

Appendix 4b Response to Public Consultation on Options for Leisure Services in Tower Hamlets

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Consultation responses

In total the council received **331** responses, the majority (316) via the online survey hosted by Let's Talk Tower Hamlets (LTTH), including 5 paper surveys transcribed to the online portal. Seven free text responses were received by email, including 8 short *vox pop* style audio clips. Nine formal responses were received from schools, sports club and a community group.

1.2 Analysis headlines

Broadly 85% of online responses agree or strongly agree with most of the council's visions for future leisure facilities. However, there is much less consensus on closing centres deemed to be in a bad condition, not used enough or losing money (over half disagree strongly or somewhat disagree).

Over half of online responses disagree strongly or somewhat disagree that the facilities in the borough are meeting their needs

Refurbishment of existing facilities on the St George's site is the most popular option amongst online respondents (36% of those who responded to this question), followed by development of a new centre at this site (26% of those who responded to this question). Responses received via email also focused on refurbishment of St George's or redevelopment on the same site.

The number of online responses commenting on the proposals for St George's was greater than the number commenting on those for John Orwell. In both cases, those who did respond were largely positive about the proposals.

In response to question 10, almost 20% of online responses feature requests for urgent action to be taken to improve the swimming offer in the southwest of the borough, with an emphasis on the negative impact this is having on more deprived groups, children, and families, as well as schools struggling to provide statutory swimming lessons. This is reflected in greater support for the refurbishment or redevelopment of St George's in Shadwell over John Orwell in Wapping. Subsequent pressure on other pools is also referred to; 23 responses mention they have been discouraged from continuing to exercise or swim because of longer journey times. Answers repeatedly highlight children learning to swim as an essential safety requirement.

Many express fond attachment to St Georges and call for speedy refurbishment to preserve its *beautiful architecture and ambiance*, 30 responses particularly reference the *unique* length of the pool.

Negative impact on family swimming time and decreased general activity levels due to closure of St George's. Eleven responses specifically link maintenance of mental health with the need to re-open St George's pool.

Twenty-three online responses cite long-term neglect of St George's by the council, though a programme of inadequate funding and historical building surveys *commissioned and ignored*. This is also a theme reflected in feedback from some of the public meetings.

Individual responses on barriers to access to the existing Leisure service include:

- Cleanliness issues across centres.
- GLL's website and booking system deemed challenging to navigate.
- Lack of women only spaces and activities.
- Inconvenient scheduling.

Experiences of GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited) service delivery are mixed:

- GLL's track record on cleanliness and maintenance regularly highlighted as sub-standard, with some attributing the decline of usership at St Georges as linked to poor hygiene.

- Mixed views on value and affordability of current offer.
- Charitable social enterprise status valued by users.
- GLL's operation of leisure services in neighbouring boroughs is viewed as a *major advantage* as it allows members access to a wider range of centres across London.
- There are positive comments on the range and delivery of services: *Have moved in last 12 months from Redbridge - Tower Hamlets has markedly better provision.*

Importance of effective contractual monitoring as part of any new agreement highlighted

More all-female designated sessions and spaces; strategy for early engagement of girls in sport advocated.

Calls for more ambitious planning to match provision at well-regarded Britannia Leisure Centre in Hackney.

Negative impact of loss of hockey pitch access at John Orwell repeatedly highlighted, including detriment to participation, physical and mental health, as well as community cohesion.

Consultation process criticised for a perceived lack of accessibility for those less digitally confident or more vulnerable users, including a perception that the consultation is a *rubberstamping* exercise for a pre-determined decision on the future of St George's. Although responses did not always specify what these concerns were, examples include closing St George's and selling the site to housing developers and/or opening a pool at John Orwell Leisure Centre, with a general bias against the refurbishment of St George's.

Respondents call for better collaboration with local health services and improved join-up with existing green spaces as part of future planning.

1.3. Alternative suggestions

Twelve online responses suggested provision of a dockside lido in the Southwest of the borough, with one suggesting provision of a *pop-up pool*. The case for installation of a demountable pool is advocated as part of the formal response from Shadwell Responds, including detailed case study examples. Another response by email recommends a lido be situated at Brussels Wharf.

2. Introduction

The current contract delivered by Better (Greenwich Leisure Limited or 'GLL') for leisure centres ends in April 2024, and the council needs to decide upon any changes to the way that it provides leisure services for residents.

Tower Hamlets has seven leisure centres, the majority of which are over 40 years old, and there is a clear need to plan for both the short-term (five to ten-years) and long-term (ten years or more) investment in these buildings. This will ensure that high-quality facilities can be provided now and into the future.

On 15 November 2021, LBTH launched a public consultation exercise seeking the views of all interested parties on options for the future of leisure services in Tower Hamlets.

3. Consultation Period

The consultation ran from 15 November 2021 to 12 January 2022 (extended twice, from an original end date of 3 January, then 9 January 2022, and finally to 12 January 2022).

A survey was published on the Let's Talk Tower Hamlets (LTTH) online portal via the following link: <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure>. The webpage carried information on how to respond, the timetable for responses and made available the formal consultation document, supporting strategies and feasibility reports: <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure/widgets/37118/documents>

People were invited to respond via the online survey, by email (sports@towerhamlets.gov.uk), by post and by email. Interested parties could also attend in person and virtual meetings, as well as requesting paper copies of the survey via the online mailbox or by post. Paper copies were placed in all leisure centres on 21st December 2021, given that the original consultation advised paper copies could be requested by post up to 17th December.

3.1. In person & virtual events - overview

- 15 November: In person public meeting at Town Hall – 13 attended (although it should be noted that the online streaming element of this meeting did not work, and the event was not recorded)
- 1 December: In person event at St George's Town Hall - 7 attended
- 4 December: In person event at Mile End Leisure Centre – 25 interacted with consultation
- 6 December: Online meeting with Isle of Dogs Councillors – 2 attended
- 8 December: Virtual meeting with Shadwell Responds attended by Cllr Akhtar and Michael Coleman
- 9 December: In person session at George Green's School - 1 attended
- 9 December: Online Public Consultation meeting with the Mayor which was recorded and available via LBTH portal - Approximately 13 attended
- 22 December – Mayor and Cllr Akhtar met with Shadwell Responds group.

