</sup>**

- 4.36 Respondents were asked what other facilities not mentioned previously should be included at the new Cophall leisure centre.
- 4.37 74% of respondents (n=712) did not state any additional facilities.
- 4.38 For the remaining respondents who answered this question, the more common mentions include spa facilities (sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi) as well as more ‘swimming orientated’ facilities such as good and adequate changing facilities (including separate ones by gender, for families etc.), a 50m swimming pool and a swimming pool with a movable floor.
- 4.39 In addition, respondents specifically noted squash and tennis courts, more children-related activities and facilities, a good variety of classes, parking facilities (including spaces for bicycles) and good toilet facilities.
- 4.40 Some of the other comments included requests for:
  - » A leisure/fun pool
  - » A separate 25m pool for overflow from classes, private hire etc.

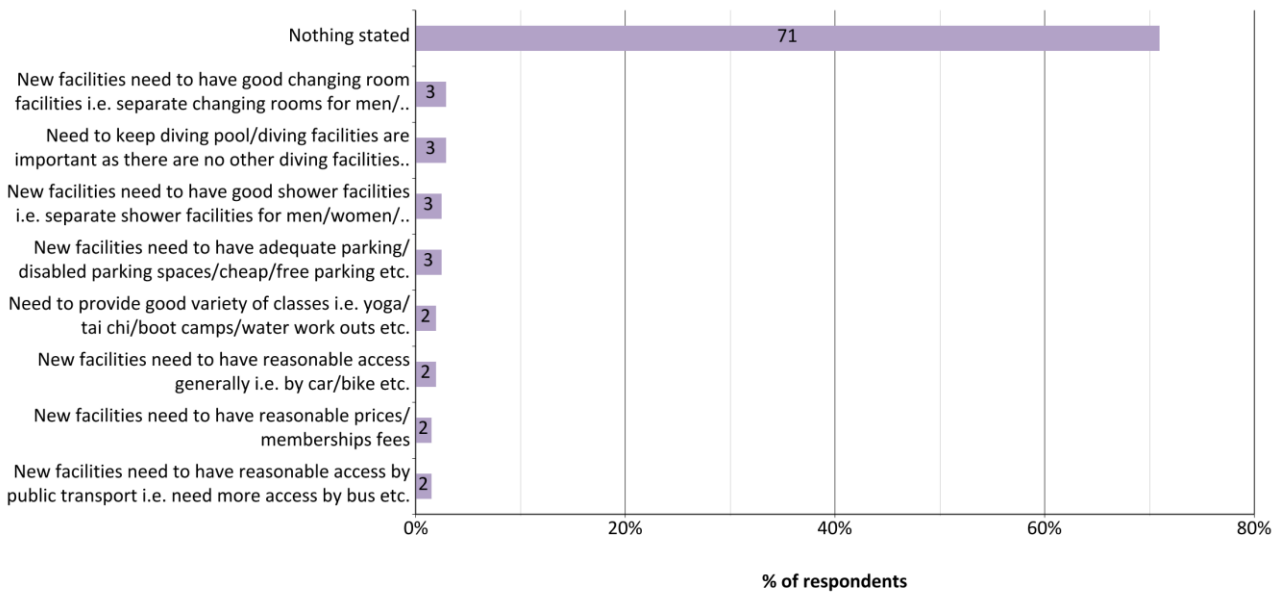
<sup>16</sup> For this question, ‘None stated’ answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

- » Gender/age/family specific swimming times (e.g. women, adults only, parents with children)
- » Spin-driers for wet clothes
- » Ozone cleaned pools
- » A café serving healthy food, vending machines and water fountains
- » A room available for studying/using computers and meeting rooms for hire
- » Adequate number of rooms for different classes simultaneously / more than one sports hall
- » Adequate access i.e. by public transport

4.41 One respondent suggested that the Council should contact Oxygen Fit, which is said to have provided useful community support over the past 5 years, although he/she did not include any more background information for this suggestion.

*If you have any further comments or suggestions about our proposals for new leisure centres that you want the Council to consider, please provide more details.*

**Figure 12:** If you have any further comments or suggestions about our proposals for new leisure centres that you want the Council to consider, please provide more details.



Base: All respondents (958)<sup>17</sup>

4.42 71% of respondents (n=680) did not provide any further comments or suggestions.

4.43 For the remaining respondents to this question, several key themes can be identified, including:

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<sup>17</sup> For this question, 'None stated' answers were included as valid results for which percentages are shown.

- » The need for adequate access – by public transport, car, bicycle or via other means of transport
- » The need for adequate parking – including enough spaces in general as well as allocation for people with disabilities, small children etc.
- » The need for adequate facilities – especially changing rooms (including separation by gender, for families etc.), showers and toilets
- » The need for a wide range of activities and facilities – including for diving, classes and lessons on offer etc.
- » The need for reasonable prices – including membership, concession tickets etc.

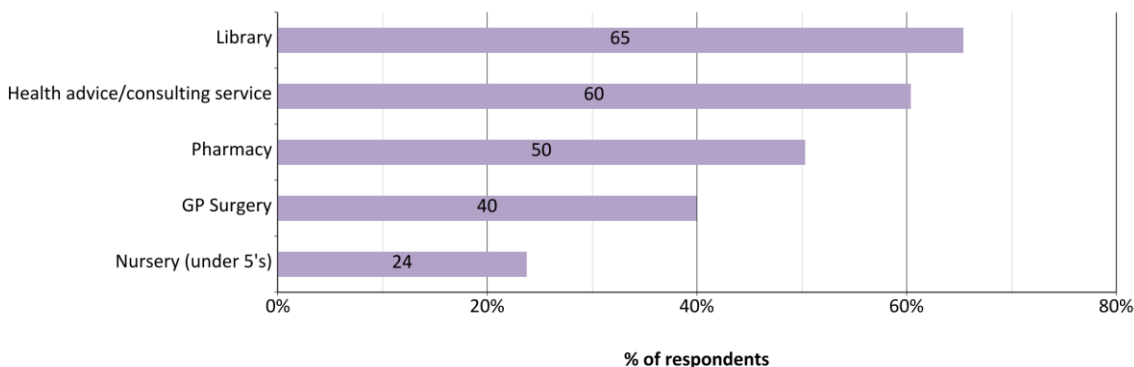
4.44 Some of the other comments noted the following points of interest:

- » New leisure centres should have a meeting point
- » There should be an ability to pay for lockers on an annual basis
- » Alternative non-chlorine water-filtering/cleaning methods should be considered: Ozone, UV etc.
- » Solar heating should be used in the swimming pools
- » Gender/age specific swimming sessions should be introduced
- » Space should be rented out for businesses and for private-hire
- » Online booking system should be made more efficient/user-friendly
- » The athletics club should be accommodated
- » There should be a fenced area within VRG for dogs and dog-owners
- » The Council should consider running the new leisure centres directly rather than outsource their management
- » As much as possible, the green features and park areas on both sites should be kept and further enhanced, and where possible incorporated within the new development
- » The Council should consider developing the new leisure centre/swimming pools on the old East Barnet Gas Works site instead of the park area
- » The Council should ensure the new leisure centres' staff members are well trained.

## Section 3: Other services

*Which of the following services would you consider accessing through the Council's leisure centres if they were to become available?*

**Figure 13: Which of the following services would you consider accessing through the Council's leisure centres if they were to become available?**



**Base: All respondents (735)<sup>18</sup>**

- 4.45 Respondents were asked to indicate if they would consider accessing additional services through the Council's leisure centres if they were to become available.
- 4.46 65% (n=481) of respondents to this question indicated that they would consider accessing library services, while 60% (n=444) indicated that they would consider accessing health advice/consulting services.
- 4.47 Half or less of respondents to this question indicated they would consider accessing pharmacy services (50%; n=370) or GP surgeries (40%; n=294), while less than a quarter (24%; n=175) indicated they would consider accessing nursery (under 5's) services through the Council's leisure centres.

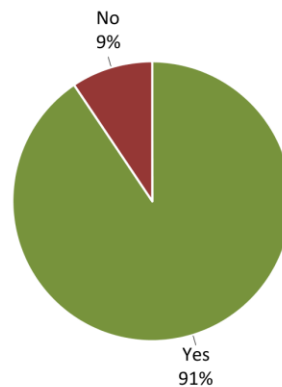
<sup>18</sup> This was a multiple-choice question hence percentages do not add-up to 100.



## Section 4: About you

*Have you used any leisure facilities in the last 12 months?*

**Figure 14: Have you used any leisure facilities in the last 12 months?**



**Base: All respondents (881)**

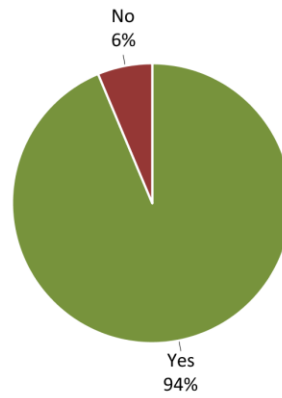
<sup>4.48</sup> 91% (n=798) of respondents overall used a leisure facility<sup>19</sup> in the last 12 months.

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<sup>19</sup> Any facility used to take part in sport, physical activities or any other form of exercise, including leisure centres (Council run and or private/commercial), sports clubs, fitness centres or gyms, golf clubs, schools, community/church halls, etc. This can be within or outside of the borough of Barnet.

*Do you use Council run leisure centres?*

**Figure 15: Do you use Council run leisure centres?**



**Base: Respondents who used any leisure facilities in the last 12 months (797)**

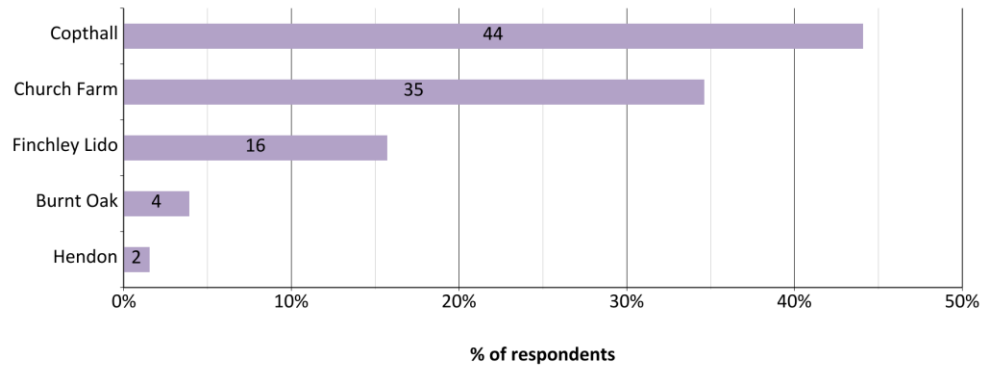
<sup>4.49</sup> 94% (n=747) of respondents who have used leisure facilities in the last 12 months said that they use Council-run leisure centres<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Council leisure centres include: Copthall, Church Farm, Finchley Lido, Burnt Oak and Hendon.

*Which leisure centre do you use most often?*

**Figure 16: Which (Council-run) leisure centre do you use most often?**



**Base: Respondents who use a Council-run leisure centre (635)**

- 4.50 Respondents who indicated that they use Council-run leisure centres were asked to indicate which one of those they use most often.
- 4.51 44% (n=280) of respondents to this question indicated that they use Copthall, while 35% (n=220) indicated they use Church Farm most often.

## 5. Drop-in Sessions

### Overview

- 5.1 This chapter in the report is based on the views expressed during nine drop-in sessions in the Church Farm area and three in Copthall leisure centre. The former were attended by 185 people (128 of whom were spoken to in depth) and the latter by 180 people.

### Are the new facilities needed?

#### Church Farm

- 5.2 It was overwhelmingly agreed that the existing Church Farm leisure centre has reached the end of its useful life and is in need of redevelopment. The Centre was frequently described as being too small, dated, in bad repair, inaccessible and too restricted (in terms of the activities it provides and the times at which it is available for 'general' swimming). Some of the many typical comments were:

*Church Farm is quite small and there's not much you can do there*

*For years we have been campaigning for a decent swimming pool this side of the borough. Church Farm is very small and is restricted to certain times of the day when you can use it*

*They hire out the pool so there is only around 20 hours a week of open swimming. That's why the proposal is great; it will be a better utilised pool with much more flexibility...*

*Church Farm is too small, too old and doesn't appeal...*

*Church Farm is too small. If you get more than ten people in there then it is overcrowded. The changing rooms in there aren't particularly good either...*

*Church Farm is very small and old...something new and bigger would really cater for this area. I think I will be one of the first to sign up!*

*I've been using Church Farm swimming pool for a while and it has seen better days so I'm not against having something new in Barnet*

*I think it's absolutely essential to upgrade the facilities; they have been old, poor and limited for a long time and there is a need in this area*

*Church Farm is awful and cold and there's no disabled access.*

- 5.3 In fact, the North East of the Borough was considered somewhat lacking in terms of sport and leisure facilities generally (with many people apparently having to use facilities outside Barnet):

*We are desperate for something here*

*At the moment there is the swimming pool, but if I want to go to something else I have to go outside of Barnet. There's not a lot around here*

*We've had to travel to get good facilities for a very long time*

*It is definitely a needed facility. On the public and private side there are not enough gym and leisure facilities in the area. The swimming pool in Church Farm isn't good enough...and Southgate is not only a little bit further but is in Enfield*

*I think it desperately needs something new...there is nowhere near enough for me in the local area. We've got Church Farm which to me has always been a learning pool for children. There isn't a gym in there. There is one next door but it's a private gym, which obviously involves contracts. I have to go to Southgate pool or Enfield, which is a distance...*

- 5.4 As such, the prospect of a new centre locally (especially a Council-owned facility that would inevitably be more competitively-priced than those run privately) was very much welcomed:

*We've been asking for this pool for at least six years. There is no doubt that it is needed; the community wants it...*

*We're from the Community Association and have been fighting for this for a long time. We were promoting a vision for New Barnet of the things we want in the area. We came up with a wish list, a vision and one of the top items was a swimming pool...*

*I feel very excited about the prospect of something happening*

*This can't come soon enough; we're crying out for it!*

*It's really necessary; it's no good saying you've got LA Fitness as that's not going to serve the same purpose.*

- 5.5 Furthermore, forthcoming changes to a private facility in the vicinity (LA Fitness in New Barnet is shortly to become a Pure Gym, resulting in the loss of its swimming pool and exercise classes) will, it was felt, result in even more need - and indeed demand - for the planned new Church Farm leisure centre:

*The area needs it. LA Fitness is about to be taken over by Pure Gym which won't suit my age group. It's only for people who want to use machines*

*I'm going to have to stop going...Pure Gym just has weights and machines*

*The changes with LA fitness will be of benefit to the Council*

*Classes at LA Fitness will come to a stop soon so I will be looking around.*

## Copthall

- 5.6 Although positive about their leisure centre in terms of most of the services provided there, the majority of Copthall drop-in attendees agreed that the building itself has run its course and is in need of re-provision (not least because of the poor disabled access generally and the fact there is only one toilet to serve the entire dry side of the centre):

*It has a reputation as an elite centre; they just need to upgrade everything*

*It's long overdue and really needs it*

*Knock it down, build something better*

*Copthall does need re-vamping but it's a fantastic centre*

*A rebuild is long overdue; it really needs it*

*I think it's time to demolish everything; it was built in the 1970s and isn't suitable*

*A lot of people don't come here because the facility isn't great...even though the swimming programme is fantastic*

*Copthall speaks for itself; re-new it, update it and use new ideas.*

- 5.7 A few people initially questioned the need for a complete re-build given that, on face value, the centre is in what they considered to be fairly good repair. However, when informed that the most costly aspects (such as the plant room) are 'behind the scenes', most accepted the proposal to re-provision Copthall to a nearby site - with only a small minority still arguing for a 'make do and mend' approach.

## Facilities mix

### Proposed Core Facilities

#### General

- 5.8 Most drop-in attendees were pleased with LBBs proposed core facilities for the new leisure centres:

*That sounds wonderful all in one place; that is the right mix*

*The basic things they've got look really good*

*From a priority point of view, a full pool, learner pool, a fitness suite and dance studios are people's main concerns*

*We've got to have a decent 25m pool, a training pool, a small gym, studios, a café. So yes, all good!*

*I think the proposal they've got in terms of facilities is great...gym, nice café, studio, pool*

*I'm impressed! It looks very good indeed*

*It's going to be brilliant!*

*It's very similar to the present system and to me that is ideal*

*The more you include the more people will use it but in principle it looks extremely good.*

#### Swimming Pool

- 5.9 As might be expected, a replacement swimming pool was at the top of the list of desired facilities for the overwhelming majority of Church Farm attendees, who were particularly pleased to learn that this will be the standard 25m in length (though in terms of width, some desired eight lanes rather than six):

*A swimming pool is the thing that's at the top of the list*

*My only thing is that if you're going to do a pool, it's got to be a decent size...they said 25 metres, brilliant!*

*An eight lane pool would be more advantageous*

*An eight lane pool is a better size; you could have two lanes being used productively.*

- 5.10 Indeed, some people (albeit a small minority) desired the provision of a replacement swimming pool only, primarily on the grounds of size and restricting the amount of open space to be built upon:

*I think a swimming pool is a crucial thing. I see that there is a plan for a gym facility, which I am a bit sceptical about, partly because it would make the building a bit bigger than it would need to be. I think as long as there is a swimming pool in there, I wouldn't say that another fitness facility is needed. I want a good facility for the community but I don't want to build on more of a recreation ground. I think that people always like additional facilities, but if you said to the community that you are going to build a new pool, people will be happy with that. If you tell them that there is going to be a gym as well it wouldn't make them happier.*

Most, though, saw the need to offer a wider range of facilities in order to attract the footfall required to develop a sustainable and self-funding leisure centre:

*It needs to offer other facilities in there to entice you in as you walk past*

*The key is that it can't just be a swimming pool; it needs to offer something to a wider variety of people.*

- 5.11 At Copthall, the main point of debate was whether the water space should include a 50m pool (with a dividing boom) as opposed to 2 x 25m facilities. As the following comments demonstrate, there was significant support for the former on the grounds that this would: ensure the centre is viewed as a top-class regional facility that could host international competitions and attract competitive swimmers from a wide area; and allow these swimmers to train in an environment that prepares them for events such as the Olympic Games. Some of the very many typical comments were:

*What about having a 50m pool with the option to have it all in one water space?*

*Why don't you just do a 50m pool? 25m + 25m with a slice that comes out in the middle. It makes more sense if you do a 50m and then a divider and get rid of the other one*

*For a regional or even sub-regional facility, just a 25m pool is not taking it forward. A 50m pool merits serious consideration*

*A 50m pool could be a national centre and you can separate it*

*Copthall is a regional facility for competition. Why not make it 50m? It would last 30 to 40 years so why not have a top class facility?*

*I'm surprised at 25m; I would have thought it would go Olympic to become international*

*A 50m pool immediately draws top swimmers...*

*Copthall is a Barnet-wide facility and there should be a 50m pool there to generate interest. They could then hold major gala and competitive events...*

*There are only a handful of 50m pools in the country; if my son wants to swim properly we have to travel. If you have it here people would come from miles around*

*You've got a wealth of experience on the swimming club side. Why not have a 50m pool and capitalise on this?*

*A 50m pool would encourage serious swimming here...people aiming to represent their country. People come a long way as it is and this would encourage even more*

*I think a 50m pool is needed to train people for the Olympics. You can divide it in half technically and it would be much more flexible and wouldn't take up much more floor space. 2 x 25m misses a trick*

*They need a bigger pool in Copthall; Olympic size. To have a smaller pool is a tragic mistake. If you're going to do it, go for it! With a 25m pool everyone just complains; serious swimmers can't use it so why bother?*

- 5.12 However, there was also some preference for the current configuration of 2 x 25m pools on the grounds that: it is preferable to keep competitive and non-competitive swimmers separate; 'serious' and 'non-serious' typically prefer different water temperatures which would not be possible in a 50m facility; it is easier to provide single sex swimming sessions in two separate pools; and it would enable one pool to function even if something went wrong with the other:

*25m is nice; 50m gets too difficult for lots of reasons*

*Two pools, one open and available for groups, would be brilliant*

*The advantage of two pools is you can have the competition in one and have the other for the community*

*You couldn't do single sex sessions easily in a 50m pool*

*Temperature would be an issue...proper swimmers want it cooler and other people want warm water*

*A boom is another moving part that can go wrong*

*Things don't always go to plan...if something goes wrong then you lose the whole pool. If you have two at least you still have one functioning.*

- 5.13 Indeed, despite the support for a 50m pool among many Copthall drop-in attendees, it would be fair to say that most would be prepared to accept 2 x 25m facilities providing the water space as a whole is not reduced there:

*I must admit 50m is nice and it would make it competition size. I would prefer to swim in a 50m pool but 25m is fine.*

