

By email only:
tranformkingston@kingston.gov.uk

Re Response to Consultation for plans for a replacement leisure centre on the site of The Kingfisher Leisure Centre

1. OVERALL COMMENT

- a. All the so-called consultations on a new development on the site of the existing Kingfisher Leisure Centre are disingenuous and misleading as they are undermined by the apparent *lack of any formal resolution by Kingston Council to demolish The Kingfisher Leisure Centre*. In the absence of any such resolution – and any public consultation in advance of such resolution – any marketing exercise to “re-imagine” facilities at a possible replacement centre have no proper foundation.
- b. No cost comparison has ever been presented to show the financial implications of repairing and reopening The Kingfisher Leisure Centre with the predicted costs of building a new centre on the site.
- c. No comparison of the environmental benefits and harm of the alternatives of i. reopening and running The Kingfisher or ii. demolishing the Kingfisher and rebuilding a much larger centre on the site have been presented.
- d. No comprehensive feedback from previous “consultations” has been shown to residents and it is impossible to know if the council’s conclusions from the feedback are evidenced and justified.
- e. The council appears to be ploughing on with plans to build on the site of The Kingfisher – and by default demolish The Kingfisher - despite still facing the need to address the grounds laid out by **Leigh Day solicitors**¹ in their letter dated 26 October 2021 for a possible legal challenge.
- f. It appears that the Council’s plans for the demolition of The Kingfisher Leisure Centre and the building of a huge new building on the site are inextricably linked to the provision of large-scale high-rise housing on the adjacent Cattle Market site. It appears likely that the scale, density, massing and height of such development will be dependent on the final costs of building the replacement leisure centre. It is highly questionable to market a new leisure centre and possible facilities within such a centre as though it is a stand alone project if the shape, form and density of other development is in any way linked to the costs of provision of such leisure facilities
- g. The lack of information and transparency regarding any financial dependency between these two projects and other development projects such as the sale of The Guildhall and redevelopment of Guildhall 1 and 2 also highlights the disingenuous nature of a consultation which detracts from core details about massive interlinked projects that will overly-densify and urbanise Kingston and cause huge harm to people and the environment and tries to

¹ https://f0895c4f-8046-4005-a284-ab80f919ab55.filesusr.com/ugd/8451a6_352aed0a8e614bfc8c43871e6aca4aa5.pdf

focus people's attention on what kind of facilities people want to see in a new leisure centre and whether it should be linked to the adjacent Museum etc.

2. SPECIFIC COMMENTS

- a. Assertions made in the consultation are not evidence based or substantiated with facts in any way. The questions are closed, leading, banal and/ or meaningless. Answering the questions would be pandering to a preconceived agenda of the council
- b. There is no assessment of the environmental impact of building such a huge development on this site. For example, football pitches on the roof will cause massive light and noise pollution across the area but no assessment of this impact or questions about it are asked?
- c. There are no questions on what we want a leisure centre in a conservation area in the heart of historic Kingston to look like or information given and questions asked about what will happen around the new leisure centre and elsewhere to facilitate its development
- d. There is no assessment of whether there will be a loss of any facilities currently provided by The Kingfisher Leisure Centre
- e. Implications on the Hogsmill chalk stream of the council's planned use of water from the stream to heat and power a new leisure centre, mass development on The Cattle Market as well as development across Kingston Town is not mentioned, and our opinion on this critical matter is not sought
- f. We are not asked if we – as local taxpayers - would prefer for a small amount of money to be spent so The Kingfisher can be reopened or many tens of millions of pounds spent on a new centre that adds little or nothing to current facilities, is dependent on mass development happening all around and will create a huge financial obligation on the council and local taxpayers and expose us to even greater financial risk
- g. I believe that The Kingfisher Leisure Centre should not be demolished and that whatever money is needed to refurbish and reopen The Kingfisher is spent as a priority so that the centre can be re-opened
- h. The mass development being dumped on Kingston and of which an unnecessary new leisure centre is key is highly speculative and environmentally harmful and gives rise to significant financial and commercial risks over which the Council will have no control.
- i. The financial and commercial risks to which this mass development plan gives rise will expose local residents to even higher council tax bills, further cuts in services and a soaring local population competing for goods and services and packed in to what will be from 2022 a reduced peak hour service from Kingston and Norbiton in to London Waterloo.