3.2. Promotion

The consultation was initially publicised via the following channels:

- London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) Members and Managers internal newsletter
- Sport centre websites
- Social media – 36 posts across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn, reaching 626.2K people.
- LBTH Sports and Leisure email bulletin
- LBTH Communications Team Newsletter
- Posters at Leisure Centres – 54 scans of QR code from posters at GLL locations and Town Hall leading to <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure>

Promotion was adjusted throughout the consultation in response to interim demographic analysis:

- Emails sent by GLL to voluntary and community sector and sports and leisure groups affiliated with individual leisure centres
- Publicised via *Local Voices* – residents' group with disabilities or long-term health conditions
- Follow up email sent via sport and leisure mailbox
- Publicised via Poplar HARCA, and One Housing
- Publicised with members of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Publicised via Headteacher's Bulletin, with request for consultation link to feature on school websites
- Publicised via GP Care Group
- Publicised via Our Time SEND Youth Forum
- Publicised via articles submitted to e-newsletters to parents and carers and professionals working with families in Tower Hamlets
- Publicised with elected Members as part of meeting held on held on 6th January 2022
- Focussed press in Bengali newsletter published Fri 17 Dec 2021.
- Publicised via youth engagement team networks
- Article featured in December edition of Our East End, P41, which goes to every household in the borough

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4. Responses

In total the council received **331** responses

- 316 responses via online survey (including 5 paper surveys transcribed to online portal)
- 7 emails
- 8 audio files via email

4.1. Formal responses

Nine formal responses were received from the following organisations:

- o Harry Gosling Primary School (online survey)
- o Lawdale Junior School (online survey)
- o St Pauls Whitechapel CofE Primary School (online survey)
- o English Martyrs Roman Catholic Primary School (online survey)
- o Wapping High School (online survey)
- o Wapping Hockey Club – c/o Stuart Burnside (Honorary President) (online survey & email)
- o London Royals Hockey Club (online survey)
- o Tower Hamlets Trojans Basketball Club (online survey)
- o A collective response - *A community vision for St George’s Leisure Centre* - submitted via email by Shadwell Responds, representing 10 faith organisations, schools, and community groups across Shadwell, supported by Create Streets Foundation

Issues raised by these organisations are reflected under central analysis where replies were received via the online survey. Analysis of formal responses received via email is provided under section 8.

Responses were also received from individuals affiliated with the following organisations:

- o St George in the East
- o Victoria Park Athletics Club
- o Turks Head Charity
- o Seven Mills Primary School
- o Oaklands Secondary School
- o Bigland Green Primary School
- o East London Hockey Club

Two responses were also received from councillors: Cllr Rabina Khan and Cllr Andrew Wood

5. Comments on the consultation methodology

Several comments were made, including:

- **Timing:** concerns were raised that the consultation took place at the end of the year and over the festive period. The consultation was subsequently extended twice.
- **Accessibility:** some respondents raised concerns that an online survey was not suitable for those who do not have digital access or skills. Hard copies were made available at leisure centres and a number of in-person events were held.
- **Access to supporting documents and information:** concerns were raised that historic building surveys were not available, and there should be more information about the comparative costs of refurbishing versus building a new centre.
- **Openness:** some respondents expressed a fear that the process was premeditated to remove St Georges and build housing on the site.

6. Demographic Profile of on-line questionnaire respondents

- The bulk of respondents are residents (89%) based in E1 and E1W postcodes (see table below), with almost a third of users citing St George’s as their ‘most used’ leisure centre. Users of Mile End Park Leisure Centre and Stadium make up 21.8%, with users of John Orwell coming in third with 19.6%. The lowest response rate was from users of Whitechapel Sports Centre (1.6%).

Breakdown by resident location

Postcode	E1	E1W	E2	E3	E14	N/A	Blank	Total
No.	70	87	28	46	49	2	34	316

- Of those 188 respondents (out of 316) who agreed to answer equalities questions, most engagement has been from married heterosexual White British females in the 35-44 age bracket. The lowest response rates feature in the very high or very low age brackets. The 16-24 age range provided only 7 replies via the online survey, with zero received from the 0-15 age range. (However, it should be noted that additional replies were received via email from two 11-year-olds and one 7-year-old).
- Of this group 15% cite a long-term health problem or disability which limits day to day activities; the majority preferred to self-describe or not to say; 17.6% of this group cite a mental health condition (such as depression); 23.5% a long-standing illness (such as cancer); 8.8% cite a learning disability; 7.4% cite a sensory impairment; 7.4% cite a physical impairment.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents identified as *White: British, White: Irish or White: Any other background*, with *Other ethnic group: Any other background* and *Asian / British Asian Bangladeshi* voices currently forming the joint second most engaged groups (both 10%).
- Overall, responses from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities have been low - with zero responses received from *Asian / Asian British: Any other background, White & Black African, Vietnamese, White Traveller of Irish Heritage* and *White: Gypsy Roma* groups
- Most respondents (45.2%) identified as having no religion and over a quarter (26.9%) of responses were received from the Christian community, with 7% identifying as Agnostic, 7.5% identifying as Muslim and 8.1% preferring not to say. There has been a very low level of response from Hindu (0.5%), Jewish (1.1%), Buddhist (1.1%), Sikh (0.5%) and Humanist (1.1%) groups.
- Over three quarters identified as Heterosexual (77.4%), with a 10.8% response rate from the Gay / Lesbian community and 3.8% identifying as Bisexual. (Although it should be noted that 131 people skipped this question)

7. Analysis of online survey responses

7.1. Strategic questions

The survey asked respondents for their views on a number of issues related to the ambition and purpose of leisure services, levels of investment and whether leisure services currently meet the needs of residents. Respondents could choose from a number of options: strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither disagree nor agree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree; don't know. All 316 respondents answered these questions.

85% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the ambition for leisure services "to be sustainable & accessible to every resident & visitor and contribute to local health, wellbeing and the economy". 8% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the future vision for Tower Hamlets leisure facilities. 5% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the principle of having a network of leisure centre facilities within 20 minutes by public transport from where you live. 11% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all facilities, where possible, should support a healthy lifestyle targeted at a range of ages, abilities, individuals, and groups. 2% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that leisure centres should be affordable and attractive to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active. 2% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that if a centre is not used enough, is in a bad condition and/or it is losing money, we should consider closing it. 58% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that community groups, sports clubs and volunteers should be supported to use open spaces, playing fields, community centres, schools, and colleges to bring leisure opportunities to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active. 3% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should consider funding new services or facilities, such as a new leisure centre, if affordable. 6% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the council should plan for significant investment in our leisure centres. 2% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

37% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the current range of leisure centres in the borough meet their needs. 54% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

7.2. Open-ended questions

Respondents were also invited to give their views on a range of different topics, including on proposals for St George’s Leisure Centre and John Orwell Sports Centre. Comments were coded, analysed and a summary of the responses is presented below.