- 5.14 As at the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-ins, several people at Copthall desired a wider community pool: eight (or even 10) lanes as opposed to six. They argued that the current facility is very overcrowded at certain times - and that a wider pool would help alleviate this in what they presumed would be a busier re-provisioned leisure centre:

*It's not just about the length; it's also about the width*

*The general public lose swimming lanes to schools a lot at the moment so we need more lanes*

*The community pool looks too narrow; you need to have to have enough lanes*

*We don't want to be crammed into a tiny pool so it may need to be eight lanes too*

*Can we keep the community pool to eight lanes otherwise it could be too crowded?*

*It should be at least eight lanes as a minimum...maybe even 10. We need more lanes rather than less because more and more people are using it as a form of exercise and for therapeutic reasons. It's at capacity a lot of the time now and if we keep attracting more and more people we will run out of space.*



## Learner Pool

- 5.15 The proposed learner pools (with a moveable floor) were praised as a means to: teach young children to swim; offer other activities such as water-based exercise and diving classes; and offer accessibility to a swimming pool for people with disabilities:

*Kids have got to learn to swim so there's got to be a small one to start with*

*Because of programming for the main pool, there is a need for a separate learner pool*

*I teach kids lessons and don't want to teach them in a 25m*

*The moveable floor...something like that would be really good because it becomes a flexible space for a range of activities*

*The learner pool definitely needs a moveable floor...it needs to go all the way down for diving and synchro*

*A movable floor would be useful for those with physical disabilities. It is difficult to get into the pool and this would give them access. It also 'doubles up' to help children to learn to swim.*

- 5.16 However, some questioned the need for two separate swimming pools at Church Farm - instead suggesting that a 33m facility with a dividing wall could offer more flexibility and space-saving opportunities, and be more attractive to larger range of swimmers:

*Why not just have one big 33m pool with a partition, rather than two separate pools? I think you've got to be realistic with the size of space*

*A 33m pool with a moveable portion would really save space and would encourage more people to use it. It would attract more serious swimmers*

*Why have a separate learner pool? Just attach it onto a larger pool...make it 33m and have a movable floor in the learner area. This would save on space concerns.*

## Splash Zone

- 5.17 Finally in terms of the 'wet side', a few people suggested a need to timetable some water/splash play at the proposed new leisure centres in order to appeal to children and young people:

*Splash time with inflatables; kids love it*

*The pool should have more fun facilities in it...we have to drive 25 miles for water play and splash. It's great to have a serious swimming element but children need fun!*

## Gym

- 5.18 A **gym** was also supported as an essential facility that people would expect to see in a modern leisure centre - though it was repeatedly said that such provision would have to be competitively priced to allow the new leisure centres to successfully compete with the area's private facilities:

*Everyone would expect to see a gym in there*

*Gym facilities will be competing with a lot of private facilities so the Council has to price competitively against commercial ventures*

*All you have to do is be £5 cheaper than LA Fitness etc.*

- 5.19 A few people at Copthall desired a separate weights room (as at Burnt Oak) in order to keep noise to a minimum within the gym environment:

*The weights room definitely needs to be separate*

*Burnt Oak has a separate place for weights*

*You need a separate weights room from a noise perspective...they have them in a lot of places now.*

#### Fitness Studios

- 5.20 Though most people agreed that they are essential given the popularity of exercise and dance classes, some at the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-ins suggested that **fitness studios** may be somewhat superfluous given the number of private facilities that offer them within Barnet. These participants were certainly of the view that if space is limited, studios should be sacrificed over a swimming pool or gym facilities:

*There are a lot of private dance studios around here. It's popular but I wouldn't want something built that doesn't get used. If you build it you have to keep it busy*

*I wouldn't say that's essential because I want a smaller building and there is quite a lot of private sector provision*

*Studio space for classes...there are lots of other places which already do that*

*Studio space for dance? Depends how much space there is; the pool comes first.*

- 5.21 Furthermore, even those who supported their inclusion strongly suggested that studio space be sufficiently flexible and multi-purpose as to allow a variety of activities to be held within it - including community meetings and activities for children:

*A couple of small studios that could be multi-use is essential*

*Schools seem to have latched onto salsa dancing and things so it could be argued that there is a demand for that. But you'd have to have it as multipurpose as it might not be used much during the day. Could it be used for some kind of educational facility as well, or if it's partly gym and partly dance then it could be used for other activities*

*Small, studio rooms could have multiple uses...they could be community spaces*

*You need to use them for other activities like a meeting room for committee meetings and kids' activities.*

- 5.22 At Copthall, good-sized studio space was considered essential given the popularity of classes such as yoga and Pilates there. In fact, several people suggested that the proposal for two studios may be insufficient - and that three may be required to cater for existing demand, and indeed to offer more and varied classes in future:

*Studios are important for yoga and Pilates. Zumba and other dance classes are also popular so they'll need to be fairly big*

*There's a huge demand for Pilates so they could have another one*

*Pilates is always packed; we will log on tonight to book next week's class*

*Three studios are needed for so many activities*

*Two studios is ridiculous...we need three at least*

*More space equals more classes and membership would increase*

*Studios...two is not enough, we need three minimum.*

- 5.23 Furthermore, there was a definite sense that these studios should be separate entities and not separated by a partition insofar as:

*It's not really good having a partition as you get noise with music and stuff...which isn't good when you're doing yoga or Pilates*

*If you have the two studios they should be separate because of the noise...yoga doesn't really go next to Zumba, spin etc.*

- 5.24 Also at Copthall, there was support for the inclusion of a **spinning studio** to ensure the proposed new centre could offer this increasingly popular activity and attract a younger audience:

*Spinning is hugely popular so a studio could be very well used*

*Spin would be absolutely buzzing here and it would bring in a younger crowd too which would be good because it does feel a bit dated.*

## Café

- 5.25 There was almost universal support for hosting **cafés** within the new leisure centres. They were seen as an important means of revenue generation and would, it was felt, offer excellent socialising opportunities for centre users and non-users, creating something of a 'community hub'. Some of the very many typical comments were:

*A nice little café would be very attractive and would generate income*

*The café is a really good idea which would have a large amount of revenue*

*A café is one of the main things; parents can look over kids during their swimming lesson and it will make money for the Council*

*A small area for parents when their children are swimming etc. would be ideal*

*A café, absolutely. I'm thinking of older people who could meet for a class then go and have a natter. And people with kids*

*People are always going to want to have a café; you can get together with friends afterwards*

*It's nice to have your class and afterwards have a coffee and a chat with people; it makes it more familiar for you and there's more draw to come back because you've met people and you're talking to them. Most big gyms do these things and that makes people more willing to come because they meet their friends and things*

*The café is a catalyst; it's more than just being about a café to serve the swimming pool. It becomes an activity hub; you don't have to be in the swimming pool to use the café. It will make it a lot more accessible for people.*

- 5.26 However, a couple of people at the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-in sessions said that they would only be prepared to support a café at a leisure centre within Victoria Recreation Ground, with the rationale being that a café facility at Danegrove could be to the detriment of other existing cafés in East Barnet village:

*With the café, yes if it were in the Victoria area but not if it were around here because there are lots of local businesses here that are struggling because of Costa coming in*

*I don't want anything to come in that detracts from the village.*

- 5.27 The current café at Copthall leisure centre was frequently criticised for its lack of ambience and poor range of food and drinks (particularly healthy options). It was claimed to be not well-used for these reasons - but people also felt that improved provision - with Wi-Fi access - within a new leisure centre would be very welcome:

*Copthall is not very appealing at the moment; there are no nice, healthy lunches. If there was nice food you'd make a killing*

*The café needs improving and it's not too healthy either. My son comes out and asks 'can I have this and that?' and it's all rubbish*

*It would be a very good idea to have an independent, upmarket facility that provides a good variety of hot food*

*If it was comfortable, had healthy options and was clean I'd use it*

*The café has to be in keeping with what the leisure centre is all about...it has to have healthy options. Limit the rubbish!*

*A proper café where you could sit down with your friends...somewhere with healthier food though*

*A good café is always good...with a nice view. If you want to make some money, not a canteen*

*It would be good if the café had Wi-Fi access so parents can do some work while the children and swimming or wherever.*

- 5.28 The café at Swiss Cottage leisure centre is, it was felt, an excellent model in this regard:

*The best café I've seen is in Swiss Cottage. It's fantastic. People use it even if they don't use the leisure centre. It has to be run very well*

*The Swiss Cottage café is lovely. You actually want to go in and eat there.*

## Extra facilities?

### Sports hall

- 5.29 As for the possible added 'extras', drop-in attendees were somewhat divided on the need for multi-purpose **sports halls** in the two centres. Some (especially at Copthall) described them as much-needed, revenue-generating facilities that would attract footfall and provide a large space for community use - whereas others felt they would take up too much space and worried that demand would not be sufficient to ensure their cost-effectiveness. Some typical comments that illustrate both points of view are:

*I think we would like to see sports hall facilities that enable badminton, basketball, five-a-side football. The potential of having all that on one site is drawing footfall to it so I'm sure it will be well used*

*You've got your badminton courts, trampolining, all sorts of indoor stuff and you can hire it out for functions too*

*You have to have a sports hall if you are thinking of it as a whole leisure complex*

*I think a sports hall is a wonderful idea...you need all of that in this day and age*

*It would be lovely if you could have a sports hall...you could rent it out for things like badminton, basketball, netball*

*A large space can be used for multiple things. During the 2009 winter all the pipes burst and they started to have community meetings and they couldn't find anywhere big enough. There are not enough big community spaces indoors that can be used for multiple things*

*There is a paucity of sports halls. There's not much available...my sons go to Furzefield in Potters Bar for badminton, basketball etc.*

*There are talks about bringing additional schools to the area so it might get good usage as I don't know of another indoor facility in Mill Hill*

*Sports halls are used a lot for trampolining, badminton, football etc. It's a good idea*

*There's nothing around for table tennis, short tennis, badminton*

*Clubs are always looking for indoor facilities...the Gaelic football club for example are always looking for facilities to do their winter training*

*I think once you have a sports hall you can hire it out and make some money*

*A sports hall would be good. There's nowhere to go in Winter...who wants to walk around the park then?*

*Sports halls are great but they're big and you have to keep filling it...I can't see whether it would get enough use*

*I'm not sure they would generate enough income*

*Don't know about a sports hall. You'd have to make sure it's not sitting there empty*

*I'm not certain about a sports hall; I'm not sure the clientele is there...*

*A sports hall would be nice but I don't think it's a luxury you can afford*

*I don't think a sports hall is necessary; it would take up too much space and people wouldn't use it.*

## Crèche

- 5.30 Parents of young children were understandably keen to see a **crèche** at the proposed new leisure centres, suggesting that this would encourage them to be much more active than they are currently. Indeed, even those without children acknowledged that such provision would be useful in attracting a younger audience to the centres and in allowing parents to undertake higher levels of exercise:

*From a personal point of view, if there could be additional facilities like a crèche where I could leave my child and have half an hour or an hour to myself; that would be wonderful*

*A crèche is really important; it's so difficult to do anything but then you could drop the kids off and go to a class*

*A crèche is quite important because young people tend not to come. Mums are stuck at home for up to a year and it would be good if they could come to exercise*

*A crèche would make a lot of difference to get the young mums and dads in; I think that's what is missing here*

*It stops me going, not having anywhere for the kids. I'd pay for it, even if it was just for an hour or two*

*I think a crèche would work by encouraging mums to stay healthy...*

*It would be ideal to have a crèche. There are many people around with young families who could exercise during the day*

*A crèche would have been useful for my kids. It would allow young mums with babies to get a bit of exercise*

*I would probably be there all the time if that was there...without that I could only go in the evenings when my husband is back.*

- 5.31 At the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-ins though, a few people were aware of other forthcoming provision in the Victoria Recreation Ground area and urged LBB to avoid duplicating facilities by providing a crèche in the proposed new leisure centre if it is sited there:

*On the 'Asda site' there are already plans for a crèche with enough capacity. There is no need to duplicate this facility on the nearby Victoria site*

*There's going to be a big crèche going on the gasworks site...so there would be no point in having something at the Centre.*

### Climbing wall

- 5.32 Mixed views were expressed on the inclusion of a climbing wall. Some considered it an innovative, cost-effective activity that would attract people - especially younger people - to the new leisure centres:

*A climbing wall could be a good thing and could be cost-effective*

*It would bring people in*

*A climbing wall is a good activity for many age groups*

*Climbing wall; yeah go for that. It could offer different sizes for different ages*

*Integrating a climbing wall would be superb, just to make it a bit more interesting as a facility...to make it a destination*

*A climbing wall would be good...it wouldn't take up too much room and it wouldn't cost too much money. It would be very popular, especially with children*

- 5.33 Others, though, were concerned about usage levels, instructor availability and the supervision costs it would incur:

*It sounds good but how many people would use it?*

*The difficulties are always having the instructors available*

*A climbing wall would need constant supervision by instructors...*

- 5.34 One suggestion was that "you can have transportable climbing walls. If you had an event you could have staff there, rather than having to have it permanently which is expensive."

### Spa facilities (sauna, steam room, jacuzzi)

- 5.35 There was support - more so at Copthall - for incorporating a **spa-type facility** (including a sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi) within the proposed new leisure centres. This, it was felt, would enable the Council-owned facilities to successfully compete with private centres - providing they are maintained to a high standard and are not provided at the expense of core facilities. Some typical comments were:

*I think they could add a nice spa facility with a sauna etc. One which is properly looked after*

*A sauna...a spa thing would be good. Somewhere you can go and keep fit and then relax afterwards*

*What about a sauna and Jacuzzi? There's no other nice public provision for that in the Borough...*

*I like the idea of a sauna and Jacuzzi. It will bring more adults and allow people to make more of a family thing of it*

*I've seen facilities in Camden...which are based on the old baths and they have excellent gyms, exercise classes, sauna facilities etc. I would like something like that here...*

*It encourages more people to come if you've got those types of things...a spa etc.*

*I'm really keen on the spa/Jacuzzi idea...it would make it seem a bit more like a private facility*

*I used to go to a private place and I really miss this now I've started coming here*

*If you've got something new you need to compete with private facilities...having these sorts of things will allow you to do that*

*I go to private facilities to use the spa facilities so I would definitely use them at my local centre. But I wouldn't want it to be at the expense of core facilities; it's a luxury, not core*

*A sauna or steam room with a Jacuzzi has to be considered to compete with private facilities.*

- 5.36 Indeed, one Copthall attendee went so far as to say that:

*I would include spas, nail bars etc. It has to primarily be a performance centre but they need to think 'where will the money be spent?' You'll be catering for two markets; the kids coming to train and the parents using other facilities that they pay for.*

- 5.37 In this vein, it was suggested that LBB investigate the possibility of replicating the set up at Swiss Cottage leisure centre, which has a GLL-run Spa London facility on-site that attracts a significant number of visitors and apparently gives the Council-owned leisure centre the feel of a private facility:

*It has a spa there for beauty therapy...massage, aromatherapy etc. It's brilliant!*

### Skate park

- 5.38 There was some support for a **skate park** - especially at Copthall:

*A skateboard park is high on the list as well...it should be considered*

*There are none in Mill Hill...and nothing generally for 12-18 year olds to do. It could work*

*The kids would love a skate park*

*It will bring money to the Centre if it's on the same site because people will use both*

*This would be very popular with children.*



## Diving pool

- 5.39 Most of those who commented on the issue supported the retention of the **diving pool** at Copthall - though it would be fair to say that reasoning was sometimes based more around nostalgia and the fact 'it's always been there' than any knowledge of usage levels and demand:

*It has to remain...it's always been here*

*Diving needs to stay. All my kids have used it; they learned here*

*A diving pool is needed; it been there since the beginning*

*How can you not have a diving pool? You've had one since time immemorial*

*I don't use it but it means a lot to other people...it's what makes us unique!*

- 5.40 More specifically though, diving was perceived as becoming more popular as an activity and it was considered unreasonable that a community the size of Barnet should be left without a facility to encourage people to take it up:

*Don't get rid of diving! If they get rid of that there's nowhere in the Borough to dive!*

*It's exciting for the children to try the diving*

*Diving doesn't affect me personally, but to have a community of this size without a diving pool?*

*There's definitely a need for a diving pool. There's no other facility in the area and it would be a shame to lose it*

*I thought there were hardly any diving pools in the country, why would you want to get rid of it? Sometimes it's a shame to take things away just because people don't use them much. Where will we get the next Tom Daley from?*

*The diving is important for generations that are coming along.*

- 5.41 A small minority felt that a diving pool would be inefficient both in terms of space and cost and should thus not be included within the facility mix at the proposed new Copthall leisure centre:

*A diving pool takes up a lot of space and is too expensive.*

## Other suggestions

- 5.42 **Soft play** for young children was a popular suggestion for an added value facility that would generate significant revenue - and one person at Copthall suggested a **trampoline park** as an innovative, attractive provision that would appeal to a diverse range of people:

*Soft play to hire out for parties and make more money*

*A children's play area like a ball park or soft play would bring in a fortune generally and for children's parties*

*Soft Play should be available for kids. I would use it and it would be well used overall*

*A trampoline park was planned for the area but it has been withdrawn. This would be really popular...even Saracens could use it as it's a different form of exercising.*



## Site preferences: New Leisure Centre

### General comments

- 5.43 In terms of location, most people understood that any significant redevelopment that incorporates the range of facilities required in the area will have to be undertaken on a different site to that on which Church Farm leisure centre currently sits:

*I've used Church Farm and it's very small. You can't build the stuff you want on it*

*They need a longer pool and it's not big enough.*

However, a very small minority suggested that the Council consider developing a multi-storey centre on the existing site to minimise the amount of green space lost in an apparently already built-up area:

*Copthall will be over two storeys, could you do that at Church Farm? Then you're not ruling out re-development on the same site.*

### Danegrove Playing Fields or Victoria Recreation Ground?

- 5.44 Given the general positivity described above, it is perhaps unsurprising that several people were prepared to see a new leisure centre sited at either Danegrove Playing Fields (henceforth Danegrove) or Victoria Recreation Ground (henceforth VRG) 'as long as it is built' and includes all of the requisite facilities:

*Compared to what we have at the moment either site will be better at least...*

*I don't really mind which site is chosen as long as it's actually built*

*I think either one of these would complement the area that they are in...either will be fine as we need it desperately*

*I support either site as long as it's a good facility that will generate footfall*

*Either option as long as it's big enough to have all the facilities.*

- 5.45 Most people, though, expressed a preference for one site over the other - and the cited merits and drawbacks of both are reported below.

### Danegrove Playing Fields

- 5.46 The Danegrove site was thought to have some considerable merits, namely: its current lack of usage (especially in comparison with VRG) and the corresponding lack of impact building a leisure centre there would have on useable green space; its prominent location; its existing transport infrastructure and nearby amenities; and the fact it could be used by local schools.
- 5.47 Table 2 (overleaf) summarises people's views on the main advantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove (sometimes as opposed to at VRG).

**Table 2: Drop-in Sessions summary table – participants’ views on the advantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Improved usage of a redundant space (with little impact on local residents in terms of losing green, open space)</b>	<p><i>Danegrove is the best option. That playing field is pretty useless</i></p> <p><i>The field is never used so it would be good to see it used for something worthwhile for local people</i></p> <p><i>Seems silly to take green space away that gets used and still have green space that isn't used</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is unused so I'm leaning more towards it as long as they can fit everything on there</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is very under-used. Victoria Recreation Ground already has a fairly well defined purpose</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove would be better because it's not used. It wouldn't be of any detriment to people who need open space to keep their sanity</i></p> <p><i>At Danegrove who are you going to affect? It's a waste of space out there</i></p> <p><i>I've lived here all my life and everyone just uses it to walk their dog on. It's not got a purpose at the moment...there is nothing to be taken away</i></p> <p><i>My option would be Danegrove...it's a dead space which should be utilised.</i></p>
<b>Existing transport infrastructure (public transport more accessible/ better road infrastructure than at VRG)</b>	<p><i>Danegrove is nearer to public transport and is in a better location</i></p> <p><i>In this area you've also got lots of buses going up and down; better accessibility</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is on more bus routes</i></p> <p><i>The bus stop is nearby so the kids my age just get the 307 and it's across the road. At Victoria Park it's at Sainsbury's and then it's quite a long walk to the park</i></p> <p><i>I think there's more space here, the roads are wider so you've got better access</i></p> <p><i>Park Road isn't as busy at the Danegrove end. What helps is that you already have traffic controls. It can get busy, but it's purely where you put the access point. You're far away from the bottleneck, whereas there is no point on Victoria...you'd have to widen something. Danegrove is a smaller site, but I think it's a safer site</i></p> <p><i>Cat Hill is a busy road already; there's not going to be any increase. Victoria Road won't be able to cope so Danegrove is far better</i></p> <p><i>It's a question of which site has better transport and communications... Danegrove is better as you can cycle, walk, get public transport. Victoria would see more traffic as people would tend to use their cars.</i></p>
<b>Prominent location with nearby amenities (including the local library) which would themselves benefit from a new local leisure</b>	<p><i>I support Danegrove...it's on a main road, everyone would know about it</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is more viable. It's in a really good, prominent location on a main route</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove has the transport links and the amenities in the village. It ticks all the boxes</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is in a good location. It's central within East Barnet village and everyone could see it</i></p> <p><i>I love the idea of having it opposite a library</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>centre</b>	<p><i>Danegrove is not used and would be opposite the library. It would have more meaning and prominence</i></p> <p><i>It would benefit the library if it was at Danegrove...there would be more footfall into the library</i></p> <p><i>I just think that Danegrove...the location is more visible and it's got the village. I think it will add to it as a whole...you'd have the sports centre, library, the village bustling.</i></p>
<b>Usage by local schools</b>	<p><i>A leisure centre on Danegrove would be beneficial to Danegrove School which would have good access to the facilities</i></p> <p><i>I am leaning towards Danegrove because of location and it will be positive for the schoolchildren</i></p> <p><i>There's a school opposite, Danegrove School; it's a big school and it could be really used by them. I think that would get a lot of use in that way.</i></p>

5.48 Conversely, the Danegrove site was thought to have some notable drawbacks, namely: its difficult topography and drainage; its comparatively small size; the implications a new leisure centre there would have on local traffic volumes and management; its location on a busy junction; its lack of access; and the probable objections from residents, especially on Park Road. The primary issue for drop-in attendees, though, was the lack of parking in the immediate vicinity - and the apparent lack of opportunity to provide much on-site provision in future.