1. You told us previously that making the new leisure centre fun and family friendly was important to you. That's why we have included facilities like the toddler pool, teaching pool with its opportunities for water play, a clip-and-climb and climbing wall, an improved outdoor playground, and soft play.

Do you agree that this is a good range of facilities for families to enjoy?



Would you bring your family to the new facility?

2. We are also keen to provide outstanding facilities for competitive swimmers and sportspeople. That's why we have included a 25m pool suitable for short course competitions and other water sports, a modern gym, sports courts suitable for a range of sports like badminton and basketball, a rooftop football pitch, and squash courts.

Do you agree that this is a good range of sports facilities?



3. We are committed to better connecting the new leisure centre and our historic Museum and Library to the town centre by re-orienting the leisure building to face the town centre and creating a new walking route through the site and past the Museum and Library into Fairfield Recreation Ground. We have also strengthened the connection between our new leisure facility and the historic buildings.

a. Do you think our plans are an improvement on the existing site layout?

Yes No

b. Do you think you will be more likely to use our Museum and Library as a result of these changes?

Yes No

4. We are aware that the Kingfisher Leisure Centre had limitations in terms of accessibility and that's why making the new leisure facility accessible for everyone is a key priority. That's why we have included features like pool pods and hoists, hearing loops, step-free access, and more. Do you think our plans accomplish this goal? (0-100 with 0 being strongly disagree and 100 strongly agree)

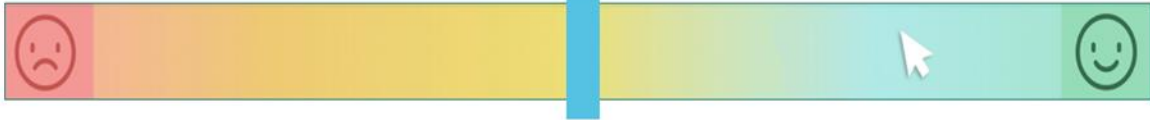


a. Are there any other accessibility features that you would like to see here?

b. Would you be interested in sharing your experience of living with a disability or caring for someone living with a disability to help us to design the most accessible building possible? If so, please write in your email address or phone number here and we will reach out to you.

5. We are conscious that the old Kingfisher was not sustainable and have put sustainability at the heart of our plans (through features like solar/PV panels, all-electric energy supply, rainwater harvesting, recycling existing materials where possible etc).

Do you think our plans accomplish this goal?



a. If not, what more should we do to ensure the building is as sustainable as possible?

6. Do you have any other comments?

Submit



From Councillor Jon Tolley | Kingston-Upon-Thames
To transformkingston@kingston.gov.uk
Date Today 10:35

hi

I'm a councillor in Kingston and have made my views well known about this, but don't think i've submitted to the official consultation, so here goes.

it's hard to undertake the response without putting it into context.

the context is that the Kingfisher is a PART of Transform Kingston and not the entirety of it. I'm disappointed that we rushed ahead with this idea without knowing the costs of it (both financial and otherwise) and what will need to be sold / not delivered to achieve that cost. I think making a choice to deprive people of a town centre pool for over 5 years is unforgivable. I'm disappointed that decisions were made without informing ward councillors and i'm very embarrassed that administration councillors and local MPs sold this to voters as being the "best leisure centre in London" which it clearly won't be. i'm also really sad that people have been dishonest with the timeframe for this project. If it wasn't a lie it was incredibly naive. not sure which is worse.

the consultation is daft. asking questions which more or less say "the old one wasn't good, the new one will be good - do you agree that good is better than not good" is obviously going to lead to a positive outcome on the survey results. but we didn't ask if a £40m+ was what people wanted, if closed for 5 years+ was okay, if south of the borough should have a pool... early papers say that the Kingfisher site and Cattle Market are to be treated as one, and then elsewhere we're told they're not.

i couldn't tell you if the plans are good value for money. and i doubt many respondents could either. the site / pool itself looks great. it bloody well should do at that price. if i bought a brand new ferrari it would be loads better than my nissan note. whether or not i could justify selling my home in order to pay for it, well i think you know the answer to that

so yeh. knock yourself out on this. the pool / leisure centre will be great. i hope it moves quick.

i just plead for honesty over spin from this point - with costs, with timeline, with decisions and consequences of those choices

Thanks
Cllr Jon Tolley | Kingston-Upon-Thames
@JonTolleyTweets