

Leisure Centres project

Q&A

Last updated: November 2017

What is the council planning to do?

The council has an aspiration to build a new leisure centre in Coalville.

Why is the council planning to do this?

A leisure centre in the town will:

- Support growth within our leisure service and improve the offer from our leisure centres across the district. The popular Hermitage Leisure Centre is almost at capacity and requires significant investment to keep the current building at a modern standard and to compete with private leisure providers.
- Support the regeneration of Coalville. Alongside a number of other projects, this scheme will bring people to the town for their leisure pursuits, encouraging them to use the rest of the town as well.

Who will run the new leisure centre?

As part of this project, the management of the new leisure centre and the existing Hood Park Leisure Centre in Ashby de la Zouch is likely to be transferred to an external provider.

All leisure centre staff who work at Hermitage Leisure Centre and Hood Park Leisure Centre would also be transferred to the external provider.

The council would retain ownership of the buildings.

How much will this cost?

Depending on the facilities included in the new leisure centre, the cost of building is estimated to be approximately £20 million.

There are a number of financing options available to the council, including borrowing the money.

Cabinet has decided that, subject to approval from Full Council, just over half of this money will come from existing council budgets. The remaining money will be found through external borrowing, taking advantage of the low cost of borrowing that councils can access.

It currently costs the council almost £800,000 to operate Hermitage and Hood Park Leisure Centres and the work we're doing to explore new operating opportunities would enable the council to use that money to bring a new state of the art facility to Coalville.

Where will the new centre be built?

Cabinet has decided that, following detailed site investigations, the new leisure centre will be built on council-owned land off the A511 (Stephenson Way) (subject to approval by Full Council).

This is the preferred site for the new leisure centre for a number of reasons:

- The land is owned by the council, so we wouldn't have to spend money buying it
- It has good access from the A511
- A development here would complement other uses in the immediate vicinity, which include the college and supermarkets
- The land is designated for 'leisure' use

Other sites, such as the brownfield site off Mantle Lane (former Grieves factory site) and the site of the former Snibston Discovery Museum, have been considered, but the cost of buying these sites makes them prohibitive.

Bridge Road Car Park was also considered, but poor access was seen as being prohibitive.

What have the site investigations shown?

The site investigations have shown that there are no concerns over environmental and geotechnical issues, such as hazardous materials, ground movement or flooding.

What about the Green Wedge / Area of Separation between Coalville and Whitwick?

Whilst the land on which the leisure centre will be built is part of the Area of Separation between Coalville and Whitwick, the emerging Local Plan includes a provision to allow for 'leisure use' in the Area of Separation, which means the leisure centre development would conform to this important NWLDC planning policy.

In addition, the leisure centre would not breach a covenant dating back to 1979, which states the land should be used for recreational purposes.

Is the A511 site suitable for access? What about the increase in cars?

As highways authority, Leicestershire County Council has advised that safe access and egress from the site can be achieved in principle, and that ongoing detailed traffic modelling surveys will inform the detailed design for the development.

Would visitors to the leisure centre have to pay to park?

No formal decision has been made regarding parking charges, but, as in Ashby, it is the council's preference that there will be no parking charge for leisure centre users, so this is unlikely.

What facilities would be in the new leisure centre?

The exact details of the facilities at the new centre have not yet been finalised, but we would expect to increase and improve on the facilities currently provided at Hermitage Leisure Centre.

As a minimum we would expect the new centre to include:

- 8 court sports hall
- 8 lane x 25m pool
- 15 x 8.5m learner pool with moveable floor
- 150 station health and fitness suite
- Multi-activity studio, large enough to be sub-divided to two separate rooms
- 1 spin studio
- 3 squash courts
- Vending area(s)
- Café / bar
- External area for 250 car park spaces

What will the cost of membership be?

This would be decided with the operator, so we do not know yet, however both the council and the eventual operator would want to ensure the costs remains competitive.

Will local people be used to build the new leisure centre, so we can create local jobs?

This will be decided with the operator, although this would be the council's preference and we will use the procurement process (which all public authorities must use) to drive local employment and training opportunities.

Hermitage Leisure Centre / Hermitage Recreation Ground

What will happen to Hermitage Leisure Centre?

Hermitage Leisure Centre would remain open until the new centre was open to customers.

All the options regarding the Hermitage Leisure Centre site are now being investigated, but it is likely that at least some of this land would be sold to invest in the new leisure centre.

We are speaking regularly to Whitwick Parish Council about their preferred options for the site, which will be taken into consideration before any decision is made.

What will happen to the other recreational facilities on the site (football pitches, fishing lake and 3G pitches)?

The other recreational facilities on the site, including the football pitches, fishing lake and 3G pitches, will be retained. The management of these facilities is likely to remain with the council, although bidders for the leisure service will be offered the chance to manage these as well.

Will the Hermitage Leisure Centre land be used for housing?

If the land is sold, it would be up to developers to put forward appropriate schemes for the site.

In planning terms, housing is likely to be seen as an appropriate use of the land, however the council plans to consult with local residents before any decision is made.

When will the new centre be built?

The design and build of the centre would be likely to take around 18 months. If the decision is made to go ahead with the new leisure centre, we hope it would be completed and open to customers by 2020.