5.49 Table 3 below summarises people's views on the main disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove (sometimes as opposed to at VRG).

**Table 3: Drop-in Sessions summary table – participants' views on the disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Site has several disadvantages</b>	<p><i>Danegrove isn't big enough and car parking and traffic would be a nightmare. It's on a busy junction and you're limited as to where you can put the entrance</i></p> <p><i>I don't think the Danegrove playing field is realistic; it's very narrow, parking would be an incredible problem, levelling would be a problem and there's no space for future development</i></p> <p><i>The Danegrove playing site...it's on a hill, the parking is very difficult, it's a busy junction with the school and it just doesn't seem like an appropriate place...</i></p> <p><i>It's such a limited area, there's no chance of fitting in a football court or a badminton court here. It's capacity, parking and access</i></p> <p><i>Can't see Danegrove working; it's a sloping site on a busy road. Cat Hill is also narrow; you can't have two cars along there which will mean it's difficult for parking. It's a bottleneck already</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is too busy, has horrendous access, poor drainage and there would be objections from Park Road</i></p> <p><i>No, no, no. It's totally unsuitable. It's a boggy site, it floods regularly, and the traffic, and the neighbours won't like it either.</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
<p><b>Lack of parking provision</b></p>	<p><i>Danegrove; you would never park there. It would be nothing but trouble for the residents</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove doesn't bear thinking about; there's no parking at all</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove would be better in terms of public transport but would be a nightmare for parking</i></p> <p><i>The problem you've got there is parking. You'll have a battle with the people on Park Road for parking. But you don't want to take so much of the space for parking that the only thing you're left with is quite small</i></p> <p><i>Our issues are traffic and parking. If there's no parking it'll be terrible. We had that issue with a car boot sale. They sent the police down because nobody could get through. People were parked over drives, it was awful</i></p> <p><i>I think it's always the parking; with any development they seem to miscalculate it. There isn't enough in Church Farm so people park in the surrounding streets. Everyone will park in my road, and when I will want to come out of my drive I won't be able to come out</i></p> <p><i>Parking in general, it can get full up, especially for the school run where parents are picking up the children from the school at the end of the road.</i></p>
<p><b>Impact on local traffic volumes/ management</b></p>	<p><i>Unless you widen the road it will have a very negative impact on traffic management</i></p> <p><i>I'd prefer Victoria Recreation Ground because traffic would be a nightmare on Danegrove</i></p> <p><i>The traffic on Cat Hill would be endless; the people on Park Road wouldn't like it</i></p> <p><i>At Danegrove the biggest problems are parking and traffic...there will be huge bottlenecks</i></p> <p><i>They used to have donkey derbies here, they'd have a bonfire party and car boot sales. It just gridlocked the area, not just this road...it just wouldn't work</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is chaos with traffic and gets a lot of through traffic as well. There will be less impact on traffic to the immediate residents in Victoria compared to Danegrove</i></p> <p><i>If anything goes wrong on the M25, people come through Cockfosters, down Cat Hill, and down Park Road. It seems like an odd place to put something where you want people to stroll along and do something nice...</i></p>
<p><b>Location on a busy junction</b></p>	<p><i>Danegrove is on a dangerous junction</i></p> <p><i>Lots of children walk to school and cars parking on both sides of the road by Danegrove affects visibility for crossing...</i></p> <p><i>It is a busy junction which is a big problem</i></p> <p><i>The problem in Danegrove is it's a very dangerous junction. People accessing it on foot; they will have to be crossing roads and all the rest of it</i></p> <p><i>Park Road will be the most affected because it is a busy road and there is no pedestrian crossing here which can be dangerous...</i></p> <p><i>It's an accident blackspot on the corner here. Park Road is used as a rat run...</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Site is too constrained for the necessary facilities</b>	<p><i>Danegrove is too small; it would be hard to construct</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove looks a bit small to me if you're including parking on it</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is not used at all, but is it too restrictive for space?</i></p> <p><i>I have reservations about the space at Danegrove and what could be provided there...so it's looking more in favour of Victoria Recreation Ground.</i></p>
<b>Difficult topography on which to build (though some felt this could be overcome)</b>	<p><i>It has to pay its way financially; it will cost more to build at Danegrove</i></p> <p><i>To build something on a hill is a lot more difficult than it is on a flat surface</i></p> <p><i>A Haringey centre was built on a slope and it is in constant need of repair as a result. Danegrove would have similar issues</i></p> <p><i>It's a hill, so that would cost money to build it up</i></p> <p><i>The idea of levelling the site, having the earth dug out, building a retaining wall. That's going to cost a significant amount of money</i></p> <p><i>They've built the hospital on a slope so it can be possible; you could have underground parking to level it off...there are ways around it.</i></p>
<b>Poor drainage</b>	<p><i>Danegrove could mean building on something which could cause flooding and consequential damages</i></p> <p><i>The Danegrove field is very prone to flooding and if you tarmac that up it won't be able to soak up the water</i></p> <p><i>It floods quite often...and if you level it off, where is the water all going to go? It's still going to have to come down the hill</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is too small with poor drainage...it would take half the allocated money to sort the land out</i></p> <p><i>Bearing in mind it's a boggy site, it would be very expensive to develop. If you're putting a swimming pool in that puts a big weight impact on it. There are springs in this hill so you can't easily drain it and if you build a big swimming pool like a dam, the water will cause problems elsewhere.</i></p>
<b>Impact on (and possible opposition from) local residents</b>	<p><i>If the leisure centre were put in in Danegrove it would be "right in my face" for some people</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is on a narrow road and there would be a lot of disturbances in terms of sound and noise</i></p> <p><i>I imagine the residents in Park Road would be very unhappy</i></p> <p><i>There are half a dozen houses in Danegrove that have just been redeveloped and they are million pound houses. The worry is that this will get bogged down forever in planning because the people in those houses aren't going to want it</i></p> <p><i>It will have massive opposition from the neighbours who have money and will throw money at fighting it. These ones and the ones in Cat Hill.</i></p>
<b>Loss of school playing field</b>	<p><i>It would be sad to see Primary School lose its football field</i></p> <p><i>I'm very much against doing away with school playing fields.</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Loss of green space</b>	<p><i>The area is over developed so we need to keep some green in Danegrove</i></p> <p><i>The playing field has been there all my life and I walk up the road and think 'isn't it lovely to have one remaining piece of green space'. It feels part of the area and if that goes, what have we got? It's nice to have it there and the birds appreciate it. It's like a mini nature reserve really.</i></p>

Victoria Recreation Ground?

- 5.50 The VRG site was thought to have some considerable merits, namely that: it is a large, flat space with potential for wide range of facilities and future expansion if required; it is within an increasingly residential area and thus has a growing catchment; it is already a recreational space and could thus become a 'destination' where individuals and families could spend the day; it has good public transport links; it has some existing parking provision and a number of access points (or potential access points); it could be used by several local schools; and siting a leisure centre there will have less of an impact on residents (in comparison with Danegrove).
- 5.51 One other apparently very important consideration in terms of locating a leisure centre at VRG is that it could act as a catalyst to developing what is presently a somewhat run-down park and wider area. Indeed, many people commented that VRG can feel unsafe after dark and suggested that siting a leisure centre there would result in improvements in this regard.
- 5.52 Table 4 below summarises people's views on the main advantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG (sometimes as opposed to at Danegrove).

Table 4: Drop-in Sessions summary table – participants' views on the advantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Site has several advantages</b>	<p><i>It's got less impact on residents and it's already a recreational space. You've got an existing small car park...and you've got the playing fields</i></p> <p><i>I would go for Victoria; you've got the green, it's flat and much bigger</i></p> <p><i>The site is flat, it's larger, and it's closer to trains. Of the two Victoria is much more preferable. It's a no brainer</i></p> <p><i>In my opinion Victoria Recreation is better as it is already used for the tennis courts, children go there and it's flat</i></p> <p><i>Just to the south...you've got buses, a train station and a big Sainsbury's which would link it all in. There's also potential to expand. The other option is do-able but there's poorer access, parking and expansion potential</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation is an ideal place for a leisure centre in every single way!</i></p>
<b>Large, flat site with the potential for a wide range of facilities - including outdoor facilities - and</b>	<p><i>It's more practical; you could put so much more into Victoria Road</i></p> <p><i>Victoria has a lot more space to expand if necessary, and has room to expand outdoor facilities if the demand is there</i></p> <p><i>I'm leaning towards Victoria Recreation Ground because of the extra facilities that could be incorporated there...like a skate park</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
<p><b>future expansion (especially in comparison with Danegrove)</b></p>	<p><i>For the Victoria Grounds the advantage is that there is lots of space for other activities that could take place there. It's a catalyst for a broader regeneration of development whereas in Danegrove there is only room for a pool and the gym. In Victoria you could maybe build a skate park or other activities</i></p> <p><i>This area has more capacity. You could develop the football pitches into five-a-side which would be a revenue stream and there's huge demand for that at the moment. It could be multipurpose...</i></p> <p><i>You'd be able to park more and you could have more facilities. What's the point of building something if you can't have half of what you want?</i></p> <p><i>It needs to be ambitious, futureproof and include all sorts of facilities. I don't think we should think small and Danegrove is too small. With Victoria Recreation Ground they could be ambitious</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove doesn't seem that big whereas at least with [Victoria Recreation Ground] you'd have the space around it too. Also going forward where you would maybe want to add or develop to it at a later date you've got space there</i></p> <p><i>If we are going to spend money it is nice if we've got the potential for further development</i></p> <p><i>There are two options for location...I'd be in favour of Victoria because there's more scope for further development.</i></p>
<p><b>Could be a catalyst to improving the park (and the wider area) and attracting more people to use it</b></p>	<p><i>The Victoria Recreation Ground is known as Vic Wreck. W-R-E-C-K</i></p> <p><i>Victoria is a beautiful park but is not as well used as it should be. This could revolutionise it</i></p> <p><i>Put something there; use the green space and give it a focus</i></p> <p><i>The area around Victoria is becoming run down and we would like it to be boosted up</i></p> <p><i>It could help re-define the park for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century...the park needs to come alive</i></p> <p><i>The Recreation Ground needs regenerating...it would be ideal to bring it back into proper use rather than just as a walkthrough</i></p> <p><i>It's not a very nice park; it's a bit tatty and has become run-down. So this could be a catalyst for the whole area</i></p> <p><i>It's a shabby park and desperately needs regeneration</i></p> <p><i>The advantage of Victoria Recreation Ground is that it will become part of a whole transformation of that park. The facilities that will be plumbed in; the swimming pool and whatever else goes with it, the café, redevelop the children's play area. It would give a sense to the whole thing</i></p> <p><i>The Recreation Ground needs regenerating...it would be ideal to bring it back into proper use rather than just as a walkthrough</i></p> <p><i>My gut instinct would certainly be Victoria Recreation Ground. We want to regenerate it, make it nicer, get more people there; at the moment it can be a bit lacking. This, we're hoping, might make the park more friendly</i></p> <p><i>East Barnet Village is quite vibrant whereas New Barnet is not; it's been neglected</i></p>



Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p><i>and this could be a catalyst in getting it going</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground is underused, and it might get rid of undesirable people who hang around there. It would actually give the space a purpose...</i></p> <p><i>It might make them want to go there and respect it and not trash it because the playgrounds were vandalised regularly and somebody has been stabbed in the last couple of years there</i></p> <p><i>A lot of people are aware of the anti-social behaviour which is going on in the park so it would be nice to see something positive going on there to improve their area</i></p> <p><i>This would regenerate the space. We avoid using it as it is, and there is drug dealing going on. It is an enclosed and hidden space and is not used for this reason</i></p> <p><i>It may make Victoria Recreation Ground less dangerous at night...</i></p> <p><i>Walking through at night; there would be people around which would improve the area</i></p>
<p><b>Area becoming more residential and in need of facilities (plus larger catchment)</b></p>	<p><i>It would just help that area so much and with the housing development taking place there; there's going to be a greater need for it</i></p> <p><i>They are developing a lot down there and it would be good for them to have something in the area</i></p> <p><i>There's been lots of new builds around this area so it's becoming more and more residential...they will need a facility meaning it will be well-used</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground is on the edge of a big housing estate so a lot of people would go there...</i></p> <p><i>A new estate is being built close to Victoria Recreation Ground...the benefit of that would be an even bigger catchment area</i></p> <p><i>There's about a thousand new homes; lots of office blocks that are being converted. None of these spaces have a square of grass. They are going to be occupied mainly by younger people, many will be poor young people and others will just be poor. They are the sort who will be likely to use it</i></p> <p><i>People from this area go to Potters Bar. If they are willing to travel four miles up to there...start relating a four mile catchment area to this one and you are picking up a heck of a lot of people.</i></p>
<p><b>Good public transport links (better than Danegrove)</b></p>	<p><i>Victoria is very central, a pivotal site for public transport and very close to the train station</i></p> <p><i>Victoria is well served by public transport, better than Danegrove...there's more potential for people to take the train up</i></p> <p><i>Compared to Danegrove there's much more public transport</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove field is only served by one bus. Victoria is served by around a dozen buses...and there's New Barnet station so it is so much more accessible</i></p>



Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Good access and parking opportunities (better than Danegrove)</b>	<p><i>There is better access compared to Danegrove and it could be positive for the area. So definitely prefer Victoria Recreational Ground</i></p> <p><i>Parking is always a problem, but I think there would be potential scope to put parking on the site...</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground has readymade parking off-road there</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground has the ability to put some sort of parking in</i></p> <p><i>At Victoria Recreation Ground there's the possibility of linking with new housing and creating another way in. This would disperse traffic.</i></p>
<b>Site is already used for leisure so can become a 'destination' for many activities</b>	<p><i>There are facilities there; it's a multipurpose area</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground...there's courts and stuff there already</i></p> <p><i>You could have people who could come for a picnic and do whatever else they want to do</i></p> <p><i>It would be a reasonable day out for the family</i></p> <p><i>Victoria is used for existing leisure. It already has some sporting facilities, so it makes sense to expand on what is already there</i></p> <p><i>It sounds like an area like Victoria is already established with bowling greens and football pitches. That should be improved by the system you're talking about, not starting off all fresh with something that could be trouble in the years to come</i></p>
<b>More remaining green space (in comparison with Danegrove)</b>	<p><i>Danegrove is claustrophobic whereas in Victoria Park there's room to breathe</i></p> <p><i>It's a great big park...it would be nice to have open space, breathing space</i></p> <p><i>There's more space; you will still have park left</i></p> <p><i>You could still have some green on the Victoria site especially for children to be able to play.</i></p>
<b>Easy topography</b>	<p><i>The Victoria Recreation Ground is a much larger, flatter area which would be more practical for construction.</i></p>
<b>Minimal impact on local residents</b>	<p><i>I think to put a leisure centre where you've got football and you've got other things going on and other activities would be a really good site as it doesn't have a huge impact on residents. It's not as in your face as others would be</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground is already a designated park; there would be less problems with objections.</i></p>
<b>Usage by local schools</b>	<p><i>There are a lot of schools around there that would use it</i></p> <p><i>It would be great for Livingstone Primary School who are close by. Those in Danegrove Primary School, the distance from them to Church Farm to go swimming isn't any different to the distance from Victoria so it wouldn't make a difference to them.</i></p>

<sup>5.53</sup> The VRG site was also thought to have some notable drawbacks, namely: the difficult road infrastructure immediately surrounding it (many comments were made about the narrowness of adjacent roads); the implications a new leisure centre there would have on local traffic volumes and

management and parking on surrounding streets; and its 'hidden' nature meaning many people are unaware of its existence.

- 5.54 A small but significant minority rejected the idea of a leisure centre on VRG because they did not want to lose any park space. Indeed, they argued passionately for Danegrove on the grounds that it is unused space currently, whereas VRG is a functioning park. As aforementioned though, most others agreed that VRG is underutilised and that siting a leisure centre there would act as a catalyst for improvement and increased usage.
- 5.55 Table 5 below summarises people's views on the main disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG (sometimes as opposed to at Danegrove).

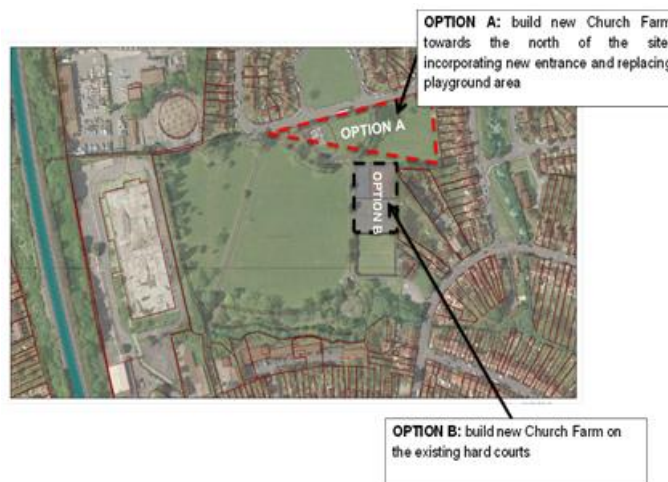
**Table 5: Drop-in Sessions summary table – participants' views on the disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Difficult road infrastructure</b>	<p><i>Some of the roads around there would be quite narrow....</i></p> <p><i>There are congested and narrow roads at Victoria</i></p> <p><i>Victoria can be hard to access; the supermarket that was going to be built there didn't happen because of how narrow the roads are etc.</i></p>
<b>Impact on local traffic volumes/ management and parking on surrounding streets</b>	<p><i>There will be lot of problems if you try to build there. It will be a nightmare with traffic as it's a natural bottleneck and there's a lot of residential parking</i></p> <p><i>My main concern is the congestion of it all. I live near Victoria Recreation Ground and this is bad news; it's bad enough as it is now</i></p> <p><i>My immediate reaction is that the traffic at Victoria Recreation Ground scares me; it is already a traffic bottleneck</i></p> <p><i>I drive down Victoria Road quite regularly and even now you cannot get up and down. It is a nightmare. You've got school buses coming down that road that can't get around that area. We aren't talking about a major increase in traffic flow, but you are increasing a relatively major access point all day</i></p> <p><i>I've got no objection to a sports centre, my only issue is around the volume of traffic. It's already very chock-a-block and the thought of even more cars...I'd prefer Danegrove as I don't want traffic on my doorstep</i></p> <p><i>I feel strongly that it should be the one at Danegrove. Victoria Recreation Ground will have congestion issues</i></p> <p><i>We're fully in favour: our concern is that there is already an existing problem with car parking</i></p> <p><i>The car parking area is insufficient as it is...the traffic spills to all surrounding roads. But at least you can expand the car park here</i></p> <p><i>Parking for local residents is poor as it is, so this would only get worse for local residents.</i></p>
<b>Loss of green space (whereas Danegrove is an unused space)</b>	<p><i>I was brought up in the Park and I don't want to see it built on. This makes the park smaller...too small</i></p> <p><i>I'm worried about encroaching on the Victoria Park area. Although it's under-used it's still a green space</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p><i>I'm a resident behind Vic Rec and I'm not convinced about replacing a nice open green with a big ugly building</i></p> <p><i>The space it's going to use up in the park is going to leave relatively little for people like me, who wouldn't use the leisure centre but would use the space to walk to dogs</i></p> <p><i>We feel a bit precious about our green space! We're not against it - it absolutely gets my vote - just not on Victoria Recreation Ground</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground should remain a park. This would take space away from a park area, while Danegrove is unused space</i></p> <p><i>It's a lot of park to lose, whereas Danegrove has no function..it's dead ground. It's preferable to use a ground that isn't being used.</i></p>
<p><b>Insular/hidden site (though some felt this could be overcome through proper marketing and advertising)</b></p>	<p><i>Victoria is tucked away; I don't know how busy it would get</i></p> <p><i>It's very local, people who live near to it know it but there are people who don't know where it is as it's not clearly visible</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground is tucked away; people find Church Farm</i></p> <p><i>The problem is that it can feel isolated. The Council will need to address this</i></p> <p><i>People don't really know it's there but that wouldn't be an issue if it's well publicised</i></p> <p><i>If you advertise and you need it people will find it. People are always inquisitive about new things aren't they?</i></p> <p><i>Some of the problems are that it's a very insular site...very enclosed. But you could overcome it's invisibility with decent signage and something on the high road</i></p> <p><i>I don't think it's an issue that it's not so immediately obvious as Danegrove because I think the public soon find out where their leisure centre is.</i></p>

Victoria Recreation Ground: Site A or Site B?

