

Deepings Swimming Club Response to SKDC Local Plan Consultation

To:

South Kesteven District Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write on behalf of Deepings Swimming Club to commend SKDC's commitment to meeting housing need in The Deepings, but to express our disappointment that the draft Local Plan does not allocate space or funding for a new Leisure Centre, including an eight-lane, 25 m pool to serve this rapidly growing community.

Evidence of Community Need

As the local plan is founded on an evidence-based need, we would like it recording that the members of Deepings Swimming Club like to see an inclusion of a new Leisure Centre, including an eight-lane, 25 m pool included in the updated document

Collectively, SKPR-36, SKPR-37, SKPR-307, SKPR-55 and SKPR-330, will add well over 1,800 new homes in The Deepings alone within this plan period would significantly increasing demand for sports, recreation and school swimming access.

- **Schools:** Within our immediate catchment there are five primary schools and one secondary school already struggling to secure pool time to deliver the statutory KS2 requirement that all pupils can swim 25 m unaided by age 11.
- **Healthcare:** Peterborough City Hospital (12 mi north) and Stamford & Bourne hospitals (7 miles south and east respectively), whose staff and patients would benefit from on-site rehabilitation and wellness programmes.
- **Defence Community:** RAF Wittering (11 miles) and other MOD establishments offer structured fitness requirements—modern aquatic facilities would support personnel and dependants.

Without a local pool, school sports leaders are forced to travel up to 20 miles round-trip, incurring additional cost, complex resourcing and increased carbon footprint.

Leveraging Section 106 Contributions

[Sport England's Facility Costs 3Q 2024 guidance](#) demonstrates that, with prudent design and procurement, an eight-lane 25 m pool and supporting leisure spaces can be delivered for approximately £8 - £15 million capital cost.

The earmarked housing development should generate substantial Section 106 funding which could fully fund an affordable sports centre with community 25m pool without additional Council borrowing:

Swimming is a unique sport

It is the **only sport you can die from not learning** (to quote Your Potential International Swimming Academy). It is not merely a recreational activity, but a **lifesaving life skill** with profound public health, education, and community benefits. A replacement pool and leisure centre would deliver value far beyond fitness — it would be an investment in **safety, health, and quality of life** for all residents.

- **Lifesaving Skill:** Swimming is the only sport from which lack of competence can be fatal. With rivers, fen drains and gravel pits on our doorstep, coastal-style drowning risk is a public safety concern, not a leisure optionality.
- **Public safety infrastructure:** With rivers, lakes, fen drains, and gravel pits, South Kesteven residents face water risks every day. Teaching swimming is therefore part of community

safety, not optional sport provision. We believe it's vitally important that every child in this area is given the opportunity to learn how to save their life if they fell into water and found themselves in difficult, and more importantly learn to swim. We want children in this area to feel confident in the water from a very young age.

- **National curriculum requirement:** Schools are obliged to ensure pupils can swim 25 m by age 11, but this is impossible without accessible local facilities. Stamford and Bourne Leisure Pools are not suitable to teach swimmers to jump or dive into water. Teaching a child how to move safely to the waters edge, if they fall in is not something teachers can safely do in our current aging facilities.

Wider Benefits

- **Child development:** Swimming enhances motor skills, coordination, confidence, and resilience in children.
- **Health, Rehabilitation and Inclusivity:** Pools offer low-impact cardiovascular exercise, aid recovery for orthopaedic and neurological conditions, and contribute to mental wellbeing. They are uniquely accessible to disabled residents.
- **Educational & Social Impact:** Pools provide safe spaces for families, older adults, and diverse groups, Local access allows schools to fulfil statutory swim targets, fosters social cohesion across age groups, and supports community volunteering and coaching pathways.
- **Economic & Carbon Benefits:** A modern leisure centre would create over 100 permanent jobs, drive footfall into The Deepings and can be certified to Passivhaus standards to reduce operating costs by up to 60 percent, safeguarding it against volatile energy prices.

It is also worth noting that the nearby facilities in Stamford and Bourne are ageing and require increasing maintenance. As we saw with Deepings Leisure Centre, once a pool is forced to close, it is extremely difficult to replace. A thriving, growing family area such as ours cannot afford to be without accessible swimming and leisure facilities.

Swim England, in 2021, warned that without investment almost 2,000 pools could be lost by the end of the decade, yet evidence shows the huge value modern facilities bring.

In conclusion, we urge SKDC to update the Local Plan to include a commitment to a new indoor leisure facility for the Deepings and to explore how sufficient S106 contributions can be secured to fund its delivery.

By incorporating an eight-lane, 25 m pool and leisure hub into the Local Plan, SKDC can transform The Deepings into a model of inclusive growth, delivering health, safety, social and economic benefits far beyond the immediate housing need.