General comments and use of leisure centres

Q10 Do you have any comments on our leisure centres, in general, or any individual centre? (261 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
<p>All female provision and engagement Multiple calls for more women only sessions and expanded designated gym space, with female staff attending to negate <i>male attendees making women feel uncomfortable</i> in a perceived “<i>male space</i>”. In addition, call to <i>ensure only women are monitoring CCTV cameras in female only section of gym</i>. Women only sessions at Whitechapel on Mondays praised. Strategy for early engagement of girls in sport advocated, with requirement for <i>safe spaces</i> underlined.</p>	9
<p>Refurbish St Georges to preserve unique architecture and ambiance Many users express fond attachment to St Georges, where they and their children learned to swim and strongly advocate for its speedy refurbishment. Negative impact on family swimming time and decreased general activity levels cited multiple times. The ambiance of St George’s pool – a great space flooded by light – is frequently praised, along with the <i>unique</i> length and depth of the pool, described as a <i>real gem</i>. In comparison, Poplar Pool is described by one user as a <i>rather dismal dreary pool stuck in the basement</i>, with Mile End likened to <i>swimming in an overcrowded fish tank</i>.</p>	19
<p>Barriers to access: Users frequently bemoan Better’s horrendous website, seen as difficult to navigate with a <i>woeful and Kafkaesque</i> booking system often requiring <i>many frustrating hours of communication with the centre staff (in person and online) to resolve ... issues</i>. One user suggests staff ethnicity should more closely resemble local demographics to ensure a <i>welcoming environment</i> and to negate <i>language and cultural differences</i>. Requests for broader range of classes suitable for disabled users and need for disability awareness training for staff, centres not Autism friendly, lack of accessible parking, increased journey times for those with mobility issues due to closures. A hearing aid user reported that refurbished facilities at John Orwell are <i>problematic ... the Sports Hall has a significant echo and the fitness studio was not fitted with any sound insulation</i>. Many praised the facilities at St George’s pool as so valuable ... to disabled and special need users, another calls for a <i>commitment to invest planning gains from Wapping to ... running the swim ability club for disabled children and adults</i>. Many liked the privacy offered by individual changing cubicles at St Georges, with segregation also proving important: <i>For reasons of personal safety and hygiene, I do not feel comfortable / will not</i></p>	54

<p><i>use mixed changing rooms such as at Mile End swimming pool. I am currently swimming in Islington to avoid using mixed changing rooms, whilst St George's is shut. Security at York Hall is highlighted as lacking as it could be judged unsafe for children in the changing rooms at present.</i></p> <p>A high proportion bemoan inconvenient session timetabling, especially for those working full time, with caring responsibilities or requiring female only sessions. Praise for St George's pool which held a <i>huge range of levels of lessons at different times in the week to suit work and school schedules</i>. Many find that access to sessions is limited and has not increased to meet need. Another user in the higher covid risk category calls for Mile End to be open later to enable avoidance of children and larger groups.</p> <p>Many call for a broader programme of activities to engage older people. Some highlight that poor cleanliness in the light of Covid may discourage this group - <i>I think this puts off disadvantaged and older people from using the leisure centre, as they are more likely to experience severe symptoms—essentially they are seeing it as risky to attend the leisure centre and be active, when in fact it's necessary for good health.</i> Calls for <i>fantastic 'Young at Heart' services to be resumed for the over 50's.</i></p>	
<p>Transport, travel, and location</p> <p>Some request for a distinction to be made between public transport vs walking for the proposed 20min journey time, preferring the latter. A high proportion are discouraged from exercising by longer journey times due to closures, especially those with mobility issues and caring responsibilities.</p> <p>School staff bemoan the closure of St George's and subsequent pressure on other pools, reducing available swimming lessons slots and the public transport element means that <i>swimming is no longer considered a local educational visit, and requires a large amount of paperwork to be completed ... to ensure the children's safety</i>, to the detriment of learning time and staff workload.</p> <p>Many praise St Georges' location as well connected for transport links, with a well-regarded Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6a versus a PTAL of 3 for John Orwell.</p> <p>One user highlights potential travel safety issues for some groups - <i>access ... could be a little worrisome for some walking alone (walk from public transport for example and in particular John Orwell).</i></p>	38
<p>Social equity</p> <p>There is a broad and urgent plea for swimming provision in Shadwell to be preserved to cater to a more deprived demographic in this area: <i>The ability to swim is not the preserve of the white middle class ... Young children of all backgrounds want to learn to swim and have been denied this opportunity by the indifference of the Local Authority.</i> These respondents also expressed support for refurbishment or redevelopment of St George's in Shadwell over John Orwell in Wapping - a centre perceived by some as <i>nice, "White", middle class with a significantly wealthier usership</i>. Another respondent cautions against closing down loss-making facilities which <i>may be providing a valuable service to hard to reach segment of the borough</i>.</p> <p>In the light of potential pitch disruption at John Orwell, many hockey club members highlight the potential negative impact on very well attended volunteer led clubs ... essential for getting a diverse range of children (diverse by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and ability) into sport for the first time.</p>	24
<p>Experiences of GLL</p> <p>In general, the sentiment towards staff is mixed, many have good experiences to share – one user describes <i>staff as friendly, helpful and welcoming</i>, but those more negative focus on lack of training to support disabled users and activities, a need for more training on computer systems and increased awareness of leisure offer. Rudeness is mentioned on occasion, with one respondent suggesting smaller turnover of staff as beneficial. Positive user experience is often thwarted by staff without necessary <i>authority or permission to rectify online problems</i>.</p> <p>One user describes Better as not perfect ... but the best out there, adding <i>I was sorry to see that Westminster changed to Everyone Active which based on my research in Southwark and Westminster, is not as accessible as Better</i>. Another user describes the Mile End Centre as <i>fantastic ... I look forward to swimming in it every week</i>.</p> <p>A high proportion attribute the decline of usership at St Georges as linked to poor hygiene. The centre was often described as <i>dirty with and left in a disgusting, unhygienic mess</i> for the most part. Many users warn that other pool and changing room facilities across the borough show similar signs</p>	119