Figure 17: Map showing the Victoria Recreation Ground sites A and B



5.56 Drop-in participants were asked for their views on which of the above options they would prefer if the proposed new leisure centre is sited at VRG. Many did not consider the exact location to be particularly important, providing the facility is built somewhere:

*It doesn't make a difference which of the two options within Victoria you build on*

*Either A or B...it's all in the same corner.*

- 5.57 Of those who expressed an opinion one way or the other, a majority instinctively chose Option A on the grounds that it is larger and thus more flexible in terms of the range of facilities that could be provided:

*I think the tennis court one would make it very small...the one across, including the children's playing area, would be much better*

*Option B looks half the size of option A. You wouldn't get very much on there; you'd just get a swimming pool I would've thought. It would be better to have it with everything else, you need a café, you need changing rooms, you need a gym*

*Option B...if you just build on that it'll be the smallest pool in the world*

*That's quite a big space where Option A is, but if you look at site B that's no space; that's a waste of time. What is it? Two tennis courts and a basketball court. What are you going to get on that?*

*Option A looks slightly bigger so they could fit more facilities in, over Option B.*

- 5.58 Other reasons for choosing Option A over Option B were that it is more discreetly located within VRG and retains its 'open-ness' and that it would improve a somewhat neglected area of the park:

*It's good to put it in the corner as you can keep the rest of the park*

*Site B is in your face*

*I definitely want Option A in the grotty children's play park*

*The playground is irrelevant because it's so pathetic.*

- 5.59 Those supporting Option B over Option A did so on the grounds that: it would impact fewer local residents; it is an already paved over area of the park with better drainage; less green open space would be lost; and that accessibility is better:

*I support where the tennis place is as it's paved over already. North of that is very wet and building on it would reduce drainage for the park*

*Option B has a lot of advantages because it's a bit further away from the houses whereas Option A would disturb more people*

*Option A is along the road; I can see that may not be popular with people*

*In terms of trying to preserve green space my preference is Option B*

*There are pedestrian entrance points around the park for Option B and car parking. Option A has a busy junction and would be hard to access...*

- 5.60 Several drop-in attendees suggested LBB consider a larger leisure centre footprint by combining Options A and B (with some very specific ideas for how this could be achieved) - and others felt the Council should look at other options within VRG to ensure the right area is chosen, primarily in terms of access and parking provision:

*Why not use both site A & B? Why were those lines drawn there? If the entire area were available that would be a lot more attractive, as space would feel less of an issue*

*If you're going to do it, do it big. You need more space if possible*

*We don't like this Option A or Option B thing...that wouldn't give us the best use of the site. Where the five-a-side pitches are, move them over to this area backing onto Baring Road. Only 10 houses would be affected. Have the swimming pool and leisure centre backing on to the car park (the very long gardens of the two adjacent houses would reduce the impact on the neighbours in that area). You'd then have a green strip to lighten it and a skateboard park and car park opposite the crescent, so it's not opposite houses. This minimises the nuisance to the neighbours, and there's only 20 to 30 neighbours there all in. That's what we think is the optimum solution. It's an amalgam of A and B*

*Look around the whole site in terms of parking and access...it is the right site but there needs to be a lot of thought into developing it. There is an opportunity to use all of this land and decide how they are going to use it... It needs to be thought of as one big asset and not just built on Option B because there are a couple of tennis courts there.*

- 5.61 Finally, whatever is ultimately decided, many people wished to see any lost facilities (such as the children's playground and the hard courts) re-provisioned elsewhere within VRG:

*We can't lose the playground or tennis court; they must be re-located*

*They have to ensure that anything they move they have to put back so nothing gets lost*

*The courts are very well used and would need to be replaced*

*If the hard courts are retained and moved I'd be happy with Option B, even though it's right at the end of my garden*

*I don't see the difference; as long you re-located whatever is lost.*

#### Overall Balance of Opinion

- 5.62 Though it can be seen that there was a large degree of support for siting a new leisure centre on Danegrove Playing Fields, a majority of drop-in attendees favoured Victoria Recreation Ground for the reasons outlined above. Within that site, Option A (building the new leisure centre towards the north of the site) was typically preferred to Option B (building the new leisure centre on the existing hard courts) primarily on the grounds of size - which suggests that, if people could be reassured that the latter is large enough to accommodate a well-provisioned leisure centre, it would be acceptable to them. There was also some support for both combining the two options for a larger footprint, and for looking elsewhere within VRG for somewhere more suitable and away from local residents.

- 5.63 It should also be noted that, in addition to those who endorsed either site providing a leisure centre is provided (as reported above), a small minority rejected both on the grounds that open space should not be built upon and that more consideration should be given to brownfield sites:

*I don't think either should be an option; open space should be kept as open space. Brownfield sites should be used; or use the existing building*

*Say no to building on green space. Everything's becoming so urbanised; that is why a little bit of green is so welcome.*

- 5.64 A few others declined to give an opinion on the two possible locations: they desired sight of more detailed information (such as traffic and ecology survey results) prior to doing so:

*I wouldn't like to give a strong opinion until a traffic survey has been completed*

*I was expecting to come here and find out more information about traffic access; why isn't there a traffic access survey? If they have to change some of the ways the roads are operated, I want to know the impact of that...I don't feel like I can make an informed decision about which site I would prefer as I don't know how it's going to affect the traffic*

*I want statistical information on the effect a leisure centre would have on traffic, especially looking at the current users of Church Farm and how many of those will be travelling to the area. I'm worried that the decision will be made on the location before this information is provided, and that people won't be able to make a fully informed decision*

*I would like to see other studies that they have been doing. If there was a planning application that went through...they have to do an ecology study. Where is the information for that sort of thing before I can say which site? It's a public facility, Council owned and on public land; why aren't they doing it for both sites? I cannot see how they can't have another consultation before they've decided which site...a leisure centre is quite important.*

- 5.65 Participants' concerns about parking provision and access should be re-iterated at this stage. The worries in relation to each site have been outlined above, but many people were of the view that both sites will be problematic in this regard and that careful consideration must be given to how adequate parking provision and proper site accessibility can be achieved:

*There are issues in terms of access for those two sites. The roads in Victoria Park are not particularly accessible...coaches trying to get down those roads is a nightmare. Danegrove is better in terms of access, but there's no parking. It needs a lot of thought*

*We desperately need it but I don't think either site is viable...I'd probably go for Danegrove if they could sort the parking out*

*There will be problems with parking at both. The end of Park Road gets busy with too many cars parking on road and it will become very congested. Parking is also an issue at Victoria Recreation Ground.*

- 5.66 In this context, several people suggested that consideration be given to underground parking (or even multi-storey parking if at VRG) - while others saw a need for more pro-activity in encouraging people to visit the centre on foot, by cycling and by public transport:

*The crucial thing is parking; you'll have to have an underground car park*

*To provide parking which is the biggest problem you've either got to go underground or multi storey...parking will be the biggest headache*

*Multi-storey or underground car parking is needed without demolishing old trees that are precious*

*To encourage people to use public transport, could you give people who produce a bus or tube ticket a discount?*

*What about cycling...somewhere to lock up bikes?*

*Covered parking for cycles is needed to encourage people to cycle.*



## Site preferences: Copthall

- 5.67 As aforementioned, very few people objected to the re-provision of Copthall leisure centre on a different site, and the only comments made regarding the proposed new adjacent location were around the need to re-site the rugby and Gaelic football pitches (including during the construction phase):

*What will happen to the Gaelic football pitch? My children play there and we hope it's not going to be taken away*

*They'll have to re-provide the rugby pitch.*

- 5.68 Several drop-in attendees commented on the need to view this as an opportunity to reconfigure the Copthall site as a whole in order to ensure it becomes a premier sporting and leisure destination for North London (both indoor and outdoor):

*This is an opportunity to re-configure the whole estate. The priorities should be swimming at number one, rugby at number two and a variety of other attractions at number three*

*I'm very keen that this part of North London becomes a 'destination'...we're famous now for Sarries, so let's make us famous for having the best leisure centre in London!*

*It would be nice to regenerate it all into a sport, health wellbeing site for people to come and enjoy themselves and do lots of different things*

*There's so much land here...put as much as you can here. Make some use of it because we come, we swim, we go...if there were other outdoor things to do we'd stay*

*It has to be looked at in the context of the whole site...for example there's all the old tracks that are not used at all. Why not make use of them for cycling etc.*

*They could hold a range of different things...triathlon, cycling. There's loads of ground here*

*What about an outdoor gym...not a trail type but one with open walls etc. with a roof over the top?*

*You could make this a sports development area for all kinds of sports like swimming, cricket, tennis. The fields around here aren't being used at all so it could become a sort of leisure park. The key is not to do the same thing; think outside the box to enthuse people. On a day like this, I would train outside*

*Use the green belt...have something specific like cross country.*

- 5.69 In this regard, a few people suggested that LBB examine the possibility of relaxing the green belt regulations in an attempt to increase the footprint of the proposed new leisure centre and make it 'the best it can be'. This, it was felt, would be instrumental in tempting people away from private sector provision:

*The Council needs a masterplan for the whole site... We need to develop what we need and not be too prissy about developing on Green Belt land...we need to make this the premier sporting site in North London*

*If it's for community benefit, which this will be, they should be able to build on Green Belt land...enlarge, enlarge, enlarge!*

*Surely you can make a business case for a leisure centre that can be bigger and better and include all these added extras? Look at what was spent on leisure centres like Westminster Lodge to see what these added extras bring in terms of their success and make a case based on that*

*The same footprint isn't going to generate more footfall. Like for like isn't going to do it...you need to build it up a bit more otherwise it's the same capacity*

*I know so many people who use private facilities and something new and more attractive might bring them back. So you have to make it as good as it can possibly be.*

- 5.70 Finally, one significant issue raised in relation to the Copthall site was that it is very poorly served by public transport. Many drop-in attendees were strongly of the view that LBB should lobby Transport for London for a re-routed bus through the site, particularly if Copthall is intended to become a 'destination' facility in future:

*Why can't we have a bus route that comes through the site?*

*This site is not accessible without a car and it's badly lit. Transport needs improving to encourage usage...and we want to see more people cycling and walking but it's difficult here*

*There is poor public transport to Copthall. Will that be improved? There should be upfront negotiations with TFL about this*

*Transport is the restriction. If you improve the transport then you will get the critical mass that makes all the extra facilities viable. Build it and they'll come!*

*Bus routes are needed...there is poor accessibility to the site*

*We need a diverted bus route as it's a very inaccessible site by public transport.*

## Other services?

- 5.71 In principle, many drop-in attendees supported the inclusion of services such as GP surgeries, pharmacies, health and wellbeing advice provision, libraries and children's nurseries within leisure centres. This, it was felt, would attract people to the facility (including those who may not normally visit), thus increasing footfall and possibly usage and revenue generation - and increase convenience for the community by providing a 'one-stop-shop' for a range of activities:

*The more activity the better to attract people*

*It should be all encompassing to attract people in*

*The whole outlook needs to be holistic and include a combination of everything*

*A GP surgery, nursery and pharmacy jump out as major pulling factors. It makes the building of the site more positive...*

*It would be a good idea because it could be a hub where all kinds of people went*

*If the incremental costs are fairly low, put as much as you can in to make it somewhere special*

*It's a good idea; if you've got the space, why not?*

*A 'one stop shop' for parents would be ideal*



*If they can provide everything under one roof it's convenient for the community. It would be like a supermarket; you go to the fish counter, you go to the meat counter and so on.*

5.72 Indeed, as one person commented: *"I think there should be potential for multi-purpose rooms that enable other things to be developed like health education, a pharmacy and a GP which would sit well there. There is a similar kind of facility in the Isle of Wight and it has proved a successful meeting point and facility."*

5.73 In practice though, there were some important concerns (especially at the Church Farm drop-ins), chiefly around the space available and the need to retain this for the main purpose of a leisure centre; that is, to provide good quality sport and leisure opportunities:

*Not enough room. I'd rather they took the space up with the leisure centre*

*It's the room; would you have space to incorporate all that? I'd hate to lose sporting facilities for a library/GP surgery etc.*

*I don't know what else you should add to it because of the size of the land; if you add anything else you impact everything*

*If you had a much larger site, yes, but why put those things in when you just need the necessary things: the swimming pool; the crèche; the coffee bar; the things that are for leisure*

*Considering the scale of the site, if you try and put too many things in there you'd be offering poor quality*

*I think there's a real danger of losing the purpose of health and wellbeing for a doctor's surgery or a crèche. My fear is that is that it will become a catch all..*

*Is there real need for things like a GP surgery or pharmacy? I'd prefer to keep it for leisure.*

5.74 Furthermore, one person felt that: *"it's not impossible to co-locate services, but if you're building on recreation ground or open space my priority is to minimise space use..."*

5.75 In terms of specifics, there was some disagreement around whether GP services would be necessary within any new leisure centre. Many New Barnet / East Barnet drop-in attendees discussed this issue in the context of need: they felt that as GP provision is good (especially in the East Barnet area), hosting additional services within their proposed new centre may be surplus to requirement:

*East Barnet health centres are being regenerated and so another GP surgery is not needed...*

*'Poly-clinics' are probably going to be built. If these are to be expanded and improved then there is no need for new ones*

*There's plenty of spaces in lots of GP surgeries so there shouldn't be a need for it. It's ok in principle but in practice you would need to look at the numbers to see if there is a real need*

*That's not an area we are under catered for. There are quite a lot of surgeries in the area so I don't think that is needed*

*You could have GP surgeries but personally I don't think that's needed; there are plenty of sites out here so that wouldn't be necessary unless those facilities were being taken away.*

5.76 Others, though, endorsed the provision of holistic health and well-being provision under one roof - by combining GP services with health advice, specialist clinics and complementary therapies such as osteopathy, acupuncture, podiatry, physiotherapy, chiropractic services, massage etc.:

*Incorporate a GP surgery; a poly-clinic. The GP surgery is currently cramped; they would love new space. The Council then is having a holistic vision of health improvement*

*If there's a GP there you've got people going in, then they'll have a link with fitness people. Those kind of links are missing massively in our society*

*It's good to have everything in one place for your mental health and convenience. Having a GP and pharmacy would be really good. Health advice would also be good*

*It would be good to maybe have a facility which gives people advice and guidance on exercise and diet, something less formal that fits with a leisure centre*

*Added extras could come in the form of health advice, which would be helpful. Positive impacts on health in terms of smoking and eating will only come about if you have good advice facilities*

*Health care or physio would work...physios work with water so this links up*

*It would make health advice more obvious, more accessible. Public health is the way to prevent illness and it would be good to have allied health things like podiatry etc.*

- 5.77 Indeed, even those who did not wish to see GP surgeries within leisure centres were positive about the provision of such advice and therapies - and many people at Copthall also endorsed the idea of a GP outreach service whereby local doctors and/or nurses could base themselves in leisure centres say one or two afternoons a week on a drop-in basis for consultations and clinics:

*There's freelance osteopaths etc.; you could offer them something that doesn't need a lot of space. Freelance doesn't cost you a fortune; you'd just need a little space for that...*

*Physio, acupuncture, osteopaths, chiro, massage...all of those would be good. People coming to the gym might want to visit them afterward. Complimentary practitioners could rent out rooms by the hour*

*Chiropractors etc. I'd have them here as part of a health complex*

*A facility for private practitioners like reflexology, acupuncture...it would really help to have them on-site*

*A room where people could have some form of alternative treatment would be amazing*

*People have their own GPs but a consulting room for physios etc. would be good.*

*You could do this in conjunction with local organisations in an outreach way...have a couple of days when doctors and nurses are based in the leisure centre. You could work in conjunction with Mill Hill Surgery by providing them with a consulting room to provide advice*

*They could hold 'drop-ins' as a lot of elderly people come here. It would be good for them to be able to get health and advice*

*Clinics like well-woman would be really good. It's something I always struggle to find the time for but if it was all here...*

- 5.78 The inclusion of libraries within leisure centres was also a source of some disagreement. Some at the New Barnet / East Barnet drop-in sessions were positive about the idea of including a new library in a new leisure centre on the Danegrove site in the context of efficiency, sustainability and what they described as 'cross-fertilisation':

*They should seriously look at taking the library [East Barnet] across the road. You then get cross-fertilisation, cross-selling. You get economies in facilities management*

*This library is under threat; a sports hall over the road could resolve that issue by putting a library into the building. The people who want the library kept get the best of both worlds*

*If they sold off the library here, that would be something to be considered. It would only be across the road*

*You could incorporate a library, a learning facility, with the café over there which would kill two birds with one stone and would allow an updated and modernised library in one building.*

- 5.79 Others' views on the other hand had clearly been influenced by the recent LBB libraries consultation and they were adamantly against anything that might be 'an excuse to reduce library space':

*I don't want to commit to asking for a library to be included in case it encourages the closure or reduction of East Barnet Library services*

*I want libraries to remain as libraries. It would be dangerous to start moving libraries about*

*What worries me is that this library is going to go and become part of that complex.*

- 5.80 There was, though, support in both areas for a small 'reading lounge' for those wishing to visit the facility with others or to socialise, but not partake in any sporting activity - and for a small library of sorts for children to be able to do their homework between activities or while waiting for their parents to collect them:

*A small library would be good so my husband can sit in there and you don't have to spend any money like you do in a café*

*I'd like a lounge or café type thing with books. Sometimes when you are lonely you just need somewhere to go*

*Some kind of area for the kids; a library type space where they can do homework*

*Having something like a small library for the children would be great. They could do some homework if they're between activities or if they're waiting for their parents to pick them up*

*So many kids sit in the café to do their homework because different ages are doing things at different times...when siblings are swimming or whatever they sit in the café and work. So maybe a little homework room or something would be good.*

## Other issues raised

- 5.81 In both areas, the need for both proposed new leisure centres to be fully disabled accessible was raised by numerous participants (Copthall was particularly heavily criticised for its poor configuration in this regard currently):

*I'm a disability campaigner. It's important that what is being planned is accessible for all*

*Things to think about...doors being wide enough, sinks, hand dryers. Curved corners that wheelchairs can get round much easier. Take a disabled person round and ask them*

*They have a lift but it's inside a set of doors and I can't open them. My husband has to come with me*

*Disabled access here is a bit naff.*

- 5.82 Indeed, access to the swimming pool was considered particularly important in both areas: a sloped entrance was suggested several times:

*What about pool transfers for disabled people? In the Aspire Orthopaedic Hospital at Stanmore...the pool has a slope and a channel full of water for disabled access. There's no maintenance and it saves money long-term*

*A sloped pool entrance is needed to allow the young and disabled to access the pool*

*Somewhere you can walk into the water for people with disabilities (Church Farm)*

*I don't use the pool because I can't get in...it's a big issue. It should have steps or a ramp like at Aspire or even a lift for wheelchair users*

*Access to the swimming pool, are you looking at that. I can get down the ladder but I can't get out. You have to cater for disabled people with the swimming pool.*

- 5.83 Finally, though there was some complaint that LBB's communication with residents immediately adjacent to the two proposed Church Farm sites has been poor, the drop-in sessions were generally praised as a positive opportunity for people to obtain information and air their views. Indeed, some attendees said that their opinions had changed as a result of the information they had been given by LBB staff:

*We found out about it through the Save New Barnet campaign. I went a few doors up and I told people and no-one knew. I thought as we are directly next to one of the sites that we would have had a letter or something*

*Before, we were walking in saying 'we hope it's not in our park'. Now we are saying 'I hope it is in our park'. We were worried we were going to lose our park.*

- 5.84 Furthermore, one person who had participated in previous consultation on the SPA project said that:

*The proposals were what we talked about at the first stage consultation workshops. That makes me happy.*

## 6. Residents' Focus Groups

### Overview

- 6.1 The following chapter is based on the views expressed at eight focus groups with protected characteristics residents from the Copthall and Church Farm leisure centre Catchment Areas, presenting the main themes and key points arising from these activities.
- 6.2 The opinions expressed were not always unanimous, but we have endeavoured to reflect the range of views expressed. Some important common themes emerged from the group discussions and these are reported below; but where issues related to a particular option, these have been highlighted. Many quotations have been used, not because we wish to endorse any views, but in order to illustrate some of the more common and important themes and issues.
- 6.3 In order to provide thoughtful consideration of the issues by a wide range of 'ordinary' members of the public, ORS recruited and facilitated eight focus groups between July and September 2015. The point or purpose of the deliberative sessions was to allow LBB to engage with, and listen to, members of the public about some important issues - so that the participants would become more informed about the proposed plans for the redevelopment of the future Church Farm and Copthall leisure centres and in turn gain detailed feedback about the various aspects of these proposals including site preference, facilities that should be included and other suggestions and comments.
- 6.4 In this context, ORS' role was to design, facilitate and report the findings. We worked in collaboration with LBB to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.
- 6.5 Although, like other forms of qualitative consultation, deliberative focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative, these eight meetings gave a wide range of people the opportunity to discuss the financial context and options in detail. We believe the meetings are broadly indicative of how informed members of the public would formulate and express their views in similar contexts.
- 6.6 Therefore, we believe that the eight meetings are particularly important within the context of the whole consultation programme – because the focus groups were inclusive (encompassing a wide range of people), not self-selecting (randomly recruited), relatively well-informed (following initial presentations of the key issues and potential options), and fairly conducted (through careful facilitation by ORS).