Thank you for your consideration. Deepings Swimming Club and its members stand ready to support SKDC and its partners through project development, fundraising and community engagement.

Yours faithfully,

Deepings Swimming Club Committee

Further Information

1. SKDC is advised that the guidance or advice given in the Swim England [25 m Pool Design Guidelines](#) is not inclusive and any decisions on swimming pool design should first be discussed with a member of the Swim England's Facilities Team. Contact details: facilities@swimming.org or telephone: 01509 618700.

2. [Sport England; Affordable Sports Centre guidance](#) is relevant to the early briefing and design stages and is intended to give a better understanding of the inter-relationships between design, capital cost, operating budgets and procurement. It is intended to supplement the current information on the Sport England web site and be an essential reference for new projects.
3. With reference to Swim England's report dated [Decade of Decline: The future of Swimming Pools in England](#) published in October 2021, highlights the fears of Swim England on what could happen without vital investment in facilities.

Below is extracts from the report, which proves that great collaboration, listening to the community and investing in Leisure Centres with pool facilities, have lasting effects on the community and the environment. **Let SKDC be part of a good news story by incorporating an eight-lane, 25 m pool and leisure hub into the Local Development Plan.**

St Sidwell's Point

St Sidwell's Point pool, in Exeter, will become the first swimming pool in the UK to meet the 'Passivhaus' energy efficiency standard when it opens shortly.

It is expected to save the local council £200,000 each year in energy costs alone, meaning it would take fewer than 10 years to pay back the increased construction costs.

Advances in technology, such as microfiltration, enables the pool operator to waste less water and use fewer chemicals, resulting in further savings in heating and enhancing the swimming experience.

Spelthorne Leisure Centre

Spelthorne Leisure Centre is a cutting-edge, exemplar community hub, located in the centre of Staines-upon-Thames.

The scheme will be one of the first certified Passivhaus wet and dry sport and leisure facilities in the UK, contributing towards the borough's zero-carbon objectives, and using the principles of inclusive design to ensure long-lasting community value.

The state-of-the-art leisure centre includes an eight lane, 25m pool, four lane 20m teaching pool (with a moving floor) and splash pad.

The overall design has been optimised to meet the strict targets set by the Passivhaus Institute, which will reduce operational energy usage by around 80 per cent. Additionally, careful material selection informed by building biology principles, ensures a comfortable and healthy indoor environment for all end-users and staff.

The multi-zoned, complex nature of the project demonstrates the industry's capability to reduce carbon and energy demand across complex sport and leisure facilities and is leading the way for a new wave of sustainable sport and leisure facilities in the UK.

The Passivhaus certified design methodology created for Spelthorne Leisure Centre will result in energy savings of 50 to 60 per cent compared to standard facilities, with an addition water saving of between 40 and 50 per cent.

Sandwell Leisure Trust

Sandwell Leisure Trust's nine facilities have helped to deliver £16.5 million of social value back to the local community.

The social value report measures and benchmarks the contribution services make on improved health, improved subjective wellbeing, increased educational attainment and reduced crime – and is a key measure of how charitable and leisure operators contribute back to their local areas.

Meanwhile, the charity's Reach Project, funded by the National Lottery's Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF), sought to increase the confidence and self-esteem of some 120 individuals by

re-introducing them into Sandwell Leisure Trust centres and back towards a healthy and active lifestyle.

Nearly 90 per cent said it had a positive impact on their mental health, 89 per cent were motivated to improve their activity levels, 74 per cent felt it has improved their sleep and 68 per cent their general eating habits.

Ash Ria, Sandwell Leisure Trust CEO, said: "We have managed to navigate one of the worst crises to hit the leisure industry in our lifetime, whilst maintaining national award winning and safe services.

"Some others have unfortunately not re-opened, handed services back and made large redundancies, but we want our positive example to give hope to other operators.

"Ours is a confident but cautious approach and we're encouraged to see an enthusiastic return by our customers, even though it may take some time to get attendances back to pre-Covid levels again.

"The signs are certainly promising and we are actively recruiting again – with, for example, over 60 applicants applying for a part-time receptionist post."

Parkwood Leisure

Parkwood Leisure has reached a record number of children enrolled on its Learn to Swim Programme – exceeding the number of registrations before the pandemic.

The total number of children signed up to swimming lessons is now 105 per cent of March 2020 figures – and since indoor pools reopened in April 2021, sites have also received more than 3,250 swimming lesson enquiries.

Parkwood Leisure runs 44 swimming pools across England and Wales.

Suzanne Gabb, Head of Aquatics at Parkwood Leisure, said: "This is a huge milestone in our recovery from the pandemic, and testament to the quality of our swimming programme, as well as the dedication of our many swim teachers and managers.

"Being able to swim remains an essential life skill for anyone, and helping children get back into the water and learn to swim safely is incredibly important to us."