<p>of neglect - pools at Mile End, York Hall and Poplar are highlighted here - <i>Better do not seem to take care of any facility they become 'dirty' very quickly.</i></p> <p>Whilst some find Better <i>excellent value for money</i>, a similar proportion find the offer too expensive, calling for more generous subsidies and concessions to increase accessibility and engagement.</p> <p>Calls for more indoor sports provision (including racquet and team sports), combat sports, investment in fitness suites, and encouragement of <i>low impact exercise</i> classes (yoga, dance) viewed as <i>really accessible, good for health and building community</i> and an enhanced offer for older groups. Parents request more soft play availability and facilities as well as and rehab for new mums.</p> <p>Management is criticised for being out of step with fitness trends - <i>The range of classes ... are very old and always the same. The Group Co-ordinator at Better seems to be deliberately unaware that the fitness industry has evolved and moved on tenfold.</i></p> <p>Suggestions for revamped St George's to include additional facilities to enhance commercial viability, such as a <i>climbing wall, trampoline park, soft play area, area for children's birthday parties.</i></p> <p>Sports hall provision is criticised as lacking and not meeting current demand, whilst <i>Poplar rec</i> highlighted as non-inclusive and lacking basketball facilities.</p> <p>GLL's operation of leisure services in neighbouring boroughs is viewed as a <i>major advantage</i>, given members can access other centres across London, adding to <i>convenience and affordability</i> especially for residents living near borough borders.</p> <p>Access to their spa experience sister company and social enterprise status is also well received</p> <p>GLL's management of centres described as poor by some, with one user's attempt at being a <i>critical friend</i> regarding problems at York Hall <i>pushed back ... on nearly each occasion.</i></p> <p>Others found the breadth of current offer is badly advertised, and users suggest more local promotion, including the eastern part of the city.</p> <p>Other issues included low pool temperatures, problematic access to Mile End athletics track and a request to avoid re-contracting with a company operating zero hours contracts.</p>	
<p>Social, community and mental health impacts</p> <p>A large proportion inextricably link maintenance of their mental health with the need to re-open St George's pool, described by one as a <i>vital resource.</i></p> <p>Many praise the social benefits of the clubs using the AstroTurf at John Orwell, one respondent highlighted <i>the benefits of the pitch to the mental well-being of so many residents and visitors in Tower Hamlets</i>, as well as providing a sense of community – <i>It has brought so many people together in the borough and provided great social outcomes for residents and visitors.</i></p> <p>In general centres are prized for their positive impact on physical and mental health - <i>creating friendships between people of different ages, abilities and ethnicities</i> - as well as reducing social isolation in older and retired generations.</p>	38
<p>Council Strategy</p> <p>Eighteen responses accuse the council of long-term neglect of St Georges, stating that there has been inadequate funding and historical building surveys have been <i>commissioned and ignored</i>. Users frequently accuse the council of using the pandemic as an excuse to permanently close St Georges. Additional council investment is a key theme throughout, notwithstanding the perceived help or hinderance of Better's management and maintenance.</p> <p>There are calls for planning to begin now for other more aged leisure centres to prolong life through effective long-term maintenance and for S106 Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus money to be used for improvements. Many urge the council not simply to close the centres deemed to be <i>failing</i>, but instead to find out why and then <i>invest in outreach and accessibility and rebuilds to increase usership instead.</i> Another two respondents suggest provision should be brought inhouse.</p> <p>Some users suggest a broader sports facility offer as an alternative approach to the perceived 'swimming focussed' future strategy - <i>especially in a post covid world where people are rightly worries about personal health.</i></p> <p>Importance of effective contractual monitoring is noted multiple times as part of any new agreement, so that the service provider can be held to account.</p> <p>Council urged by one respondent to create a "culture of wellbeing", with a <i>focus on what health means to each individual given the unique lives they are leading ... then facilitating this for each</i></p>	134

<p><i>individual</i>. Another called for more managerial imagination to offer lifelines to centres becoming challenging to operate through more creative thinking.</p> <p>Some responses focus on a narrative that the council’s main aim is to build housing on the St George’s or John Orwell site to developers for profit. In general, this is seen as the wrong course of action.</p> <p>Responses highlights the optimal location of St George’s in terms of any planned redevelopment - <i>The components for revival are already here; the well-connected Shadwell Overground and DLR Station, Watney Market, the Vestry Hall, the route to Tobacco Dock, the St. George's Gardens, the Church and the St. George's Baths building and site.</i></p> <p>Facilities on the Isle of Dogs are highlighted multiple times as being out of step with the rising population in this area.</p> <p>The importance of engagement with sports clubs ahead of redevelopment is repeated, <i>without effective consultation with people of groups that use them or want to use them any development will be wasted.</i></p>	
<p>Consultation methodology</p> <p>The consultation process was criticised for a perceived lack of accessibility for those less digitally confident or more vulnerable users - <i>how can people who have no access to social media, are too old or unable to read or comment actually make their views heard.</i></p> <p>Two responses express a perception that the consultation is a rubberstamping exercise for a pre-determined decision on the future of St George’s, namely to sell off the land for profit to developer.</p>	8
<p>Swimming provision</p> <p>There is a broad plea from many respondents for urgent action to be taken to improve the swimming offer in the borough, with an emphasis on lack of provision in the Southwest and the negative impact this is having on children and families, as well as schools struggling to provide statutory swimming lessons.</p> <p>Subsequent pressure on other pools is keenly felt, discouraging some from continuing to swim.</p> <p>Responses include suggestions for a dockside lido, with Brussels Wharf as an option.</p> <p>Answers repeatedly highlight children learning to swim as an essential requirement, to enhance <i>health and ‘life chances’</i>, as well as the dangers of close proximity to various waterways and youngsters swimming in Shadwell Basin. One user cautions that the <i>time required to build a new centre would mean that an entire generation of young children would lose the opportunity to learn to swim.</i></p>	52
<p>Health and leisure collaboration</p> <p>Joined-up thinking and closer, direct collaboration with the NHS and the wider “health industry” is advocated by one respondent, another suggests GP and physiotherapy referral activities as beneficial in local centres for those needing rehabilitation.</p>	6
<p>Local footfall capital</p> <p>Hockey club members particularly highlight closure of the pitch at John Orwell as a hammer blow to the local economy within Wapping, given the current patronage of members and opposing teams in local pubs, restaurants, and shops pre and post matches.</p>	5

Q11 Which of these leisure centres did you mostly use before the pandemic, use now, or are you are planning to use in the next 12 months? (316 responses – one choice allowed)

Summary of responses in numbers	Percentage (number)
St George’s Leisure Centre	30% (96)
Mile End Leisure Centre	22% (69)
John Orwell Sports Centre	20% (62)
York Hall Leisure Centre	9% (30)
Poplar Leisure Centre	6% (20)
Tiller Leisure Centre	5% (16)
Whitechapel Sports Centre	2% (5)
None of the above / I do not use any leisure or sports centres	6% (18)
Total	316

Q12 Which of the following consultation options do you prefer? (316 responses – one choice allowed)

Summary of responses in numbers	Percentage (number)
Refurbish the existing St George's Leisure Centre	36% (114)
Build a new leisure centre on the site of St George's Leisure Centre with a swimming pool	26% (83)
Refurbish and extend the existing John Orwell Sports Centre to add a swimming pool	11% (35)
Invest in other sites, not St George's Leisure Centre or John Orwell Sports Centre	11% (34)
Build a new leisure centre, with a swimming pool, on the site of John Orwell Sports Centre	6% (19)
None of the above	10% (31)
Total	316

Specific proposals for St George's Leisure Centre and John Orwell Sports Centre

Q13 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing the existing St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future? (106 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
<p>Positive:</p> <p>Local women only sessions would be reinstated and preserved, providing <i>much-needed access to the pool for ... local women, many of whom can only attend a female only session.</i></p> <p>Investment in this option would affirm the council's commitment to invest in Shadwell and more deprived communities as opposed to Wapping where the demographic is much wealthier and challenge the view of some of the project as a <i>money earner</i> for the council. The majority assert that housing on the site is not desirable, one user suggests spare space should be used to <i>extend the park instead.</i></p> <p>It would not impact on a thriving hockey club (at John Orwell)</p> <p>Architecture and ambience of unique pool would be preserved. Seventeen responses expressed fond attachment and a desire to return to the <i>beautiful, light filled space with large windows and view of the sky from the pool</i>, where many learned to swim. St George's is described as a <i>much loved and once very successful leisure facility</i>, considered by some a <i>historic building which should be listed.</i> There is strong support for the preservation of the 30.4m long pool and an expectation that <i>spectator galleries would be able to re-open with borough galas and swimming and diving competitions resumed.</i> Others add that preservation of the existing pool size would <i>allow for many activities to take place in one centre simultaneously</i>, including reinstatement of Tower Hamlets swimming club activities.</p> <p>Usership would increase, providing it was supported by a proper maintenance programme.</p> <p>Centre would be reinstated as community hub helping to <i>build a bridge between Wapping and Shadwell.</i> Refurbishment of St George's would not disrupt John Orwell hockey club activities, highlighted by many as central to their sense of community.</p> <p>Pool could re-open sooner compared with new build option, with <i>Lower carbon impact than demolition.</i></p> <p>Site already benefits from excellent access to public transport (DLR, Overground, bus) ... carparking and several Santander cycle docking stations nearby, including parking for disabled people.</p> <p>Local residents would benefit from reduced journey times and associated costs which have especially impacted more vulnerable, disabled and deprived groups, and those with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Beneficial impact on children and family swimming time; <i>We really miss our mum and daughter bonding time at St George's.</i> All agree refurbishment and re-opening of the centre would be hugely beneficial to the children of Shadwell, including re-establishment of a local pool convenient for school swimming lessons and enabling children to learn a <i>necessary life skill.</i> This would also relieve pressure on other pools, with limited capacity currently a limiting factor for many that have to travel further due to closure.</p>	95