### Attendance and Representativeness

- 6.7 In total, there were **80** diverse participants at the focus groups. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public are noted in Table 6 overleaf.

**Table 6: Summary of focus groups' details**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>TIME AND DATE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ATTENDEES</b>
<b>Young People</b>	<b>5.00pm-7.00pm 15<sup>th</sup> July and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Non Users</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>BME</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2015</b>	<b>10 (including 4 face to face interviews)</b>
<b>Older People</b>	<b>10:00am – 12:00pm Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>	<b>11:00am – 12:30pm Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Deprived Communities</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2015</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Physical Disabilities</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2015</b>	<b>8</b>

- <sup>6.8</sup> The attendance target for the focus groups was around eight to 10 people, so the recruitment programme was very successful. Participants (with the exception of the people with learning disabilities and young people groups) were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS' Social Research Call Centre. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community.
- <sup>6.9</sup> The young people group was recruited by CommUNITY Barnet which is an organisation which supports, promotes and coordinates an effective voluntary and community sector in the LBB and had a number of useful contacts with the aforementioned. CommUNITY Barnet were recompensed for their time and efforts in assisting the recruitment. The learning disabilities group was arranged by Barnet Mencap who allowed the group to take place at its offices.
- <sup>6.10</sup> In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the focus groups met were readily accessible. People's special needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venues.
- <sup>6.11</sup> Overall, participants represented a broad cross-section of residents and, as standard good practice, were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part by being given £30 at the conclusion of each group.

## Discussion agenda

- 6.12 ORS worked in collaboration with the LBB to agree a suitable agenda and informative stimulus material for the meeting, which covered the following topics:
- » Core facilities proposed for each leisure centre
  - » Additional facilities proposed for each leisure centre
  - » Any other facilities
  - » Site preference for the new Church Farm: Danegrove or VRG
  - » Site preference for the new Church Farm: The two proposed options within VRG
  - » Any other issues or suggestions raised
- 6.13 The questions were accompanied by a presentation devised by ORS and the LBB to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues – and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions.

## Facilities mix

### Proposed core facilities

#### General

- 6.14 Most focus group attendees were pleased with LBBs proposed core facilities for the proposed new leisure centres, though many felt they should represent the bare minimum in terms of provision (albeit with some acceptance of financial constraints):

*All of those core facilities are good to encourage people to join (Learning Disabilities)*

*It looks like it'll be a good facility for a growing population (BME)*

*This would all be really great! (Deprived Areas)*

*Oh wow, that sounds good! (Women)*

*I would like a new leisure facility here; a pool with clean and pleasant changing rooms, a gym with maybe studio classes that you can pick and choose... (Women)*

*I think the 25m pool, for sure, is very important. The learner pool because that's for my little one and I'm not so interested in the dance studio and gym but others will be. I think they're all good to be honest (Women)*

*This should be the minimum because every leisure centre has this mix (BME)*

*At the very least that's what I would expect (Older People)*

*The London Borough of Barnet cannot compete with David Lloyd etc. and within the respect of financial restraint the core facilities there are quite good. (Older people)*

## Swimming pool

- 6.15 As might be expected, a replacement **swimming pool** was at the top of the list of desired facilities for the overwhelming majority of Church Farm attendees, who were particularly pleased to learn that this will be the standard 25m in length:

*I think 25m has a very good merit; it's big enough but not intimidating for people who want to start up and for the elderly. Thinking of the community, for a broad spectrum 25m is perfect (BME)*

*They have to have a 25 metre pool because I wouldn't go to Church Farm because it is too small (Young People)*

*25m is fine...we've only got an 18m at the moment so it's a big improvement (Deprived Areas)*

*It's really important to keep a swimming pool here (Non-users)*

*As long as they have a swimming pool I'm happy; if it has extras then that's brilliant. (Older People)*

- 6.16 Indeed, only a very small minority in the BME group felt the Church Farm area requires a longer pool: they suggested that a 33m combined full and learner pool facility with a dividing wall could offer more flexibility and be more attractive to wider range of swimmers:

*I'm shocked at a 25m pool; you have to cater for the long term. Even 30m would be better than 25m (BME)*

*Why are they going for a 25m pool? We should be heading for a 40 or 50m size pool (BME)*

*We need the same as Southgate...a 33m pool (BME)*

*How about combining the learner pool and main pool for a 33m? (BME)*

- 6.17 As aforementioned though, most were happy to accept the provision of a 25m pool - though the BME and deprived areas groups and some of the young people stressed that it must be sufficiently wide to cater for the anticipated high community demand:

*The wider it is the better; even if it's 25m it has to be wider (BME)*

*It's not just length, it's width as well; there's no good having a 50m pool with five lanes (BME)*

*How much of a six lane pool is going to be taken up by swimming clubs? If people want to use pools in the evening, will they have enough room with six lanes? (Deprived Areas)*

*If it's wide enough they can then change the number of lanes according to how many people are there. If there are more children, make it wider...more swimmers equals more lanes (BME)*

*There needs to be enough lanes... (Young People)*

- 6.18 With specific regard to Copthall, the main point of debate was whether the water space should include a 50m pool (with a dividing boom) as opposed to 2 x 25m facilities. As the following comments demonstrate, there was strong support for the former on the grounds that this would: offer good value for money and a future-proofed amenity; ensure the centre is viewed as an elite regional facility that could attract competitive swimmers from a wide area; and allow these swimmers to train in an environment that prepares them for events such as the Olympic Games. Some typical comments were:

*50m...might as well. It supposed to be a sports complex; they need everything, especially if it's going to be new. Now is the time to do it (BME)*

*I would want an Olympic swimming pool there. If you're going to build new why not? (Older People)*



*Will it conform to Olympic standards? Because if not, it's a waste of money (Non-users)*

*There are only about 10 Olympic pools in the country. If they're going to spend money, they should do something for the future (Non-users)*

*The Council should plan for the future, not replace what's already in existence (Non-users)*

*We need to set our sights higher...I think definitely a 50m (Women)*

*It should be elite; a 50m pool is a very good idea (Women)*

*It would be nice to have a centre of excellence in Barnet. If you've got a chance to put in a 50m pool, why wouldn't you do it? (Deprived Areas)*

*If you're doing competitions it could become a national centre; a 50m pool would be a really good thing for North London (Physical Disabilities)*

*I think you have to look at it as not just a replacement centre but something for the future. How are you going to train future generations if you're going to limit it to 25m? (Physical Disabilities)*

*A 25m is sufficient for normal people but Barnet Copthall has always prided itself on its swimming clubs and Olympians. I think it would have to be 50m...a 25m isn't going to cut the mustard in this day and age (Deprived Areas)*

*There are a huge number of pre-Olympic swimmers training in Barnet. They need a proper pool (Non-users)*

*It has a swimming club with 1500 members; every night they use 11 lanes and schools go there all the time. It's even more reason to make it a 50m pool (Non-users)*

*Presuming the old buildings are 50 to 60 years old you'll get that again; it has to give you value for money and a 50m pool will contribute to this. (Non-users)*

- 6.19 However, some of the non-users and young people said they would prefer the current configuration of 2 x 25m pools, primarily because: 50m pools are more expensive to build and run; having two pools is better practically as they can be built to the different requisite depths, set to different temperatures and one can remain open for the community during competitions and school lessons; and it would be more suitable for the community as a whole (especially given there is a 50m pool relatively close by at the Olympic Park):

*Building a 50m pool would be more expensive and it wouldn't increase capacity (Non-users)*

*A 50m pool needs three times the depth of foundations; it's more expensive (Non-users)*

*I think the cost of a 50m pool is two or three times what a 25 metre pool is...because you've got ground pressures and everything (Non-users)*

*There should be a main pool which is sufficiently deep to swim in the whole time; anything less than 1.2 metres you can't tumble down at the end if you're a competitive swimmer. If you've got two pools you can have the different depths you need more easily (Young People)*

*You couldn't then have the two different temperatures (Physical Disabilities)*

*2 x 25m pools are essential. I like that they've got two. It does mean even when there are galas; there is somewhere else to go (Women)*

*If I was swimming I would prefer 2 x 25m. If the school kids are there they can all be in one pool (Physical Disabilities)*

*I think we need to think back to the SPA aims which are to increase participation. Pool space is an issue and I wouldn't like to see it all given over to high level competitive swimming. I would prefer to see it split for the two different groups (Physical Disabilities)*

*25m is more the average person size pool (Physical Disabilities)*

*It would depend on the degree to which the 50m pool was being used as a 50m and how much that would encroach on the use by the community. So maybe 2 x 25m would be better (Older People)*

*The one in Stratford isn't impossible to get to; if you want to get in the Olympics, get on the train. The community doesn't need a 50m pool because we're not going to be in the Olympics! (Non-users)*

On the issue of expense though, one non-user questioned: *how far is the next Olympic pool? Is there a possibility of cost sharing with the surrounding boroughs and centralising the cost?*

- 6.20 Again, some people in the physical disabilities group desired a wider community pool at Cophall: eight (or even 10) lanes as opposed to six. They argued that the current facility is very overcrowded at certain times - and that a wider pool would help alleviate this:

*A six lane pool is not very big. I would like to see a couple more lanes to make it more accessible to the general public at public sessions. (Physical Disabilities)*

### Learner pool

- 6.21 The proposed **learner pools** were praised by many as a means of teaching young children to swim away from the general public, and also in offering swimming opportunities to adults who are not confident within a larger facility. Furthermore, the moveable floor was also considered crucial in allowing the space to be used flexibly for a range of activities:

*A learner pool is really great as it involves the community; most people have kids (Non-users)*

*I think you need the gym classes but you also need the learning pool as well because sometimes the big pool is too big to take little ones in (Women)*

*The learner pool is a good idea...they must have somewhere for children to learn to swim in a smaller pool (Deprived Areas)*

*That's important for the community to come and use and also they are separating children from people who want to come and work out (Young people)*

*Learner pool...I would definitely go there if they did have that because I don't like the big pools (Learning Disabilities)*

*The learner pool can be used that for deep water workouts...the movable floor can be moved to make it shallow for people who want to do normal aerobics. (BME)*

### Splash zone?

- 6.22 Finally in terms of the 'wet side', a few people - especially those in the learning disabilities and young people's groups - suggested a need to timetable some water/splash play at the proposed new leisure centres in order to appeal to children and young people and those who like to swim for fun:

*I have been to the swimming pool at Copthall but I didn't like it much. Maybe put a water slide in*  
(Learning Disabilities)

*This is just a swimming pool and it's a bit boring...at the lido people can jump on the waves*  
(Learning Disabilities)

*There are no fun pools, no water slide. If you're on holiday they don't have a swimming pool with lanes marked out* (Non-users)

*They should have obstacles; inflatables. That would be good for parties and for our age group 14-17 and for really young people* (Young People)

*There needs to be that fun element: we would go to Furzefield or the Olympic Park and that is a long distance* (Young People)

*My sister is having a pool party next week and we are holding it at Finchley; we are able to do that because of the pool. It would be nice to have some space where sometimes in the holidays we can just go in and have a load of fun* (Young People)

- 6.23 There was some suggestion though that Copthall - as an elite performance centre primarily - may not be the right place for such activities:

*This should be to do with keep fit and training not fun...they are two different things* (Non-users)

*You can't mix the two together, they're separate things* (Non-users).

However, those in the young people's group who are members of the Copthall Swimming Club disagreed and felt that fun, training and competitions/galas can co-exist: they cited Hatfield as an example of where this is successfully achieved.

### Gym and fitness studios

- 6.24 A **gym** was supported as an essential facility that people would expect to see in a modern leisure centre - and most people across all focus groups agreed that **dance and fitness (including spinning) studios** are essential given the popularity of exercise and dance classes, providing they are sufficiently flexible and multi-purpose as to allow a variety of activities to be held within them:

*I think they should have definitely a gym. What modern leisure centre doesn't?* (Non-users)

*Both me and partner quite like working out, so if it had a gym I think it would be a lot more attractive definitely* (Women)

*Gym and studios (including a spin studio) are required for a regional facility* (Non-users)

*Spinning is really popular so I think that would be really popular to be honest* (Deprived Areas)

*I think the gym would take off because it's quite expensive to go to the gym elsewhere...these sorts of places are a lot cheaper* (Deprived Areas)

*Gym and dance studios; that's good. They are really important* (Young People)

*I think it will be good that there will be more than just a swimming pool, that it will have a gym and dance studios, it will encourage more people to come and it will make more money* (Young People)

*Dance studios etc...there are a lot more people getting into dance and more studios will mean more choice of classes* (BME)

*I think that would be great for things like Pilates and aerobics...it's great exercise and really popular now (Deprived Areas)*

*I think it's important that these studios are really multi-use (Older People)*

*They're really important for classes (Non-users)*

*Studios...that should be there. That would draw a lot more people (Learning Disabilities)*

*If the dance studios were commonly available for hire then great. I have tried and they are few and far between. I run a dance company and we do functions and we need rehearsal space, audition space so being able to hire for an hour would be amazing. A nice big open room, air conditioned with water fountain, sprung floors, bars and mirrors...even just a basic speaker (Young People)*

*In the community venue a dance studio could be used for birthday parties. (Young People)*

- 6.25 With particular reference to Copthall, several people in the physical disabilities group suggested that the proposal for two studios may be insufficient - and that three may be required to cater for existing demand, and indeed to offer more and varied classes in future:

*Two dance studios is nowhere near enough. The more studios you have the more opportunity there is to have different things (Physical Disabilities)*

*You're definitely looking at needing more than two studios. (Physical Disabilities)*

## Café

- 6.26 There was almost universal support for hosting **cafés** within the new leisure centres. They were seen as an important means of revenue generation and would, it was felt, offer excellent socialising opportunities for centre users and indeed non-users:

*We have refreshments after the swimming...yes they're important (Learning Disabilities)*

*If they want to get people in then a café area is essential; one that's open without having to go into the pool (Women)*

*It would be nice after swimming when you are tired and hungry (Young People)*

*It adds to a facility if you can go there after your exercise...and it brings in revenue I would have thought (Deprived Areas)*

*If you are going to be a member somewhere you don't want just a swimming pool; you want a bit more, even a café, just somewhere to go with friends. It makes it a bit more of a social occasion (Women)*

*Cafés bring in money (Women)*

*It's a way of getting people through the door and if you've got someone coming with you they have somewhere to go and sit. People may come just for the café then see what else is on (Physical Disabilities)*

*Private gyms have cafés. It's a good meeting point to socialise...you can say 'I'll meet you at the café before the class'. (Non-users)*

- 6.27 The current café at Copthall leisure centre was frequently criticised for its lack of character and poor range of food and drinks - particularly healthy options. It was claimed to be not well-used for these

reasons - but people also felt that improved provision (with Wi-Fi) within a new leisure centre would be very welcome:

*It would be great if the café was made into a restaurant. I think healthy would be best...wraps, paninis, juices. You could spend the day at the leisure centre and go to the café at the end. It makes you feel you've had a good day...like you would at a spa. (Women)*

*A café would be great but not serving junk food like Copthall. We want salad, healthy options (BME)*

*We should have a place where we can vegetarian meals and a variety of healthy things (Learning Disabilities)*

*I think it needs to be a bit better than the Copthall one at the moment. It needs to be somewhere you want to actually sit down...not 'let's meet at the gym then go somewhere else'. And it has to have healthy snacks there to practice what we preach (Physical Disabilities)*

*A café would be fab; they have a café at the moment but I don't know if you'd eat there (Women)*

*It would be good to have somewhere to sit and wait for people to turn up...especially if there was Wi-Fi as well. (Young People)*

- <sup>6.28</sup> One person at the deprived areas group suggested that LBB consider: *"branding it like a juice bar...with high counters and healthy snacks and a little seating area. Something a bit more modern."* (Deprived Areas)

## Extra facilities?

### Sports hall

- <sup>6.29</sup> As for the possible added 'extras', focus group participants were overwhelmingly positive about the need for multi-purpose **sports halls** in the two centres, describing them as much-needed, revenue-generating facilities that would attract footfall and provide a large space for community use (particularly during inclement British weather!). Some typical comments that illustrate this point of view are:

*It excites me the idea of a multi-use sports hall; it could have lots of activities for older people (Older People)*

*Why don't they have different sports in different halls...like badminton, tennis and volleyball? If we had more halls we could do different things. It's just that I get a bit concerned about the weather; that's why I prefer indoors (Learning Disabilities)*

*It's nice to have things outside but when the weather's bad it's good to be able to go indoors. Suppose it belts down with rain; you need to have a place inside where you play football (Learning Disabilities)*

*I'd agree with sports halls; something relatively small with, say, four badminton courts and an inside or a multi-use games area outside. You've got a commercial entity there as well. Model it on Burnt Oak where they have a big hall they can separate out and have also got an all-weather court for five-a-side, basketball etc. (Physical Disabilities)*

*I think there should be a sports hall where they could do badminton, basketball etc. There's not that many places around for that (Deprived Areas)*

*A sports hall could host clubs for the local kids who could probably do with being occupied (Women)*

*A sports hall definitely for things like netball. It would be really good for activities in the summer and in the winter (Young People)*

*A sports hall...if they are just there for basketball, football, maybe netball it's not the best. But if you have things like badminton, tennis there then great. Also if you could spilt it up then that would be good. We've got swimming and we've got gyms in the area but that's basically it (Young People)*

*We have nine months of the year when you are indoors. (BME)*

6.30 Indeed, as one older person stated:

*I don't think these are good 'core' facilities; it's limited. It's for people who take exercise for the sake of exercise. I enjoy sport and exercise as a by-product of sport. I'm all for it...but I want to see a place for badminton, indoor tennis, five-a-side football; that's how people really enjoy sport. If you want to go to a gym, go to LA Fitness...we want a more holistic approach to the whole thing. (Older People)*

## Crèche

6.31 Parents of young children were keen to see a **crèche** at the proposed new leisure centres, suggesting that this would encourage them to be much more active than they are currently. Indeed, even many of those without children acknowledged that such provision would be useful in attracting a younger audience to the centres and in allowing parents to undertake higher levels of exercise. Some typical comments were:

*Crèche facilities would be a real bonus for parents to use it during the day. There are a lot of young women who are interested in keeping fit but don't have the babysitting facilities to do so (Women)*

*I could leave one of them in the crèche and take the other swimming or it could be for me to go swimming myself. I could leave them just for half an hour and swim rather than have to get child-care, so a crèche would be good (Women)*

*A crèche would be fab, especially when they get a bit older. To be able to use that would be amazing (Women)*

*For parents who want to use the gym or even just take some time out and got to the café...it would be very well used I think (Deprived Areas)*

*I would go to do stuff without her so a crèche would be good. I'd go there as an adult and I'd love to do tennis or a badminton club or something... (Women)*

*Knowing that there is a crèche would be great to have more time to exercise again (Women)*

*I was chatting to my daughter and she said 'for goodness sake tell them to have a crèche'... (Older People)*

*A crèche would be helpful for young mums to exercise (BME)*

*To be fair this thing has to pay for itself. A crèche would enable mothers to gravitate there and spend money (Non-users)*

