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TOWN HALL
FELIXSTOWE
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IP11 2AG

Cllr T J Haworth-Culf
Suffolk Coastal District Council
East Suffolk House
Riduna Park
Station Road
Melton
Woodbridge
IP12 1RT

30 April 2018

Dear Cllr Haworth-Culf

Leisure Vision Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to be consulted on Suffolk Coastal District Council's Leisure Vision for Felixstowe

The Town Council understands that the evidence base for a new facility in Felixstowe will be informed by this survey which has been specifically designed to find out what leisure facilities people use now and would like for the future.

Felixstowe Town Council strongly supports the development of a new, state-of-the-art, leisure facility in Felixstowe to meet the needs of its growing residential population and support its revitalised visitor economy. The Town Council also shares the district council's aspirations for an all-inclusive destination venue in Felixstowe with the capacity to deliver a wide-range of indoor and outdoor sporting and leisure activities for all ages, unrivalled in Suffolk.

Although the Town Council expects any new leisure centre to provide the range and scale of activities as currently offered by the two existing sites at Felixstowe Leisure Centre, Undercliff Road West and Brackenbury Sports Centre, High Road East as a minimum; the district council is encourage to take this once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance the current provision, increase participation and introduce innovative sport and leisure activities.

Traditional sport and leisure activities such as sports halls, studios, bowls and squash should be supported alongside new facilities such as clip-and-climb, a high-tech spin studio and fitness equipment such as Pilates Reformers. Competitive swimming opportunities should be offered and the provision of diving boards should be considered as well as fun leisure pool features such as flumes, wave pools and indoor surfing.

The café/catering area should be commensurate with overall capacity to provide a comfortable setting for those who may be coming to the leisure centre to participate, meet, wait or spectate.

We note that investment by the district council in a new, state-of-the-art, facility will be subject to a business case *"that will serve both Felixstowe and be a destination facility within*

*the district*¹. We understand this to mean that any new leisure centre in Felixstowe should be conveniently located for the local population as well being able to attract visitors from a wider catchment area than the current facilities are reasonably able to achieve.

The Town Council notes from the consultation documents that: *“initial consultation has been undertaken with a number of key stakeholders. The consultation investigates where the best place to site a new leisure centre would be, including the existing Felixstowe Leisure Centre site, the Brackenbury site and also new sites in the northern area of the town.”*

We understand that the Felixstowe Leisure Centre site at Undercliff Road West is theoretically too small to accommodate the scale of facility that the district council is aspiring to deliver; particularly if outdoor sports pitches and adequate car parking is to be provided alongside. However, as consistent with our response to the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation, it is critical that this site is prioritised for an iconic tourism-led modern development if the new leisure centre is to be located elsewhere. It is essential that this site is not left derelict and the Town Council strongly urges that a redevelopment project be appropriately timetabled to commence as soon as the site becomes vacant.

A modern leisure centre should be easy to access, provide ample free parking and not exacerbate local traffic issues. The existing site at Undercliff Road West does not sufficiently meet these criteria.

Similarly, the Town Council also believes that the Brackenbury Sports Centre site on High Road East is not an ideal location for a new facility as the resulting increase in traffic and noise would have a negative impact in this predominately residential area of the town. As indicated in its response to the Local Plan Issues & Options Consultation, Felixstowe Town Council believes that this site could instead offer a potential brownfield opportunity for good quality housing.

We understand that the reference to *“new sites in the northern area of the town”* includes the possibility of locating a leisure centre on land to the north of Candlet Road, west of Gulpher Road.

Notwithstanding our current view that this site should not be brought forward for housing, or any other type of development in the forthcoming Local Plan period, the Town Council does not support the use of this site as a location for a new leisure centre for the following reasons:

Accessibility

Whilst a leisure centre on this site may be considered well-accessible for incoming visitors by car, it would also necessitate the use of a car or other vehicle by the majority of Felixstowe’s local population. This would exclude a significant number of local people who currently enjoy easy access to the existing sites by foot or bicycle. Furthermore, this undermines the health benefits associated with walking and cycling and the increased traffic would negatively impact environmental factors such as carbon footprint and air pollution.

Tourism and the Local Economy

We believe that the distance from this location to Felixstowe’s resort and town centre could be viewed as an inconvenience to visitors and the opportunity for onward journeys from the leisure centre would be significantly reduced.

¹ <http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Leisure/Felixstowe-Leisure-Overview.pdf>

Any new leisure centre should be located within easy walking distance of the town centre and the majority of Felixstowe's existing residential population – this is especially important for families, younger or older people who may not have access to a cars. It should also be within easy walking distance of the rail station and other public transport links - to extend the catchment of the leisure centre to those who do not wish to or are unable to drive.

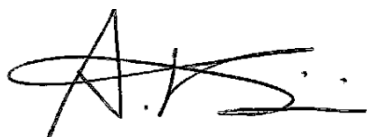
Importantly, any new leisure centre should be conveniently located to promote onward journeys to the town centre and resort – enhancing the local economy and encouraging visitors to discover Felixstowe's many and varied attractions

In the context of the wider Local Plan review, existing large areas of informal open space should be preserved. Ideally, a new leisure centre should be closely allied to existing sports pitches and informal open space, offering the opportunity for further health and wellbeing benefits.

Given that the interests of the whole community of Felixstowe are paramount to Felixstowe Town Council, we consider ourselves to a key stakeholder in this project.

The Town Council would therefore welcome any opportunity to work closely with Suffolk Coastal District Council to consider the feasibility of locating a leisure centre within the vicinity of the town centre to ensure that the best connected location is found for the long-term benefit of the residents of Felixstowe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ash Tadjrishi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ash Tadjrishi
Town Clerk
Felixstowe Town Council