<p>Lapse in mental & physical health reversed. Many cite closure of the pool as negatively impacting health; <i>I was swimming 3-5 times a week before it was closed and successfully losing weight and getting fitter, to the point my diabetes was in remission. Since then I have been unable to access a swimming pool and my health will almost certainly be suffering.</i> Others attest to the pool as a lifeline for mental health, <i>swimming helped me reestablish my confidence after a relationship breakdown.</i></p> <p>An opportunity to enhance the Southwest, given the sites proximity to the park and development of café facilities should be better developed and exploited to <i>revitalise this neglected part of the borough,</i> with one user recommending the increase of <i>positive through traffic to the St George's park.</i> Promotion is also highlighted including to <i>local more westerly office workers.</i></p>	
<p>Negative:</p> <p>Development of facilities at John Orwell would be neglected; <i>option would only help one site in Wapping.</i></p> <p>Refurbishment would further delay swimming access for local families.</p>	2
<p>None:</p> <p>Refurbishment would be more cost effective than demolishing and starting again <i>This option would make me feel like Tower Hamlets borough takes care of its residents needs.</i></p>	7
<p>Other comments:</p> <p>Information on costs and specification of type of refurb versus rebuild missing.</p>	2

Q14 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre on the site of St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future? (70 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
<p>Positive:</p> <p>People more inclined to use a modern centre <i>purpose-built for the needs of the community,</i> especially with the addition of a <i>wider variety of studio, fitness and sports activities</i> and in place of previous offering described by one user as <i>filthy and poorly maintained, with unhelpful staff.</i> One user welcomed <i>getting rid of a dangerous eyesore.</i></p> <p>Opportunity to design more accessible layout, including a <i>pool ... accessible for disabled people with a moving floor like Mile End Leisure Centre</i> and ability to <i>adjust the temperature and floor depth for parent and baby, toddler and infant classes.</i> A hydro pool is also suggested to assist recovery from injury.</p> <p>No disruption to hockey club activities at John Orwell</p> <p>Beneficial impact on children and family swimming time, with swimming and diving lessons resumed and children able to learn an <i>essential life skill.</i></p> <p>Local residents would benefit from reduced journey times and associated costs particularly affecting families and deprived groups.</p> <p>Benefits of central location and travel links advocated as <i>equally accessible to very different communities on both side of the Highway,</i> with certain groups <i>less willing to travel down into John Orwell.</i></p> <p>Opportunity to enhance offer for competitive swimmers retaining the current length (at the least) or building a 50m pool to <i>open up the training potential for young and masters swimmers in TH.</i></p> <p>Reinstate and enhance social aspects of centre as <i>more attractive community centred space,</i> which would <i>bring in a lot more people.</i></p> <p>Lapse in mental & physical health (as a result of closure) reversed</p> <p>Better value to <i>demolish and rebuild than to refurbish the degraded fabric of the building,</i> with <i>greener and cheaper</i> running costs making long term maintenance more sustainable.</p> <p>Opportunity to <i>reinvigorate the wider area</i> by building a new centre which <i>better interacts with the local space, including the park and local heritage context.</i> Investment would challenge the view that <i>people in Shadwell are not being invested in, while being surrounded by lots of development that doesn't serve their needs.</i></p>	58
<p>Negative:</p> <p>Investment in other centres neglected <i>if no money is reserved to update ... in the next 3-5 years.</i></p>	6

<p>Building a new centre may fail to preserve the <i>unique character of the existing pools</i> - the feasibility study has not explored this as fully as it could. Also risk of losing <i>individual changing booths, which also support diversity, given different standards of modesty in our community, and encourage those with poor body self-images to exercise more.</i></p> <p>Redevelopment would further delay swimming access, with a complete rebuild deemed the longer option. The impact of having no interim swimming option is described as <i>devastating</i> by one, who advocates for a temporary swimming option such as a <i>'pop-up' pool.</i></p>	
<p>None:</p>	7
<p>Other comments:</p> <p>Low use previously impacted by <i>poor management</i> with restrictions on user numbers due to <i>staff shortages and lack of lifeguards.</i></p> <p>Access to survey information hindered by broken document link, although this was not reported to officers.</p> <p>Council predetermination: One user stated: <i>The council seems intent on demolishing St. George's by making the only option as the John Orwell Sports Centre in Wapping better to include a pool.</i></p> <p>Survey questions criticised as no provision given to state first or second choice options.</p> <p>Feasibility study criticised as un-ambitious in providing more options for facilities at St Georges.</p>	7

Q15 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing and extending John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future? (30 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
<p>Positive:</p> <p>Local swimming provision welcomed despite likely building disruption, with council urged to just do something quickly given the <i>area's desperate need of a swimming pool.</i></p> <p>Scope for development of centre s social hub, with culture space and broader offer, including space for <i>parties or gatherings</i> and expanded sports sessions. Provision similar to York Hall spa suggested, along with an on-site café to extend duration of visits.</p> <p>Refurbishment of outside pitch beneficial to community in long run due to current age and condition – replacement with a <i>high standard multi-sport surface</i> suggested. Adding other outdoor facilities would expand range of activities available and <i>sustain or even increase ... frequency of visits and involvement in those activities and ... time spent in the surrounding businesses.</i></p> <p>Centre is well located with access to Wapping Gardens, convenient for <i>families that wish to play after swimming or training sessions.</i></p> <p>Adding facilities on this site would be a more efficient use of space, incorporating unused land around the existing site, <i>while using the St George's site for housing.</i></p>	18
<p>Negative:</p> <p>Temporary closure would limit access exercise options and a staged refurbishment is suggested to <i>allow for the gym to remain open, even if equipment/machines needed to be moved around the centre during the process.</i></p> <p>Redevelopment could trigger price increases which might price out existing members.</p> <p>Disruption to or removal of AstroTurf would seriously jeopardise participation in hockey and other team sports. Hockey club members repeatedly emphasise the importance of club activities to their physical and mental health and sense of community and <i>dire</i> impact of loss of pitch due to limited facilities elsewhere.</p> <p>Redevelopment could result in loss of parking provision, particularly impacting access for disabled users and sports league clubs visiting from outside the borough.</p>	9
<p>None</p>	9
<p>Other comments:</p> <p>St Georges will be expensive to refurbish and would be better being sold off and the profits put into other leisure services.</p>	1