*You want to engage the entire community so it sounds sensible. (Young People)*



- 6.32 There was also a sense that facilities such as a crèche are important in terms of revenue generation and ensuring the centres eventually become self-sustaining - and in enticing people away from private sector facilities:

*If you want this to be used during the day this would be the other add on. I'm just thinking about how you get people to go in and pay for services; things like small crèche where you can pay by the hour would be something. You have to look at it in comparison to a private gym; you have to include other things and I think it's add-ons like this that will make people go. (Physical Disabilities)*

### Climbing wall

- 6.33 The possibility of including a climbing wall was spontaneously mentioned at the groups for people with physical disabilities and young people, who felt that such non-traditional activities are essential in attracting new audiences to the proposed new leisure centres:

*Climbing walls are incredibly useful when you've got young people; it's something to get people using their physical strength but in a different way for those that don't like traditional sports (Physical Disabilities)*

*I think you have to have things like this to bring people in (Physical Disabilities)*

*When I was doing my moderation for my GCSE my teacher was trying to get us climbing but the only one near us was in Hatfield and it was really expensive. (Young People)*

- 6.34 It was also suggested that:

*You could put a climbing wall up the side of the building. When you go to Swiss Cottage there's a climbing wall on the outside of the building. It's not exposed to the elements because there's glass around it...and if the new one is being designed from scratch it could easily be incorporated and not take up space inside. (Deprived Areas)*

### Spa facilities (sauna, steam room, jacuzzi)

- 6.35 There was significant support across all focus groups - and especially among the women - for incorporating a **spa-type facility** (including a sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi) within the proposed new leisure centres. This, it was felt, would again enable the Council-owned facilities to successfully compete with private centres - providing they are maintained to a high standard. Some of the many typical comments were:

*I've been to places in Haringey with a sauna and steam room; I would like that and it wouldn't cost the earth (Women)*

*I would like to see a health spa...a Jacuzzi, sauna, classes, treatment. If I had a facility like that locally I'd go every week... (Women)*

*For the little bit I would be swimming isn't worth me going to a leisure centre, but if I could sit in the sauna etc. I would (Women)*

*It's much more attractive if you had the whole package there. The core facilities are great but I would add to it with a little treatment room and a hot room (Women)*

*If they could provide a beautiful clean swimming pool and a Jacuzzi; if there was something like that on my doorstep I'd go (Physical Disabilities)*

*I would go to it if it was a spa leisure centre (BME)*

*Steam room, sauna, Jacuzzi...oh yes! (Learning Disabilities)*

*Saunas, Jacuzzis etc. would be very good for people our age...they are the obvious things to have with the core facilities (Older People)*

*I like saunas and I like steam rooms...definitely a good idea (Non-users)*

*Copthall is more used for training rather than leisure but the leisure is kind of important. If you had a sauna and steam room that would be really handy (Young People)*

*I think it would be used really well if it was maintained well...they have to be looked after and not turn grotty and horrible. (Deprived Areas)*

## Diving pool

- 6.36 Most of those who commented on the issue supported the retention of the **diving pool** at Copthall. Diving was perceived as an increasingly popular activity and it was considered unreasonable that a community the size of Barnet should be left without a facility to encourage people to take it up:

*I agree we should keep it (Learning Disabilities)*

*I think it's really good that they have it, and they've got all the Tom Daley endorsement. It's good to encourage all those sorts of things...as she gets older my daughter would really like it. I think it's good to encourage for the Olympics and all that, all these different skills (Women)*

*A diving pool is definitely needed; there isn't another facility for that in the borough (Women)*

- 6.37 Moreover, if the future Barnet Copthall leisure centre is designed to be an elite facility, it was considered important that it includes additional, somewhat niche facilities such as diving pools; these should be sufficiently flexible to allow other activities to take place in them (and could, in fact, be incorporated into one of the proposed swimming pools):

*In our borough to have something that is absolutely elite; I think we should be supporting that (Older People)*

*It is geared up for training and is a 'serious' facility. I would have thought it needs a proper diving pool (Women)*

*With the diving pool the floor goes up and down and so it could be incorporated into the learner pool (Older People)*

*They could change the diving pool into a hydrotherapy pool (Physical Disabilities)*

*A diving pool; if it's the only one in Barnet, then yes. But instead of having a specific pool which is very deep the space could be better used in one of the pools with a moveable floor. (Young People)*

- 6.38 A small minority felt that a diving pool would be inefficient, primarily in terms of usage versus cost:

*Not everybody uses it (Learning Disabilities)*

*Is it every used? All the times I've been there I've rarely seen it being used (Deprived Areas)*

*It's a very specialist thing; I've only ever used it once (Deprived Areas)*

*There is demand for that facility but when we are looking at the Council facilities, is it the most important? Less people are going to use it. (Young People)*



## Other suggestions

- 6.39 **Soft play** for young children was another popular suggestion for an added value facility that would generate significant revenue:

*If you're going to have a learner pool you need a café and a soft play. That's where you're going to get your money from... (Non-users)*

*Soft play would be lovely. One of the gyms over in the Queens Park area has soft play which we used to go to; that would be good (Women)*

*Are they talking about a soft play area? It's very popular (Deprived Areas)*

*At Hendon they do stay and play for toddlers; my younger siblings used to find that every useful. So what about a big pit with sponges...balls and soft play things which could then put back in storage? Having that available for the community would be great (Young People)*

*All the Hertsmere ones we have gone to have all had a soft play as standard; they can make quite a bit of money (Women)*

*A children's play area like Junglemania would be good and profitable. (Women)*

- 6.40 Indeed, one participant at the women's group described how they currently visit Furzefield in Potters Bar simply because the leisure centre has a soft play area. This, along with the more traditional facilities like swimming and a café, allows them to undertake several family-friendly activities under one roof - and they felt they would certainly prefer to use such a facility locally if it were to be provided:

*When we end up going for these sort of social things, we end up going to Furzefield in Potters Bar because they've got a soft play area. So if she goes swimming and then goes to the soft play and then we go to the café afterwards, that's sort of your whole morning taken care of. I actually travel that little bit further because it provides it all under one roof... (Women)*

*If it was closer we would go a lot more. Because Potters Bar is that bit further, we only go once a week. If you had that sort of thing in Barnet, we would be much more likely to join. So if they could provide something comparable to Furzefield, I would happily go there... (Women)*

## Site preferences: New Leisure Centre

### Danegrove Playing Fields or Victoria Recreation Ground?

- 6.41 Given the general positivity described above, it is perhaps unsurprising that several people were prepared to see a new leisure centre sited at either Danegrove Playing Fields (henceforth Danegrove) or Victoria Recreation Ground (henceforth VRG) 'as long as it is built' and includes all of the requisite facilities. Most people, though, expressed a preference for one site over the other – and the cited merits and drawbacks of both are reported below.

### Danegrove Playing Fields

- 6.42 The Danegrove site was thought to have some considerable merits, namely: its prominent location; its existing transport infrastructure and nearby amenities; its current lack of usage (especially in

comparison with VRG) and the corresponding lack of impact building a leisure centre there would have on useable green space; its proximity to the current Church Farm site; and the fact it could be used by local schools.

<sup>6.43</sup> Table 7 below summarises people's views on the main advantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove (sometimes as opposed to at VRG).

**Table 7: Focus Groups summary table – participants' views on the advantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Existing road infrastructure (public transport more accessible/parking opportunities better than at VRG)</b>	<p><i>Cat Hill has a bus stop outside...the other site is about a quarter of a mile from a bus stop (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>The bus route wouldn't need any re-routing like it would at Victoria (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>I would still opt for Danegrove. It's not about parking; it's about access (Women)</i></p> <p><i>Cat Hill has easier access and is nice and bright; it's the right site (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>Parking is available on the roads around there and there's a car park in East Barnet village. (Women)</i></p>
<b>Prominent location with nearby amenities (including the local library) which would themselves benefit from a new local leisure centre</b>	<p><i>It's actually better than the middle of nowhere because a busy junction means everyone knows it; it's not like you have to explain where to go. It's easily visible and there is going to be transport...as long as the traffic lights are making it safe to cross (Young People)</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove is large and on the main road; it's in the public view (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove would be visible; people would think lets go in for a coffee (Women)</i></p> <p><i>You could make it a nice day out with the library as well (Women)</i></p> <p><i>It would help local businesses like coffee shops etc. (Older People)</i></p>
<b>Improved usage of a redundant space (with little impact on local residents in terms of losing green, open space)</b>	<p><i>That's good...it's not like they already have lots of people going there in playtime (Young People)</i></p> <p><i>I think it would be very good because we walk past it on our way to school. We never see it being used and there is no point in having it if you are not doing anything with it, so it is a good location - I would use it (Young People)</i></p> <p><i>The area isn't used for anything...it's effectively a brownfield site in that respect. (Older People)</i></p>
<b>Close to current Church Farm site</b>	<p><i>It's only a mile away from the current site. If they could just sort out parking (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>If you close down Church Farm Danegrove is ideal. It serves the same community and there are four primary schools nearby. (Older People)</i></p>
<b>Usage by local schools</b>	<p><i>School children could walk to the Danegrove site (Women)</i></p> <p><i>I suppose Danegrove would be used quite a lot by the school - suppose that's a good thing (Women)</i></p>

<sup>6.44</sup> Conversely, the Danegrove site was thought to have some notable drawbacks, namely: its comparatively small size; the implications a new leisure centre there would have on local traffic

volumes and management; its location on a busy and apparently dangerous junction; its current designation as a school playing field (and indeed as a green open space); and the probable objections from local residents. The primary issue for focus group participants, though, was the lack of parking in the immediate vicinity – although some felt they could support this site option if they could be reassured that this could be rectified in future.

6.45 Table 8 below summarises people’s views on the main disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove (sometimes as opposed to at VRG).

**Table 8: Focus Groups summary table – participants’ views on the disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at Danegrove**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Site has several disadvantages</b>	<i>I don't think that's a good idea; I object completely based on location, parking, access etc. (Non-users)</i>
<b>Lack of parking provision (though some said if this could be rectified the site would be 'perfect')</b>	<p><i>Danegrove – what about parking? (BME)</i></p> <p><i>The neighbours won't be too happy; parking is a must (BME)</i></p> <p><i>Parking would be a major issue; I think the road would get clogged up (BME)</i></p> <p><i>There's not going to be any parking facilities (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>You wouldn't be able to park anywhere around there at all (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>I think it's going to be a horrific place to put it. There's no parking...it would make our lives a misery (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>Would there be parking on the Danegrove one? Because if it there's no parking and it's near a main road, it's a problem because you have to park...you have people parking over other people's driveways (Young People)</i></p> <p><i>I just don't know where anyone is going to park around there. It's a problem as it is (Deprived Areas)</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove; you wouldn't get a car park there (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>The ground is perfect; the parking is the main issue (BME)</i></p> <p><i>I think parking is going to be one of biggest considerations. It's a lovely site if the parking was okay. (Women)</i></p>
<b>Site too constrained for necessary facilities</b>	<p><i>I can't see how you would fit all those facilities and parking on that site (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>It's just not big enough (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>It's a good location but it's really small (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>I do think it's quite small so you couldn't have any extras on it (Deprived Areas)</i></p> <p><i>It won't be big enough to make it pay. If you are going to build something, build something to give the community the chance to make it work (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>It doesn't look that big to be honest (Deprived Areas)</i></p> <p><i>Danegrove isn't big enough to warrant all the investment (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>You wouldn't get anything but a pool at Danegrove. (Physical Disabilities)</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Impact on (and possible opposition from) local residents</b>	<p><i>It's quite an affluent road; they're not going to be happy one bit (BME)</i></p> <p><i>There's going to be a lot of opposition from Park Road residents (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>Local residents will complain because they are used to looking at green (Women)</i></p> <p><i>I think we should listen to the residents who live there. If you put a leisure centre opposite my house I'd be thrilled but if someone is saying it's already a bad idea then we should listen. (Older People)</i></p>
<b>Impact on local traffic volumes/ management</b>	<p><i>It's already very congested around there (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>People won't be able to get near Danegrove with the traffic congestion on Cat Hill from schools (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>On a school morning it would be absolutely crazy around there (Deprived Areas)</i></p>
<b>Location on a busy/apparently dangerous junction</b>	<p><i>It's a really busy road (BME)</i></p> <p><i>On that junction where the library is; the road is very narrow. (Women)</i></p>
<b>Loss of green open space</b>	<p><i>Danegrove is a nice open space; leave like that as it's quite appealing visually. (Non-users)</i></p>
<b>Loss of school playing field</b>	<p><i>Where would the children go if this is a leisure centre? (Non-users)</i></p>

<sup>6.46</sup> Despite the above, several of those who opposed the siting of a new leisure centre at Danegrove were keen to see the site used for something:

*Can they not use both? Put something opposite the library as well... (Non-users)*

*Danegrove...make that into a nice, useable park area (Physical Disabilities)*

*What about putting some of those outdoor gyms at Danegrove...it's a shame not to use the space (Deprived Areas)*

*What about Danegrove? Can that not be used as a part of the deal so it's not redundant (Women)*

## Victoria Recreation Ground?

<sup>6.47</sup> The VRG site was thought to have some considerable merits, namely that: it is a large, flat space with potential for a large number of facilities and future expansion if required; it is within an increasingly residential area and thus has a growing catchment; it is already a recreational space and could thus become a 'destination' where individuals and families could spend the day; it has good public transport links and a number of access points (or potential access points); it could be used by several local schools; and it is an enclosed space where a leisure centre will have minimum visual impact.

<sup>6.48</sup> One other apparent consideration in terms of locating a leisure centre at VRG is that it could act as a catalyst to developing what is presently a somewhat run-down park and wider area. Indeed, many people commented that VRG can feel unsafe after dark and suggested that siting a leisure centre there would result in improvements in this regard.

6.49 Table 9 below summarises people's views on the main advantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG (sometimes as opposed to at Danegrove).

**Table 9: Focus Groups summary table – participants' views on the advantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Site has several advantages</b>	<p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground is much better (BME)</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground is the better one from what everyone else said; it's a bigger site and will help with the regeneration of that area (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground is massive and under-used (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>Personally I think it would be better in Victoria Recreation Ground only for the fact it's a scrubby old park and there's more space there; Danegrove is a bit congested. (Older People)</i></p>
<b>Large, flat site with the potential for a wide range of facilities - including outdoor facilities - and future expansion (especially in comparison with Danegrove)</b>	<p><i>That's a lot bigger isn't it? More facilities and more parking? (Women)</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation is bigger than the Danegrove site (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>It's considerably bigger than Cat Hill (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>They need loads of things; things around it. They could do this in the park because there's more space (Learning Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground has got a lot of land so there's more potential for extra facilities (BME)</i></p> <p><i>It makes sense to me that if you've got a big site like that, put the leisure centre there in a municipal park (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>It seems like it's got the capability to have more in one place. Once you develop the facility you can develop more... (Young People)</i></p> <p><i>There's more open space which you could incorporate into a new facility. (Older People)</i></p>
<b>Could be a catalyst to improving the park (and the wider area) and attracting more people to use it</b>	<p><i>The redevelopment would completely change the area for the better (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>It would change the nature of the park...it would make it feel a lot safer (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>There are tennis courts in the Victoria park and there's broken glass and gatherings of local jobs. I know other parents who wouldn't take their kids there (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>It sounds like the actual area will be improved...it could do with a lift. Danegrove is residential already so there's no need to regenerate it (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>It's a vastly under-used park. It's an opportunity to do something to utilise the area better for the local community. (Physical Disabilities)</i></p>
<b>Site is already used for leisure so can become a 'destination' for many activities</b>	<p><i>The park already has tennis courts and redeveloping here could result in combining indoor and outdoor facilities. It was built as a municipal park and this is a good reason to re-develop it (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>You would have a park that's already used next to the facility which is nice (Older People)</i></p> <p><i>You've got more facilities around Vic Rec (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>That would be really nice because you would have the park to play on as well...I thought it would take the whole thing. I think it's nice to have the swimming pool and</i></p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<i>the open space all in one area. Then you can make a real day of it; or a morning of it at least. (Women)</i>
<b>Good access (better than Danegrove)</b>	<p><i>Access is much better here than in Danegrove (BME)</i></p> <p><i>I used to live right by there and if I still lived there, I wouldn't complain. I can't see it making a huge difference to traffic (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>There's more than one entrance there at Victoria Recreation Ground (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>As whole Victoria Recreation Ground is a better option and with the big developments going on there it's likely the roads will be changed anyway. (Women)</i></p>
<b>Good public transport links (better than Danegrove)</b>	<p><i>It's easy to get to Sainsbury's New Barnet by Victoria Recreation Ground (Learning Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>Victoria Recreation Ground has a railway station and is served by buses (Physical Disabilities)</i></p> <p><i>I've probably swung toward Victoria Recreation Ground because of the better transportation. (Non-users)</i></p>
<b>Area becoming more residential and in need of facilities</b>	<i>Vic Rec is a much more residential place; we should be getting onto Barnet and saying 'there's a lot of people that live around here...make it nice'. The leisure centre could help. (Older People)</i>
<b>Enclosed space (minimal impact visually)</b>	<p><i>I think the park is a better option as it's completely enclosed (Non-users)</i></p> <p><i>You can't see it easily from the road and I think that's a good thing; if anything its very discreet. (Older People)</i></p>

<sup>6.50</sup> The VRG site was also thought to have some notable drawbacks, namely: the difficult road infrastructure immediately surrounding it and the implications a new leisure centre there would have on local traffic volumes and management; a lack of safety and security currently that would have to be rectified to increase usage, especially among young people; and its 'hidden' nature meaning many people are unaware of its existence (though it was said this could be overcome with proper signposting).

<sup>6.51</sup> A small number of people rejected the idea of a leisure centre on VRG because they did not want to lose park space – though most tended to be reassured when informed that the leisure centre would only take up a very small proportion of the site.

<sup>6.52</sup> Table 10 below summarises people's views on the main disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG (sometimes as opposed to at Danegrove).

**Table 10: Focus Groups summary table – participants' views on the disadvantages of locating a new leisure centre at VRG**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Site has several drawbacks</b>	<i>I think Victoria Recreation Ground is the wrong site because of congestion...and parking is horrendous. It's also a dark area to walk around; after 4pm in the evening I wouldn't</i>

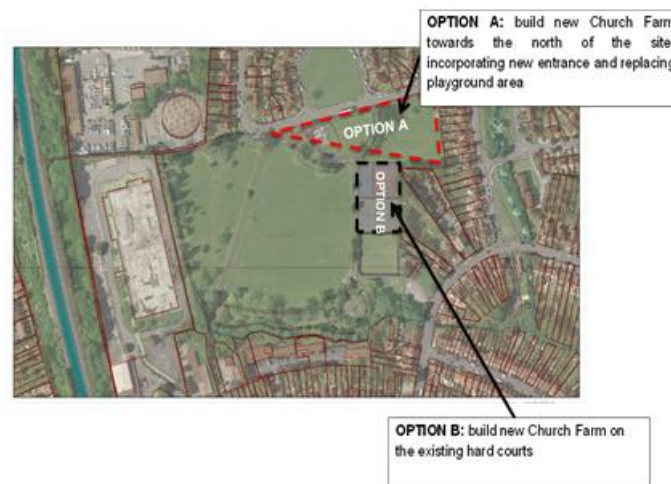


Theme	Sub theme and details
	<i>want to walk around it. (Non-users)</i>
<b>Difficult road infrastructure/ accessibility</b>	<i>What about access to that? Around Sainsbury's is a very busy roundabout and the volume of traffic would increase. The infrastructure won't cope (Women)</i> <i>There's not good accessibility on Park Road. (Non-users)</i>
<b>Impact on local traffic volumes</b>	<i>The area around Victoria Recreation Ground is already struggling with the new school causing congestion. (Non-users)</i>
<b>Loss of green space</b>	<i>We're going to lose green space (BME)</i> <i>They're talking about taking away some of the park (Women)</i> <i>Are we going to build on every bit of green space? (Older People)</i> <i>I have great reservations about building on a green park (Women)</i> <i>The only problem is that's quite a nice park...it worries me that you would put something else there (Women)</i> <i>Far more people use a park with multi-facilities in than would ever come into a leisure centre. If you're actually trying to provide for your community, that's what we should be preserving and not sticking a great big building and car park on it (Deprived Areas)</i> <i>I'd be really sad to see a large area of park like that being built on (Deprived Areas)</i> <i>From an environmental perspective that looks like a nice greenfield site (BME)</i> <i>It makes a difference seeing the actual options; the whole nature of the park is going to be left intact. (Women)</i>
<b>Safety within the park area (though some felt this could be overcome by improved lighting and the presence of a leisure centre)</b>	<i>There is a place under the bridge and that is unsafe...security is a big thing (Young People)</i> <i>Walking down the bridge there are no lights at all at night, it is really scary (Young People)</i> <i>You have a few entrance points: under the bridge; then by the railway along the main road. So it is either dodgy or out of the way or proper dangerous (Young People)</i> <i>There is an ex prisoner place by the railway bridge and there is always people hanging around. (Young People)</i>
<b>Less high profile site (though some felt this could be overcome through proper signposting)</b>	<i>Vic Rec has a less high profile than Danegrove; consequently it might get used by people in the immediate locality but it won't get used by the wider community (Older People)</i> <i>I don't know it...don't know where it is (Learning Disabilities)</i> <i>The only disadvantage of Victoria Recreation Ground is that it is further away from the main junction and more hidden (Young people)</i> <i>The only disadvantage I can see is that it's hidden away but good advertising will overcome that (Physical Disabilities)</i> <i>Being further away from the main road is a disadvantage but if it's clearly signposted and there are buses going near enough and there is parking I think Victoria is better.</i>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	(Young people)

Victoria Recreation Ground: Site A or Site B?

Figure 18: Map showing the Victoria Recreation Ground sites A and B



6.53 When asked for their views on which of the above options they would prefer if the proposed new leisure centre is sited at VRG, a small majority chose Option A on the grounds that: it is larger and thus more flexible in terms of the range of facilities that could be provided; and does not result in the loss of apparently well-used hard courts:

*The site itself is big enough to incorporate parking...on the other one there is no space for anything (BME)*

*Option B is really small; it looks like the same size as Danegrove (Young People)*

*It looks quite big...and there's still a lot of space left (Women)*

*Option A seems to be much bigger than B but still leaves a massive amount of park (Physical Disabilities)*

*Leave the hard courts and develop them. Why pave over it to build a new one? (Non-users)*

*Why would they take away the tennis courts? It would be such a shame if that was to be taken away without being regenerated. (Non-users)*

6.54 Those supporting Option B over Option A primarily did so on the grounds that it would impact fewer local residents:

*Option B has less impact on residents (Non-users)*

*Option A backs on to people's houses. I would imagine there would be less problems on the other one. It wouldn't be visible to anyone that didn't know about it. (Women)*



- 6.55 A couple of the BME and physical disability focus group participants suggested LBB consider a larger leisure centre footprint by combining Options A and B - and a few non-users and young people felt the Council should look at other options within VRG to ensure the right area is chosen, primarily in terms of size and potential residents' objections:

*Option A and B is still only taking up a very small percentage of the park; we've still got 90% left (BME)*

*You could go bigger. Why not bring them both together? (Physical Disabilities)*

*I think they should use Option A and B (BME)*

*The two sites seem quite odd choices. One is an existing sports area and the other area has lots of trees. I would have thought it would be better to use the flat bit in the middle given the scope of what we've been talking about. It needs a bigger site (Non-users)*

*Option B is further from residents but why wouldn't it be right down the other end? (Non-users)*

*I think the residents are going to hate the location so it's possibly not the best area it could be within the park. What about towards the bottom end? (Physical Disabilities)*

*Option B backs on to some residential areas and as soon as you say that the residents are going to start kicking up a fuss. If we can avoid all that and the facility can be best for them instead of working around what they can do that's always better. But then Option A backs on residential as well; aren't both options surrounded by residential areas? Isn't it better to find somewhere in the park that doesn't? (Young People)*

#### Overall balance of opinion

- 6.56 While there was some support for siting a new leisure centre on Danegrove Playing Fields, majorities in all focus groups favoured Victoria Recreation Ground for the reasons outlined above.
- 6.57 Within that site, Option A (building the new leisure centre towards the north of the site) was typically preferred to Option B (building the new leisure centre on the existing hard courts) primarily on the grounds of size - which suggests that, if people could be reassured that the latter is large enough to accommodate a well-provisioned leisure centre, it would be acceptable to them. There was also some support for both combining the two options for a larger footprint, and for looking elsewhere within VRG for somewhere more suitable and away from local residents.
- 6.58 Participants' concerns about parking provision and access should be re-iterated at this stage. The worries in relation to each site have been outlined above, but many people were of the view that both sites will be problematic in this regard and that careful consideration must be given to how adequate parking provision and proper site accessibility - especially for disabled people - can be provided:

*So where would parking be? There's no space to park anywhere... (BME)*

*There needs to be definite provision for essential things like parking. There's not much point in having a climbing wall if there's no parking (BME)*

*I know both sites will have the same facilities but parking...if I have problems parking I probably won't leave the house (BME)*

*On either plan they haven't really addressed the parking. If you are disabled and going for a swim you need to have parking next to building (Non-users)*

*One of my worries is if we haven't got the parking area for a lot of cars (Women)*

*Are they going to include parking facilities with that because that's an issue right across the board? (Older People)*

*Car parking is a very big issue, especially for people who have disabilities of all kinds. The spaces have to be as close to the centre as possible (Physical Disabilities)*

- 6.59 In this context, several people suggested that consideration be given to underground parking - particularly if Danegrove is chosen as the site for the proposed new leisure centre:

*Go down five storeys and provide 1000 spaces. If they are going to sell Church Farm for development then there will be funds...they need to look at parking and neighbours (BME)*

*Underground parking could be the solution for Danegrove (Deprived Areas)*

*I know it's an expense but they would need an underground car park...and the slope would be conducive to that (Women)*

*It would have to be underfloor parking. (Women)*

## Site preferences: Copthall

- 6.60 As aforementioned, very few people objected to the re-provision of Copthall leisure centre on a different site, and the only comments made regarding the proposed new adjacent location were around the need to re-site the rugby pitches (including during the construction phase):

*The footprint of the building isn't going to be the actual size of the building site because there's going to be the machinery, workers etc. A lot of the Mill Hill Rugby Club isn't going to be useable. (Deprived Areas)*

- 6.61 Many focus group attendees commented on the need to consider this as an opportunity to reconfigure the Copthall site as a whole in order to ensure it becomes a premier sporting and leisure destination for North London (with both indoor and outdoor facilities), for example:

*It needs to become a sport complex across the whole site (BME)*

*There should be capacity for squash, racquet sports, hard courts outside. We need to have everything in one location. If you're building such a big facility it would be crazy to miss those out. This needs to be made a sports-orientated destination...it's such a big site that this could be done (Non-users)*

*There is infinite land around there; wouldn't it be nice to be able to go on a trip to Mill Hill to like a family fun park. You could make it on a bigger scale (Women)*

*An outdoor playground would be lovely...I think it's a shame to put them in a soft play when it's a beautiful day if they've just gone swimming and still want to run around. Picnic tables, you can get something from the café and sit outside; it makes it much more family-orientated... (Women)*

*All that green space. There is enough to be building a running track. I went to Sweden last year and every single local area...they have all these fantastic parks, as well as an outdoor swimming pool, outdoor gyms. Everyone has got keep fit built into them and you will see that everyone is active...and they have a much harsher winter than us (BME)*

*Even an outdoor facility for football, basketball, netball, tennis...something multi-surface to support the indoor activity. It's a big complex, it can support it. I've grown up playing a lot of outdoor sports outside leisure centres; that's popular (Non-users)*

*Copthall has the potential to be an iconic facility. I think I would like to see something for physical activities like walking routes and points of activity around the walking route. They need to use the outdoor space they have available to them (Physical Disabilities)*

*What about an assault course around the perimeter of it? (Deprived Areas)*

*There is space to put in other facilities for other elite athletes to train in the grounds for athletics etc. (Older People)*

*The fact that you do have those open fields and sports facilities; it could be really good for it to develop. (Young People)*

In this regard, a few people suggested that LBB examine the possibility of increasing the footprint of the proposed new leisure centre and make it 'the best it can be':

*It's good as it's proposed; but it you could build bigger then go for it! (Young People)*

6.62 Finally, one significant issue raised by many participants - particularly those in the non-users and physical disabilities groups - in relation to the Copthall site was that it is very poorly served by public transport. Many focus group attendees were strongly of the view that a re-routed bus through the site is required, particularly if Copthall is intended to become a 'destination' facility for the whole community (and not just those who drive). Some of the many typical comments were:

*Access is appalling. If it's to engage the entire borough it can't only facilitate for drivers (Non-users)*

*The bus route needs to be extended the whole way down Champions Way. I think the vast majority of people who use it do take their cars but it's excluding those who don't drive (Non-users)*

*They have to do the transport otherwise it won't increase turnover or per capita use. It won't be any more of a community thing...it's not a community centre; it's for rich people with cars (Non-users)*

*Copthall is ideal for driving to but if you get people who don't drive it's a bit inaccessible for them so they may have to change the infrastructure a bit (Women)*

*Copthall is an absolutely beautiful place with the wildlife around it but there is only the 221 bus and then there is a walk from the bus stop (Women)*

*You get off the bus and you have to walk for ages...and if you're not very good with walking there's nothing worse (Physical Disabilities)*

*It wouldn't be hard to re-route the 221 or have a shuttle service from Mill Hill East. You would get a lot more clientele there if you had a bus going to it. I would go there all the time if I didn't have to bother someone to take me there and take me back (Physical Disabilities)*

*One of the biggest disadvantages of Copthall is how far it is from the bus. The bus service doesn't go along Champions Way. As it's proposed there's no benefit except you are not losing the facility (Young People)*

*Copthall has got the land but the transport links are the problem. If they could make some infrastructure improvements then it would be a centre of excellence that everyone could access easily (Women)*

*Copthall is a little bit inaccessible; what is built there has to be exceptional in order to attract people from a wider catchment area (Older People)*

*There's no point in doing anything unless you improve the transport (Non-users)*

*They should have a proper good service going up and down. (Learning Disabilities)*

- 6.63 Furthermore, this was considered especially important if LBB is to incorporate some of the additional services outlined below at the proposed new Copthall leisure centre:

*Putting extra services in is fine if you can get to them (Non-users)*

*I think we have got one problem with having these extras in Copthall. Somewhere like High Barnet would work but there is the problem with getting to Copthall. (Older people)*

## Other services?

- 6.64 In principle, while many focus group participants supported the inclusion of other services such as GP services, pharmacies, health and wellbeing advice provision, libraries and children's nurseries within leisure centres, in practice there were some important concerns, chiefly around the space available and the need to retain this for the main purpose of a leisure centre (that is, to provide good quality sport and leisure opportunities):

*I would have reservations; in a way it's trying to do too much. If you start trying to do all that it's going to lose the ethos that Copthall is really serious about training and competition. People will be using all of the extras and not the sports facilities. It takes away from the sports centre (Women)*

*Both new centres will have a certain footprint so let's make the most of it for sports and leisure in its wider sense (Deprived Areas)*

*I can't help thinking that you are spreading the net too wide; we are talking about fitness and health here. (Older People)*

- 6.65 Most of those who commented did not consider GP surgeries to be necessary within any new leisure centre - though there was some sense that:

*People who go to their doctors but don't go to leisure centres may give it a go if it's just across the road...so I think if there is space and it's not at the expense of the leisure centre (BME)*

*I would like to see something like a community centre; tapping into people who wouldn't think about being active, people who are not exercise people. A centre that revolves around a hub of different activities. (Physical Disabilities)*

- 6.66 However, there was significant support for the provision of allied services such as: health (including mental health) advice; midwifery and health visiting services; massage; physiotherapy; hydrotherapy etc.:

*Exercise rehab would be different; they could offer things like hydrotherapy (Women)*

*At Furzefield they have a midwife service, so that would be really handy (Women)*

*You could have space to rent out to people like physios, masseurs etc. This would be beneficial and would make money (Older People)*

*Complimentary therapies would go really well with the sports...massage, physio. Practitioners could come in and rent a space; you can charge them £100 for a morning session. It's quite difficult for them to find spaces as practitioners. This would bring income in (Physical Disabilities)*

*A facility to do with a sports injury (like massage) might be useful (Older People)*

*We need the back-up services for sport injuries etc. Things that are allied with the services on site (Older people)*

*Health advice yes...we don't get enough of that (BME)*

*Health advice would be good...and a consulting room specifically for confidential services (Young People)*

*I used to work for Sure Start and we rented a room in a leisure centre in Potters Bar for health clinics etc. It was great for the leisure centre because after coming to us people would visit the soft play, or go swimming or to the café. It kept it busy during the day. I thought it was a good idea to be honest...a lot of its custom came from families using our services (Deprived Areas)*

*Mental health services are really lacking...young people who go to the gym anyway could get some support and advice. I think if you are re-building that would be really good to include; even if it's just every Sunday afternoon the studio is turned into a drop-in. So if you go for your dance classes you could then think 'maybe I will join the gym, or go swimming, or maybe I'll take up swimming lessons or I'm going to the mental health or another clinic'. Turn it into a real centre. (Young People)*

- 6.67 While some people were adamantly against anything that might lead to a 'reduction in library space', many focus group participants were positive about the possible co-location of libraries and leisure centres insofar as both facilities would be more sustainable and cost-efficient and it would enable individuals and families to undertake several activities under one roof:

*A library would be lovely...that would be really nice especially if they've been really active, just to sit with a book. If it's all under one roof it makes it easier, and then they associate the place with all the things they've done. After doing something physical, they are more likely to sit and read. (Women)*

- 6.68 Indeed, one member of the women's group offered the following example of where such co-location has succeeded in creating such a 'one-stop-shop' style centre:

*It would be handy for us, because we live just there. At the moment we go to the library in Mill Hill. The one in Kings Cross that has just opened, some of our family did go swimming there and said it was great; then they went to the library for the computers, then to the café and it was all in the same place. Something like that would be great; to have a good morning at all these activities with the kids. (Women)*

- 6.69 There was also support for a small 'reading lounge' for those wishing to visit the facility with others or to socialise, but not partake in any sporting activity - and for a small library of sorts for children to be able to do some homework:

*What about reading rooms for people to have discussions? (BME)*

*What about facilities for older people that cannot swim or dance...some kind of lounge facility? A lot of people my age are not fit enough so somewhere for some kind of get together (Older People)*

*What about a combined café and small library where you were able to study? You could go to the library, do your work, then go to the gym. It would have to have power access for phones and laptops though. (Young People)*

## Other issues raised

6.70 The need for both proposed new leisure centres to be fully disabled accessible (and welcoming) was raised by participants at the groups for people with physical and learning disabilities:

*At the Lido, people that have got wheelchairs; they can ask the staff for the chairlift and that's a really good thing. They have to make sure they have things like that (Learning Disabilities)*

*With Finchley Lido; I think it's more comforting, being disabled. I have a lot of friends like me and I can join in with them and the staff show us how to do things (Learning Disabilities)*

*Doors, steps, parking close to the centre. They must absolutely think about all of these things (Physical Disabilities)*

*With the swimming pool; could I ask if they could have some sort of rail around the walls from the changing rooms so people like me who can't walk very well can hang onto it on the way to the pool? It's put me off; I'm on my sticks on a slippery surface and it's really hard (Physical Disabilities)*

*I would like to see IFI accreditation<sup>21</sup> for any new building which means it is accessible for any impairment. (Physical Disabilities)*

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<sup>21</sup> The Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) is a programme which offers disabled people more choice and opportunities to enjoy the benefits of physical activity. More information here: [http://www.efds.co.uk/inclusive\\_fitness/the\\_ifi\\_mark](http://www.efds.co.uk/inclusive_fitness/the_ifi_mark)

## 7. Design Issues Raised Regarding Copthall leisure centre

<sup>7.1</sup> Table 11 below outlines a list of considerations that LBB may wish to consider when designing a proposed new leisure centre at Copthall.

**Table 11: Summary table - design issues raised regarding Copthall leisure centre**

Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>Incorporate new design ideas</b>	<p><i>A lot of people excavate down nowadays...iceberg buildings. If they go down and put on a green roof you wouldn't even see the place. You could have three storeys, one below and two above...then you could have a 50m pool at the bottom and two more storeys for all your other facilities. These things can and should be done in this day and age. It might not be the cheapest way to build the building but long term it's the best thing to do...there's so much innovation in building it would be silly to go down the cheapest route short-term as it's not going to reap the rewards long-term. Make it state-of-the-art (Deprived Areas)</i></p>
<b>Appropriate changing room layouts/locations</b>	<p><i>The wet changing area can't be like Finchley Lido; that's dreadful</i></p> <p><i>I don't like it in Finchley. You need privacy when you've got children</i></p> <p><i>The changing rooms at Finchley are awful as they're open plan...here they're perfect as they're open but with cubicles as an option for people if they want to use them</i></p> <p><i>I think there needs to be something for people who want to change in private</i></p> <p><i>We'll fight tooth and nail to not have one of those villages</i></p> <p><i>The continental approach to open changing doesn't really work for English people and cultural groups</i></p> <p><i>Absolutely not to the village-style changing rooms. Why would the Council even consider such a thing? We need totally separate changing rooms and showers because we want to respect our privacy and dignity</i></p> <p><i>The changing rooms are a focal point; there should be separate ones for families...family only changing in a certain area</i></p> <p><i>Separate adult and junior change would be good</i></p> <p><i>Quite a few cubicles will be needed for group changing for the schools</i></p> <p><i>A family changing room as part of the family area and also accessible for disabled people</i></p> <p><i>Changing facilities for those that have disabilities; if you are in an open plan changing room it can be quite embarrassing</i></p> <p><i>Changing rooms are a cultural thing; you've got to make facilities work</i></p> <p><i>Having changing rooms downstairs will allow you to have a larger gym and studio</i></p>



Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p><i>space upstairs</i></p> <p><i>Look at the design of the Aquatic Centre in the Olympic Park; it's fantastic</i></p>
<b>Sufficient and accessible showers</b>	<p><i>10-15 showers, if not more, are needed</i></p> <p><i>Showers that have got cubicles for disabled people</i></p> <p><i>Disabled showers should be totally separate...they take up so much space</i></p>
<b>Tumble dryers for swimming costumes</b>	<p><i>What about a tumble dryer for trunks?</i></p> <p><i>In a few places you have 'tumble dryers' for swimming costumes where you just pop them in and they dry. Otherwise people will just wring them on the floor</i></p>
<b>More toilets on the dry side of the centre</b>	<p><i>There have to be enough toilets upstairs and downstairs</i></p> <p><i>Toilet facilities are rubbish but at least they'll be putting more in</i></p>
<b>Proper ventilation and air conditioning</b>	<p><i>Ventilation is really important...you need a separate system for the pool and the dry side</i></p> <p><i>We need good efficient air-con</i></p> <p><i>Air-conditioning needs improving...these are not modern air-flow systems</i></p> <p><i>They need to think about the air-con system in the changing rooms. People who should be exercising are saying 'I can't come in the Winter because it's too cold'</i></p>
<b>Studios to be located away from weights room/area</b>	<p><i>When weights drop, you can hear them in the studios. It's really annoying when you're in the zen and you hear a big clunk!</i></p>
<b>Alternatives to chlorine</b>	<p><i>What about UV filtration and disinfectant? A lot of people are put off by chlorine</i></p> <p><i>There's too much chlorine in the pool. Swiss Cottage has the UV chlorine and it's brilliant</i></p> <p><i>The chlorine content doesn't need to be as high as it affects skin. There are other chemicals they can use</i></p>
<b>Warmer water temperature in learner pools</b>	<p><i>I have actually brought him to the baby toddler class; we just went once and the water was too cold so we didn't go back...</i></p>
<b>More and better seating around the competition pool area</b>	<p><i>We need another 40 or 50 more seats...and big steps for swimmers to sit on</i></p>
<b>Adequate light</b>	<p><i>We need lots of windows for lots of light</i></p>
<b>Clear signposting</b>	<p><i>Everything needs to be clearly signposted...otherwise if you are looking for the pool you could end up in another changing room!</i></p>
<b>More parking</b>	<p><i>Parking is always an issue unless you come to a very early class. People are doing lots</i></p>



Theme	Sub theme and details
<b>(including disabled parking)</b>	<p><i>of things</i></p> <p><i>On gala days you can't find a space</i></p> <p><i>We're concerned about parking; I think they should increase it</i></p> <p><i>You need to have world-class facilities...which will need more parking</i></p> <p><i>You need enough disabled parking...proportionally more than the law states</i></p> <p><i>There's not enough disabled parking</i></p>
<b>Visit and gather ideas from other facilities (i.e. Swiss Cottage leisure centre)</b>	<p><i>You should look at Swiss Cottage...it's fantastic</i></p> <p><i>Model it on Swiss Cottage</i></p> <p><i>It's brand new, there isn't peeling paint, their changing facilities are nice and clean; that's important especially with children. It still feels new. They should go and look at it.</i></p>

## 8. Written Submissions

### Introduction

- 8.1 The following chapter reports on the public’s written submissions relating to the consultation.
- 8.2 During the formal consultation process, ORS was made aware of eight such communications from members of the public after these were forwarded by LBB team members.
- 8.3 ORS has logged and filed all the submissions it received, identified that all of them directly related to the consultation and further analysed them for key messages. These are summarised in Table 12 below according to the source of submission.