Q16 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre with a swimming pool on the site of John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future? (12 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
<p>Positive: Site considered to be <i>more practical for development</i>, with easy access from overground station and <i>enough space to develop other sports and refreshment facilities</i>. The potential for housing would <i>significantly help borough funding for both JO development and other improvement and put to good use a piece of waste ground to the west considered an unsightly blight on the locality for decades</i>. Beneficial impact on children and family swimming time, with one parent noting <i>It will probably mean the difference between my children becoming strong swimmers or not</i>. Building a larger complex would provide a more varied offer allowing <i>families to participate in a range of activities simultaneously</i> and allowing for historic ad-hoc structural changes described as <i>very 'bity' and added at various periods</i> – to be addressed. New centre would provide focal point for local community, with potential to address a growing anti-social behavioural problem in the area of <i>Knighen Street/Vaughan Way due to the area's isolation (following the implementation of the Wapping bus gate)</i>.</p>	10
<p>Negative: Closure as part of rebuild project would limit access exercise options and increase journey times for users to alternative centres.</p>	1
None	2

Q17 Do you have any comments on the borough's leisure services? (232 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
<p>Calls for more all-female provision and engagement, including gym space, as well as a dedicated leisure centre with a female only staff and gym equipment designed specifically for women. The importance of separate women-only changing areas over a <i>changing village</i> is highlighted. In contrast, there are also pleas for separate classes for <i>minority groups</i> not to be held at busy times, citing <i>too much focus on political correctness with a direct negative impact on other users</i>.</p>	12
<p>Develop a broader borough-wide offer, with specific opportunity to increase variety of provision at St Georges through redevelopment.</p>	20
<p>Experience of GLL Charitable social enterprise status valued by users Mixed views on value and affordability of current offer; some find membership <i>too expensive</i>, while others praise <i>very good value for money</i> compared with <i>very expensive private facilities</i> and given that a <i>membership with them gives me access to many leisure centres over London</i> and includes accessible options such as <i>basic type of pay and play to all inclusive</i>. However, one user notes that since the pandemic <i>GLL have put their prices up by more than 50% for clubs to rent pool/lanes</i>. Another user reports the discounted rate for TH staff is less favourable than expected. Experiences of staff are mixed, with some users reporting lack of flexibility, non-responsiveness and rudeness - although staff members <i>seem to try their best</i> - despite <i>many mistakes</i> being made. Others note that GLL staff succeed in providing <i>open, inviting leisure centres</i>. A high proportion are critical regarding GLL's perceived <i>mismanagement and neglect of St George's</i>: <i>It is scandalous that St Georges has been allowed to get into such a state of disrepair ... Better GLL have been not performed their most basic obligations</i>. Another respondent suggests that <i>a previous rolling programme of improvements whilst keeping the pool open could have prevented the current position</i>. GLL's track record on cleanliness and maintenance regularly highlighted as sub-standard, with pools described as <i>dirty, badly managed and unhygienic</i>. Other respondents complain of contracting fungal infections and finding excrement inside changing rooms at Mile End centre, whilst <i>Cleaning team throw some bleaching products on floor while people are still there which increases asthma attacks</i>. A user suggests that if <i>management keep the leisure services clean then this will encourage users to also respect the space</i>.</p>	140

<p>Range of leisure centres and services valued, but users flag that many are in a poor condition with suboptimal maintenance, with a need for increased promotion: <i>I think there are a lot of excellent facilities in the borough and we're lucky to have them, but I think some of facilities and opportunities are poorly communicated and promoted so not best used.</i></p>	
<p>Barriers to access Many highlight class scheduling as a major barrier to access. Lack of provision for new mums to help women become pain free and confident with their new bodies. A high proportion berate GLL's booking system and online presence as difficult to navigate and inaccessible to those without smart phones or internet access, putting certain vulnerable groups at a disadvantage. Various calls for pool temperature to be more carefully considered, as colder water is considered to be a deterrent for learners, children and older people suffering from specific illnesses such as Raynaud's syndrome. Access issues specific to Mile End Stadium are reported as having been exacerbated during the pandemic, including overcrowding, an unreliable booking system, problematic access to the outdoor track via the main leisure centre <i>requiring the intervention of staff. Where staff are new (and not yet understanding the apparent idiosyncrasies of Mile End), they can be very unhelpful.</i> The same users states that <i>finer can often result ... but shouldn't be a normal and regular occurrence.</i> Also noted is irregular availability of Outdoor toilets, lack of access to the gym, toilets or changing facilities on the stadium side, creating <i>access issues for disabled users and emergency services</i> personnel. There is lack of access to a defibrillator located on the closed stadium side.</p>	42
<p>Transport and travel Redevelopment of leisure services in the Southwest would enable local residents to benefit from reduced journey times and associated costs which have especially impacted more vulnerable, disabled, and deprived groups, and those with caring responsibilities. Responses include requests for public transport not to be used as the measure for accessibility given that <i>public transport costs are significant</i> for some groups.</p>	9
<p>Collaboration and service join-up Respondents call for better collaboration with local health services, including <i>physiotherapy, community dietician smoking cessation</i> which could be delivered in Leisure Centres to improve health outcomes. In addition, one user suggests facilities with smaller, warmer pools should offer rehabilitation sessions. Disconnect between leisure planning and transport and streets strategies described as <i>shocking.</i> There are calls for increased provision and link up with active transport opportunities, such as <i>free-to-use cycle parking,</i> as well as more engagement with community health and fitness groups. Better link up between leisure services and green spaces, encouraging use of well-regarded outdoor gyms and access to running clubs. Mapping space available for provision across the borough, including classes held via Ideas Stores, school and community halls, and other providers and utilising effective booking software to manage access. Requesting access to leisure facilities in universities, corporate buildings is also suggested: <i>If working from home continues there will be lots of empty corporate gyms in Canary Wharf!</i></p>	20
<p>Council strategy Calls for more ambitious planning to match provision at well-regarded Britannia Leisure Centre in Hackney Eight respondents suggest that the council has neglected St George's Investing more evenly across the borough favoured by some, rather than focusing on rebuilding one closed centre. Another user suggests other council services suffering cuts should benefit from investment above leisure centres. Some call for less strategic focus on pools as a priority, with a preference for <i>a variety of accessible activities (particularly fitness/gyms, yoga and Pilates, dance and tennis) as opposed to swimming.</i> Specific investment to improve facilities at Mile End Stadium is highlighted, including indoor and outdoor toilets, resurfacing netball and tennis courts and fixing flood lights. The importance of monitoring any contractual leisure service agreement is repeatedly emphasised, including financial penalties for breach of agreed maintenance and hygiene standards. As well as</p>	123