**Table 12: Summary of written submissions by submitting party**

<b>Submissions by individuals (5)</b>
Local residents (5)
<b>Submissions by groups/organisations (3)</b>
A group of residents (1)
New Barnet Community Association (1)
Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum (1)

### How submissions are reported

- 8.4 All submissions were read by ORS - none have been disregarded even if they were not expressed in a “formal” way. It is a painstaking but necessary process to identify the main themes and issues raised by respondents.
- 8.5 All submissions were also reviewed by the Council, including any submissions that presented technical arguments (e.g. a critique of how the Council analysed certain data) and which required more detailed consideration.
- 8.6 ORS initially classified each submission on the basis of which individual or organisation sent the submission. Thereafter, each submission was read in its entirety and key themes and issues were identified, collated and reported.
- 8.7 Due to the small number of submissions received, all submissions are outlined in considerable detail in this chapter. Submissions that originated from individuals were reported without any identifying personal details to protect their privacy, but for transparency reasons, submissions identified as representing groups or organisations include further identifying details.
- 8.8 ORS would like the reader to note that the views, arguments, comments, questions or suggestions that were submitted by the public may at times not be supported by the available evidence or publicly available information.

- 8.9 Any comments that have been re-phrased by ORS do not connote ORS's endorsement – but rather serve to succinctly present submitted ideas in a way that is easy to understand, rather than using respondents own words exactly.
- 8.10 **ORS has not sought to highlight or correct erroneous claims, statements or assumptions, and would like to advise the reader to bear this in mind when evaluating the reported submissions. All reported submissions, ideas, comments and questions in this chapter are not endorsed by ORS, nor should be seen as originating from ORS.**

## Submissions received

- 8.11 All submissions received are summarised and outlined below.
- 8.12 Across all submissions, support for either optional sites for the new leisure centre has been noted (some submission noted a preference for Danegrove while others noted a preference for VRG). Others submissions noted no preference either way, or suggested that neither site is appropriate.
- 8.13 A strong support to introduce a 50m swimming pool was noted for the council's consideration for the new Copthall leisure centre.

## Submissions by individuals

- 8.14 One submission offered the Council an alternative solution, essentially buying an existing leisure facility (which has leisure facilities, including a swimming pool, in a central location) instead of spending money on developing a new leisure centre elsewhere.
- 8.15 Two separate submissions from individuals discuss the need for adequate swimming facilities at the new Copthall leisure centre. One requested adequate training sport facilities for the local community of avid swimmers (including a 50m swimming pool), while the other called for the Council to cater to the needs of an increasingly aging Barnet population who often prefers swimming over other forms of sport and physical activity.
- 8.16 While one submission provided detailed arguments as to why the new leisure centre near Church Farm should not contain a swimming pool (but can be further developed to include outdoor facilities), another submission noted that many local people would benefit from having the pool on that site, given that a local popular fitness centre (which had a swimming pool) recently closed.
- 8.17 One submission suggested that the new leisure centre should not be developed at either Danegrove Playing Field or Victoria Recreation Ground, but instead on a separate site that the Council should purchase.
- 8.18 A number of submissions noted also the need to consider adequate parking arrangements, access by car and public transport, and the impact on the immediate environment (in terms of noise, traffic, lighting, visual impact) and the surrounding properties.
- 8.19 All of the submissions noted above are outlined in greater detail in Table 13 overleaf.

Table 13: Outline of submissions from individuals

Submission #	Details
001	<p><b>Main theme:</b> A suggestion for the Council’s consideration to utilise an existing local fitness centre which has recently changed ownership.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» A chain called Pure Gym has recently purchased the ‘LA Fitness pool New Barnet’ facility.</li> <li>» Due to Pure Gym’s business model it’s unlikely they will keep the swimming facilities there. The facility has large changing rooms, steam, sauna, pool, gym, studios, café and underground parking</li> <li>» The Council is urged to approach Pure Gym and purchase the site from them, utilise it instead of building the new Church Farm leisure centre, and save money in the process by avoiding the expenditure associated with building a new leisure centre ‘from scratch’.</li> <li>» A caveat is noted that the existing pool there may be too small for the Council’s needs.</li> </ul>
003	<p><b>Main theme:</b> Suggesting that the Council provides a 50m swimming pool in the new Cophall leisure centre.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Swimmers deserve an opportunity to train and compete in adequate facilities, and the Council now has a rare opportunity to introduce these in Barnet.</li> <li>» 2 separate pools are proposed: 1 x 25m pool alongside a 1 x 50m pool. The latter can be split if necessary and the former will allow an additional warming-up area, facilitate additional training/teaching programs etc.</li> <li>» The additional expense is said to be worth-while as it will show the Council’s commitment to residents’ health and fitness, lead the way amongst other London Councils and honour the spirit of the 2012 Olympic legacy.</li> <li>» The submitter offers to be of further assistance to the Council, provide information and facilitate contact with the Barnet Cophall Swimming Club.</li> </ul>
004	<p><b>Main theme:</b> Feedback on previous comments by the New Barnet Community Association. The submitter argues that the new leisure centre <i>should not</i> be located at VRG; instead, alternative development plans for the VRG are proposed.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Investment in the VRG should not necessarily be linked only to a swimming pool as currently proposed.</li> <li>» There is public support to locate the new leisure centre at VRG – but this support does not extend to replacing the existing park/green areas. The Council is challenged to ‘prove otherwise’.</li> </ul>

Submission #	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The submitter suggests that an open-air paddling pool <i>is</i> a viable alternative, as long as the Council allocates adequate supervisory staff.</li> <li>» Disagrees that that VRG is underused or associated with insecurity/fear; arguing that should these claims be true, they can be dealt with very easily through e.g. CCTV and better lighting.</li> <li>» Suggesting that the VRG be redeveloped to include more outdoor facilities, a café, toilets /changing facilities and generally be 'community orientated'; revenue associated with Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy could be used by the Council towards this development.</li> <li>» Querying the Council's plans to enhance the Pymmes Brook trail, arguing that it always was and always will be 'an eyesore'.</li> <li>» Further arguing that traffic and parking problems will manifest themselves should the Council proceed with its proposed plans for the VRG.</li> <li>» Suggesting the Council could purchase parts of the gas works' brownfield land for the proposed swimming pool; this is said to also enable the introduction of adequate parking facilities.</li> <li>» The two-storey building proposed for VRG would be obtrusive and visible from Lawton Road, Baring Road and the park. Similarly, heated swimming pools, long opening hours and associated traffic will have a negative environmental effect, including light, noise and air pollution.</li> </ul>
005	<p><b>Main theme:</b> Suggestions regarding the new Church Farm leisure centre.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» No particular preference for either site, although having a swimming pool at VRG would benefit many local residents (especially the elderly) who previously frequented the LA Fitness Club.</li> <li>» Adequate parking must be a priority; the Council should consider multi-storey/underground parking facilities in either site, which will encourage higher usage levels and improve access for less mobile residents.</li> <li>» The needs and preferences of the community/users should be taken into account. Separate shower cubicles/changing rooms for males/females should be made available; Finchley's communal showers are disliked by many and can drive locals to other, further away facilities if they offer better (and separate) changing facilities.</li> <li>» Requesting adequate number of sessions (and different session times) for adult-specific classes. Swimming requirements for elderly populations need to be considered, including reduced prices.</li> <li>» The Council should consider utilising the free space currently underused in Oakhill Park.</li> </ul>
006	<p><b>Main theme:</b> Requesting the inclusion of outdoor (public) toilets as part of any new leisure centres. Also providing other suggestions and comments about the consultation.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» While there are insufficient public toilets in Barnet in general, those who</li> </ul>

Submission #	Details
	<p>exercise outside will especially benefit from having these in close proximity to the new leisure centres being developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The new leisure centre should not be developed at either Danegrove or VRG as these are green spaces meant for outdoor activities.</li> <li>» The Council's proposals are contrary to CS7; if necessary Barnet Council should buy suitable land elsewhere instead.</li> <li>» Access via public transport should be a key consideration. The new Cophall leisure centre should be placed nearer to Pursley Road (which has a bus route).</li> <li>» The submitter objects to using Survey Monkey or other similar computer-based surveys, said to result in biased responses as well as restrict the amount of free input participants can provide.</li> </ul>

## Submissions by groups/organisations

- 8.20 In terms of the preferred location for the new leisure centre, submissions were split between those supporting the Danegrove Playing Field option (a group of residents sharing the same address) and the Victoria Recreation Ground option (New Barnet Community Association).
- 8.21 A detailed submission by the Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum provided considerable feedback and points for consideration regarding the new Cophall leisure centre.
- 8.22 Submissions from groups and organisations tended to be quite comprehensive and detailed and included suggestions and queries that concern the proposed developments of the new leisure centres and sites, including environmental and design considerations, parking, traffic and access issues, and suggestions for what services should and should not be included as part of any future redevelopments.

**Table 14: Outline of submissions from groups**

Submission #	Details
002	<p>(Local resident on behalf of a group of residents who share the same address)</p> <p><b>Main theme:</b> Feedback on the consultation proposals.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The submitter notes a preference for the new leisure centre to be built at the Danegrove site.</li> <li>» The submitter suggests that sports halls and a swimming pool should be included as part of the new leisure centre as a priority, with the additional option of a gym if possible.</li> </ul>
007	<p>(New Barnet Community Association)</p> <p><b>Main theme:</b> A qualified support for locating the New Barnet leisure centre at VRG (in principal), while opposing the Danegrove alternative.</p>

Submission #	Details
	<p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Supporting the redevelopment of the New Barnet leisure centre in VRG for the following reasons: the positive regeneration of the site and surrounding areas; in-line with the Council’s need to make savings; the positive impacts to housing stock along Victoria Road following the redevelopment of the TESCO sites; the proposed sport and swimming facilities; the improved safety and personal security on site; and, the proposals being in-line with the Save New Barnet Vision for New Barnet.</li> <li>» The submitters qualified their support for this option with certain conditions being satisfied and clarifications provided by the Council, mainly: the Council should provide an indication of which/how many amenities will be made available; and, the Council should confirm when it expects to have the final consultation report.</li> <li>» The submitters note that the new buildings must fit-in with the environment, i.e. have traditional features, keep as many trees, shrubs and grass areas as possible, merge with the existing landscape features etc.</li> <li>» The new development should consider any impact on local nearby residents, properties, parking and traffic considerations etc. The submitters query if there are any traffic-management plans in place? They also call for early consultation with the local community about the way forward.</li> <li>» The submitters call for a southbound bus line from a station opposite Sainsbury’s, funded by ‘CIL and S106 money’ as well as other mitigation measures ‘previously suggested by ASDA traffic consultants but rejected by the Council’.</li> <li>» The submitters oppose the Danegrove proposal due to a predicted negative impact on the adjacent properties, as well as arguing that the geography of the Danegrove site makes it unsuitable.</li> <li>» The submitters call for the Council to provide more details about its proposals and to meet the group’s representatives to discuss the way forward.</li> </ul>
008	<p>(Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum)</p> <p><b>Main theme:</b> Concerning the new Copthall leisure centre. Further discussion around some of the questions in the consultation questionnaire, specifically those concerning the New Copthall leisure centre.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The Council should introduce 2 separate pools: 1 x 25m pool alongside a 1 x 50m pool. The latter can be split if necessary and the former will allow an additional warming-up are, training/teaching programs etc.</li> </ul>

Submission #	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="459 286 1437 353">» The submitters suggested the Council utilises funds from The National Lottery, the marathon trust and other similar bodies to fund these facilities.</li> <li data-bbox="459 371 1437 439">» The submitters request a regular bus route to service the new leisure centre and suggest a detailed route.</li> <li data-bbox="459 456 1406 490">» The submitters stress the importance of adequate parking arrangements.</li> <li data-bbox="459 508 1437 642">» The submitters note concerns regarding the anticipated traffic congestion in and around Page Street, Bunns Lane and Pursley Road; they suggest improvements to the roads and footpaths in these routes are necessary, in addition to an additional entrance from Pursley Road.</li> <li data-bbox="459 660 1437 728">» The submitters request that the Council provides better cycling and walking paths to/from and around the new leisure centre.</li> <li data-bbox="459 745 1406 880">» Facilities suggested for the new centre: a modern and comprehensive fitness area (with a gym, studio rooms, classes etc.); indoor sports halls; a cycle track; a skating park; table tennis facilities; a playground for children with picnic tables; a crèche; and a café.</li> <li data-bbox="459 898 1422 1111">» The submitters suggest that the new Copthall site will be developed as a sport and leisure complex, incorporating the Hendon Rugby Club, Mill Hill Rugby Club and the changing facilities on Copthall Fields into a new and modern complex with adequate parking. The existing sites/facilities could be returned to green-use. A suggestion is made to share facilities/activities with the new Saracens site.</li> <li data-bbox="459 1128 1358 1196">» The Council is urged to employ environmentally friendly materials and design for the new car parks/roads/cycle and walking tracks.</li> <li data-bbox="459 1214 1422 1281">» The submitters request that due consideration will be given to people with disabilities in terms of access, facilities and classes and other provisions.</li> <li data-bbox="459 1299 1390 1400">» The submitters quote population projections for Barnet and call for the Council to consider the estimated demographical changes for the area – especially the likely increase in the older age groups.</li> <li data-bbox="459 1417 1437 1630">» The submitters outline additional services/facilities that they would like to access through the future Copthall leisure centre, including: GP surgery; Nursery, as a separate commercial enterprise, but also offering free child care (under government program); Health advice/consulting services, including a sports medicine/physiotherapy service, potentially in association with Saracens / Middlesex University; and a Pharmacy.</li> <li data-bbox="459 1648 1437 1749">» A library service is said to be unnecessary and even undesirable within the context of a leisure centre. It is argued that local libraries play a key role for local communities, and as such should be kept local and in residential areas.</li> <li data-bbox="459 1767 1406 1868">» The submitters urge the Council to develop a landscaping ‘master plan’ in order to maintain the visually appealing nature of the area and retain its usage as a Green-Belt site.</li> </ul>



## 9. Other Comments from Respondents to the Questionnaire

### Additional comments included in this report

- <sup>9.1</sup> All responses provided to the open-ended questions of the consultation questionnaire have been read, and then classified (coded) using a standardised approach (code frame). This approach helps ensure consistency when classifying different comments and the resulting codes represent themes that have been repeatedly mentioned in a more quantifiable manner.
- <sup>9.2</sup> In a previous chapter in this report, concerning the detailed results of the questionnaire, results were outlined for coded responses to the open-ended questions. The current chapter reports about a small number of comments that were made by respondents and that *were not* coded, as they did not repeat a sufficiently high number of times, but that presented ideas identified as particularly important and relevant for the Council's consideration.
- <sup>9.3</sup> Specifically, ORS has read through all the open-text comments provided by respondents to the consultation questionnaire that were not coded, and identified those comments that either proposed alternatives<sup>22</sup> to the Council's suggestions, or criticised the Council or the consultation process; these comments are summarised below.
- <sup>9.4</sup> ORS would like the reader to note that the views, arguments, comments, questions or suggestions outlined in this chapter were submitted by the public and may at times not be supported by the available evidence or publicly available information.
- <sup>9.5</sup> These comments, that have been re-phrased by ORS, do not connote ORS's endorsement but rather serve to succinctly present submitted ideas in a way that is easy to understand, rather than using respondents own words exactly.
- <sup>9.6</sup> **ORS has not sought to highlight or correct erroneous claims, statements or assumptions, and would like to advise the reader to bear this in mind when evaluating the comments reported below; these comments or their summaries are not endorsed by ORS, nor should be seen as originating from ORS.**

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<sup>22</sup> By alternatives we mean alternative sites or configurations for the new leisure centres. Specific suggestions for the leisure centres (e.g. additional facilities to be included) have been reported elsewhere in the detailed results chapter of this report.

## Alternatives to the Council's proposals

<sup>9.7</sup> A number of important comments that suggested alternatives to the Council's proposals have been identified and are reported below.

### The Council should utilise both sites (A and B) on the VRG

<sup>9.8</sup> Both sites being considered on the VRG should be utilised, as there is not enough space on either site on its own to accommodate the proposed changes; this is said to be especially true given the need to make provisions for adequate parking space on-site.

### The current Church Farm leisure centre should remain at its current site

<sup>9.9</sup> Comments supporting this idea include the following suggestions:

- » A new site should not be used for the future Church Farm leisure centre
- » Existing facilities should be kept exactly where they are and as they are
- » Any new developments should concern the existing site only
- » The leisure centre should remain where it is, but the current facilities should be upgraded
  - The current site contains a lot of un-utilised space; if required, the surrounding area can be further developed.
  - Similarly, the Council can purchase the nearby gym as part of the future redevelopment.
- » Similarly, others suggested that the new Church Farm could be redeveloped in very close proximity to its current site
- » The only real need for a new/upgraded swimming pool (in or near the existing site); there is no need for other changes.
- » A new swimming pool can be built elsewhere (e.g. at Danegrove or somewhere else in East Barnet); no need for other changes/to move other facilities.

### Other proposals concerning the new site for the leisure centre in the vicinity of Church Farm

<sup>9.10</sup> Suggestions for other sites (where the new leisure centre should be built) were brought forward, including:

- » (Taking into account the developments around Colindale tube station and Edgware) the Council should consider the site of the cinema/bingo hall on Burnt Oak Broadway
- » The new site should be closer to Colindale's Grahame Park estate
- » The new site should be closer to North Finchley/Whetstone area
- » The new site should be where the Barnet Football Club used to be located
- » The new site should be at Dame Alice Owen's Ground

- » The new site should be at Chandos Road
- » The new site should be at Whetstone Stray
- » The new site should be at Park Road
- » The Council should utilise a brown-field site/nearby gas works site
- » The Council should consider the area near VRG - next to the railway lines
- » The Council should consider North London Business Park
- » The Council should consider the open space in Brunswick Park.

#### Other site-related comments

9.11 Other site-related comments were made, including:

- » Victoria Park (VRG?) could be improved in other ways, including a new/upgraded children's area, natural landscape area, derelict buildings demolished and a new café and community centre built
- » Locate the new swimming pool nearer the railway line, and consider traffic access from both Victoria Road and Lawton Road
- » The playground / tennis courts should be re-built; either on additional floors as part of the redevelopment of the future site or within the park
- » Provide new entrance to VRG via Albert Road or through existing path near Nightingale nursery, and locate new leisure centre at southern side of the site.

#### Other comments

9.12 One respondent called for the Council to consult 'Oxygen Fit' who are said to have provided useful community support over the past 5 years (*no further details provided*).

## Critique of the Council or the consultation process

9.13 A number of respondents provided comments that seem to criticise, demand further information from, or make further suggestions to the Council in relation to its proposals or the consultation process.

#### The need for more information

9.14 Comments to this effect included:

- » If the Council is intending to utilise green spaces for the new sites, what is going to be done with the existing sites? Will these be converted into green spaces, or sold-off for housing?
- » Details regarding the proposed changing rooms are missing; will these be gender-separated? Will there be any communal changing facilities or not?

- » One respondents suggested that he/she were told by staff at the current Church Farm leisure centre that this leisure centre is currently one of the few in Barnet which 'breaks even' in terms of profit; This respondents queries the need to move or drastically change a facility which is said to be currently profitable
- » Who will be paying for the proposed changes? Better (part of Greenwich Leisure Limited) or local tax payers? Are Better offering a good service to the community? Who controls/supervises Better's expenditure and investment in local leisure facilities?
- » It's unclear from the consultation document where the water workout classes would take place. At the moment they are held in the diving pool which has a moveable floor; if this floor will be found in the learner pool in the future, there will be a clash with classes held at the learner pool (e.g. for school groups)
- » Classes for water-based workouts are always full/in high demand. What evidence is there to justify the introduction of two dance/spinning studios?

#### The Council should 'do more'

9.15 Comments calling for the Council to take further actions included:

- » Further consult local users of the Copthall leisure centre about the proposals
- » Further consult users of the swimming pools about the proposals
- » Further consult users of Church Farm and Copthall leisure centres about the internal design of the future leisure centres
- » Make provisions for the later development of a multi-function activity/diving pool, once the Council's financial situation/funding options improve, as it appears that it can't invest in these facilities in the immediate future
- » Adopt the approach taken by the London Borough of Enfield, which constructed cheap, efficient and practical leisure centres that truly benefit the community there
- » Provide written confirmation of how development would proceed chronologically.

#### Critique of the Council or of the consultation process

9.16 Comments criticising the Council or the consultation process included:

- » The current Church Farm site is fine – proposals appear a money-making exercise.
- » It is clear that the existing Church Farm site has been earmarked for a lucrative housing development, which would bring short-term financial benefits for the Council but long-term negative impacts on local residents
- » The consultation questionnaire does not allow respondents to rate some facilities as equally important (e.g. the café, crèche and sports hall).

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