<p>ensuring <i>centre managers and deputies are actively responsible for keeping their centres in a good state.</i></p> <p>Many question why centres are <i>conveniently not fit for purpose since the pandemic</i>, amid concern that the council will use the pandemic as an excuse for cutting services, instead of fighting for the investment from government that our borough needs.</p> <p>Bringing leisure services inhouse is advocated by some, while others suggest incorporating commercial wellness provision to help fund running costs.</p> <p>Provision is flagged as being out of step with population growth, both across the borough and specifically in the Isle of Dogs.</p> <p>Affordable outdoor swimming options are recommended by many, with a dockside lido suggested to mitigate unauthorised and dangerous swimming each year. Although, <i>Lidos are not good for school swimming for various reasons and school swimming needs to be accommodated in pools.</i> Another respondent cautions against <i>an expensive lido that only middle aged middle class people use.</i></p>	
<p>Swimming provision</p> <p>Urgent pleas from many for swimming provision to resume in the Southwest: <i>Although St. Georges was in a poor state, it was better than nothing.</i> A high proportion agree that current swimming provision is <i>totally inadequate.</i></p> <p>Negative impact of St George's closure on school swimming lessons reiterated: <i>schools in the SW of the borough will face a difficult choice if St George's pool is not re-opened - either cease providing swimming lessons or face significant disruption to children's learning.</i></p> <p>Ethnic minorities more at risk of drowning according to World Health Organisation data referenced by one user, who also highlights the low proportion of black children and adults who do not swim, recommending collaboration with the <i>Black Swimming Association to increase the uptake of swimming by black and ethnic minority children</i>, supported by a LBTH strategy.</p>	48
<p>Impact on community and mental health</p> <p>Negative impact of loss of hockey pitch access repeatedly highlighted, including detriment to physical and mental health, as well as community cohesion.</p> <p>Since the closure of St George's there has been a definite decline in the area and community feeling.</p> <p>Opportunity to invest in St George's to develop a community hub to unite multi faith, mixed income communities.</p>	17
<p>Consultation methodology</p> <p>Community engagement criticised as lacking, with <i>timing of meetings and notice given ... minimal at times</i></p> <p>Consultation criticised as loaded ... with leading questions which strongly suggest that you are looking for a "rubber stamp" to justify decisions that have already been taken. Another respondent asserts <i>extreme bias against the refurbishment of St George's Pool within the survey.</i></p> <p>In person events criticised for lacking hard copies of the survey for people to fill out.</p> <p>Consultation documentation lacking information on usage of individual centres and trends over time.</p>	7
<p>Offer for young people</p> <p>High level sports offer lacking in the borough, with some mention of gymnastics provision which <i>used to be very good.</i></p> <p>Calls for more <i>child-friendly climbing facilities and creches</i>, with calls for children's activities to be better spread across centres.</p> <p>More leisure engagement with teenagers requested to improve mental health through physical activity, with combat sports suggested as effective way to engage older children.</p>	17
<p>Access to sports and clubs</p> <p>Negative impact on outdoor sports participation at John Orwell in event of potential redevelopment at this site, including disruption to hockey club league matches, volunteering programme, free provision for disadvantaged children and children's grassroots football club.</p> <p>Significant shortage of tennis courts highlighted driven by an <i>increased up-take in tennis during and following the pandemic.</i></p> <p>Calls for the council to restore the basketball facilities in Wapping Gardens and increase basketball opportunities across the borough.</p>	28

8. Analysis of other responses

Summary of comments received via email	Number of responses
<p>Summary of audio clips received Eight audio clips were sent to sports@towerhamlets.gov.uk, recorded by Caroline Morton on 4 December 2021 in Wapping. All those interviewed were discussing why they wanted St George’s Pool to remain open. Two responses received from children, aged 11 and 7.</p> <p>Majority in support of having a local facility that is easy to access, especially for those who are visually impaired, are reliant on public transport, or are too busy to spend lots of time going further afield.</p> <p>Several parents raised concerns about children learning to swim, and where schools would take children swimming</p> <p>Several respondents had a strong attachment and fond memories of the pool where they learned to swim</p>	8
<p>Email correspondence with James Thomas (Corporate Director Children and Culture Directorate)</p> <p>St George’s Steering Group Highlighted the <i>convenience</i> of savings made due to pool closure during lockdown and how this could be negatively perceived by the public, adding that <i>much-needed</i> maintenance work could have been undertaken during this period in line with government guidelines.</p> <p>Accused the council of <i>continual neglect</i> to maintain St George’s - as the conditions surveys of 2018 and 2019 testify – and queried why the professional advice in the reports was not followed by the council.</p> <p>Highlighted the need for the 30.4m pool to be maintained to preserve current provision and queried why refurbishment and reopening of this facility was not included in the public consultation.</p> <p>Underlined the need for a <i>like-for-like</i> refurbishment proposal with costings to enable a <i>transparent and fair consultation</i>.</p>	1
<p>Formal response from <i>Shadwell Responds</i></p> <p>Response provided analysis of a Google form survey conducted with Shadwell residents collecting 252 responses (copies have not been provided to council officers), supported by engagement with 6 local schools¹ to create artwork and engagement through conversations in Shadwell Responds’ 10 institutions².</p> <p>Preference for bolstering St George’s pool redevelopment and refurbishment options, describing consultation’s scope as <i>insufficient to capture local feeling</i> and <i>is difficult to complete</i>. Aim to provide economically viable solution to the lack of access to swimming pool provision during redevelopment works through provision of a temporary swimming pool in Shadwell.</p> <p>Emphasis on ensuring any new pool will help to <i>improve the ‘spaces in between’ the buildings</i> as part of a holistic vision to improve the area, including celebration of local heritage and by including community voice in redevelopment.</p> <p>Analysis of their survey revealed 89.3% wanted to see St George’s Leisure Centre refurbished, with rebuilding on the same site the next most popular option and many highlighted the negative impact on children’s swimming lessons. Many called for a temporary swimming pool in Shadwell and the</p>	1

¹ Bigland Green, Harry Gosling, English Martyrs, The Aldgate School, St Pauls, Whitechapel, St Mary’s and St Michael’s

² St George-in-the-East Church, Darul Ummah Mosque, E1 Community Gardeners, St Mary’s Cable Street, Roman Catholic Church of St Mary & St Michael, Oblates Retreat Centre, St Paul’s Shadwell Church, E1 Community Church, Centre for Theology and Community, St Paul’s School, Whitechapel

response suggests possible locations, as well as examples of providing a demountable temporary swimming pool, with costings.	
<p>Formal response from Wapping Hockey Club</p> <p>Although the response commends the Council's Sport Development Team and supports the Council's efforts to improve leisure facilities in the borough, concerns are raised that potential redevelopment at the John Orwell site will disrupt use of the pitch, participation and facilities by Wapping HC and prejudice delivery of inclusive opportunities and health outcomes. Namely:</p> <p>Disruption to youth training, bursaries scheme, ability to store equipment on site</p> <p>Loss of social / community benefits and local economic footfall</p> <p>Increase in costs</p> <p>Loss of car parking – especially impacting visiting teams and disabled users</p> <p>Opportunity for closer engagement with club as part of planning process to ensure pitch fit for purpose.</p>	1
<p>Summary of other emails received:</p> <p>Query regarding survey accessibility for people who are not online or not digitally confident, with request for print ready paper format</p> <p>Response sets out benefits of considering an all-weather, retractable-roof lido in Brussels Wharf funded by associated housing development as an alternative to existing pool proposals.</p> <p>Request to confirm that the full set of technical survey reports have been made available to allow proper consultation.</p> <p>Query on lack of maintenance work carried out at St Georges in response to survey recommendations and why pandemic lock down was not used to carry out repair work.</p> <p>Query on depth of pool being considered for the main pool at St Georges in event of redevelopment. Highlights Sport England minimum guidelines as not ideal for swimming clubs and <i>means waterpolo and syncho can't be practiced</i>. Highlights opportunity for the council to install a pool that <i>can be realistically used by swimming, waterpolo and syncho clubs to increase participation and performance in the borough</i>.</p> <p>14-year-old resident highlights limited women's sessions and inconvenient timetabling which have discouraged activity, especially for those with <i>religious and cultural preferences</i>.</p> <p>Communication with GLL team described as difficult, via website and phone, further hindered by a <i>confusing app</i>.</p>	5

Summary of verbal feedback received via virtual and in person meetings:	Number attending
<p>Mayor's Session (9 December 2021)</p> <p>Officers challenged on whether there has been due consideration given to a lido</p> <p>Negligence of St George's has caused decline in use – one attendee stated the centre has been <i>starved of money for decades</i>.</p> <p>Consultation accessibility criticised with background documents appearing online in an <i>ad-hoc</i> manner which appears <i>dishonest</i> and access to online survey difficult for users without access to the internet. Delay in providing access to paper copies also highlighted as a barrier to accessibility. Technical nature of feasibility study has also proved difficult for some to understand.</p> <p>St George's is an iconic building that should be saved. The addition of housing on the site rejected as the wrong course of action.</p> <p>Consultation process and manner that information is presented suggests decision is predetermined – <i>the survey does not bear any resemblance to what is being put forward</i>. The feasibility study for John Orwell gives the impression that the council's decision is predetermined, and consultation process is a formality.</p> <p>There are more available options than are being presented, but council lacks vision.</p> <p>Installation of a smaller, shallower 25m pool at St Georges would have a detrimental effect on range of activities able to be delivered.</p> <p>Not all users able to travel to the London Aquatics Centre in Stratford to dive whilst St George's closed.</p>	13

<p>Impact of increased travel time on schools for swimming lessons highlighted as an issue. Wapping Hockey Club raised concerns regarding disruption to the pitch at John Orwell as part of any development plans, potentially jeopardising regular tournaments, including provision for children and impacting a club of over 400 members.</p>	
<p>St George’s Town Hall session on 1st December (7 attendees) Has the Council already decided which option to proceed with? Was a decision already made to use the John Orwell site? Negligence of St George’s has caused decline in use – suggested that the Council had not invested in St George’s, which caused the decline in use. Current pool length and ambience is ‘iconic’ – the existing building should be refurbished because St George’s offers a bigger pool and the pool hall receives extensive natural light. John Orwell site has high levels of ground contamination so would be expensive to build on. Housing should not be built on the St George’s site as so close to the Highway.</p>	
<p>Mile End Leisure Centre session on 4th December (25 attendees) Comments received about the management of Mile End Leisure Centre, access to the running track via the Leisure Centre in particular. Was it planned to invest in York Hall? Would Mile End Leisure Centre receive investment too, or was the consultation about the south-west?</p>	

9. Petition and online support

An e-petition has been collecting signatures at [Petition · For all options to be investigated to fully refurbish and update St George's Pools · Change.org](#). It had been signed by 3048 people at 12:46pm, 17 January 2022. The petition and open letter from the Turks Head Charity and St George's Pool Steering was discussed at the full council meeting dated 17 November 2021 following a special motion brought by Cllr Rabina Khan but was not debated fully.

A web page entitled [saveourpool.co.uk](#) sets out a *community campaign to reopen St Georges swimming pool*, which provides links to the above mentioned Change.org petition and the online council survey.

10. Background papers

Available via LTTH [Leisure Consultation](#) page:

- Consultation Document
- Feasibility study & summary
- Physical Activity and Sports Strategy (PASS)

11. Responses to online survey questions in numbers

No.	Question	Answered	Skipped	Don't know	Disagree strongly	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Some what agree	Strongly agree
Q1	How are you responding	316	0						
Q2	You are responding as a representative of an education setting, sports/leisure club, voluntary and community sector (CVS) or other. Please provide any additional detail about your interest in this consultation	35	281						
Q3	What is the name of your school, club or organisation	35	281						
Q4	Is your response a formal response on behalf of your school, club or organisation	35	281						
Q5	You are responding as a resident. Please tell us the postal code from your address in Tower Hamlets.	282	34						
<i>Strategic vision questions: Agree/disagree</i>									
Q6	We set out our ambition for leisure services to be sustainable & accessible to every resident & visitor and contribute to local health, wellbeing and the economy	316	0	7	9	16	16	59	209
Q7	The future vision for Tower Hamlets leisure facilities	316	0	1	10	7	18	99	181
Q8a	A network of leisure centre facilities within 20 minutes by public transport from where you live	316	0	2	15	19	19	70	191
Q8b	All facilities, where possible, to support a healthy lifestyle targeted at a range of ages, abilities, individuals and groups	316	0	3	2	4	10	59	238
Q8c	Leisure centres should be affordable and attractive to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active	316	0	1	3	3	10	65	234
Q8d	If a centre is not used enough, is in a bad condition and/or it is losing money, we should consider closing it	316	0	9	122	61	37	57	30

Q8e	Community groups, sports clubs and volunteers should be supported to use open spaces, playing fields, community centres, schools, and colleges to bring leisure opportunities to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active	316	0	2	1	7	21	82	203
Q8f	The Council should consider funding new services or facilities, such as a new leisure centre, if affordable	316	0	4	6	13	31	68	194
Q9a	The council should plan for significant investment in our leisure centres	316	0	2	3	2	12	53	244
Q9b	The current range of leisure centres I the borough meet my needs	316	0	2	90	80	26	68	50
Q10	Do you have any comments on our leisure centres, in general, or any individual centre?	261	55						
Q11	Which of these leisure centres did you mostly use before the pandemic, use now, or are you are planning to use in the next 12 months?	316	0						
Q12	Preferred consultation option (<i>See table on page 9 for further detail</i>)	316	0						
Q13	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing the existing St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future?	106	210						
Q14	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre on the site of St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future?	70	247						
Q15	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing and extending John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future?	30	286						
Q16	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre with a swimming pool on	12	304						

	the site of John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future?								
Q17	Do you have any comments on the borough's leisure services?	232	84						