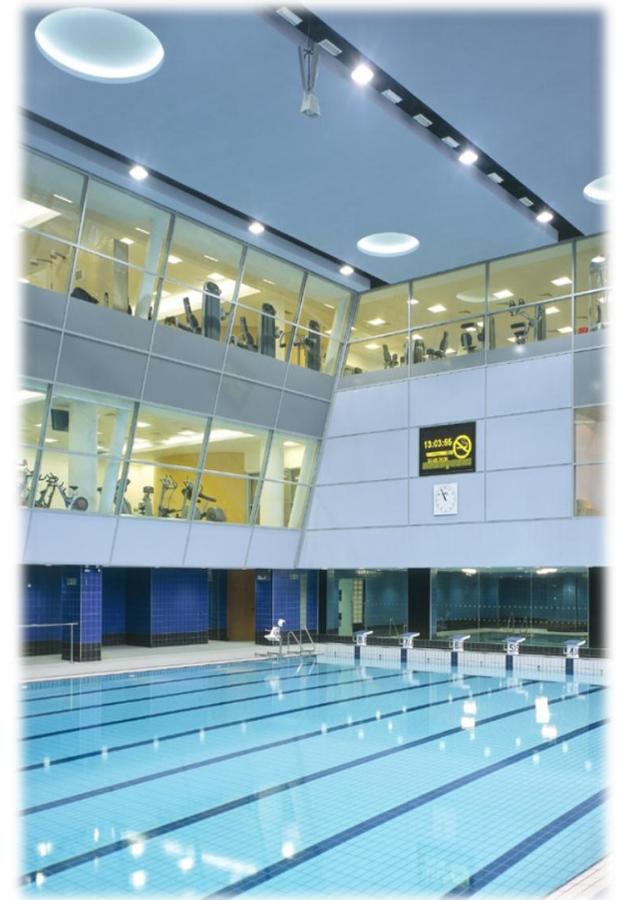


Rother District Council

Bexhill Leisure Centre Project

Scoping Study

Services Directorate
June 2013



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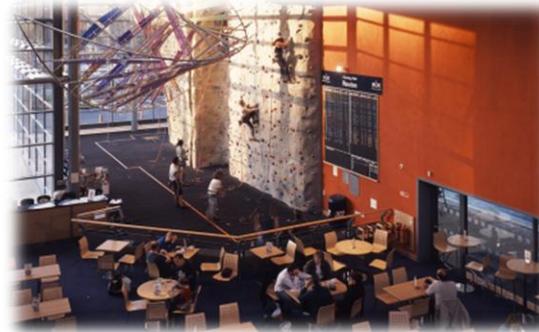
Introduction

Bexhill Leisure and Community Facilities Project is an executive priority in Rother District Council's Corporate Plan 2006 to 2016 under the aim of 'Building Stronger and Safer Communities'.

The purpose of this Study is to provide a preliminary consideration of options, prior to further feasibility work, for the provision of a new combined Leisure Facility in Bexhill. This is in accordance with our Corporate Plan, our Local Plan Site Allocation, our emerging Core Strategy and other corporate strategies. It is also in response to the newly strengthened development opportunities of the former Bexhill High School site as a result of the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road, and the recently agreed land swap between Rother District Council (RDC) and East Sussex County Council (ESCC).

"...sport is critical to building the happy and healthy communities that local councils want to see" Sport England 2012

Right, images from top showing high quality leisure provision: K2 Crawley Glass Fronted entrance with climbing wall and café area, Horsham Pavilions in the Park, (Faulkner Brown Architects), Xcel Leisure Centre. Copyright S&P architects



The Aspiration

The Council's aspiration, reflected in the Corporate Plan, is to respond positively to the challenge of meeting active lifestyles, increasing participation in a wide range of sporting and leisure activities, and delivering the highest quality of facilities as part of an overall strategy for the regeneration of the town.



Photos courtesy of Sport England & Freedom Leisure

The Project

Options will be presented within this study referring to the current Bexhill Leisure Centre site, to look at broad site-planning opportunities in advance of more detailed site master-planning, and specifically with a view to consolidating our two existing leisure facilities in the town, namely Bexhill Leisure Pool and Bexhill Leisure Centre, to a single site facility so as to improve the leisure offer for the town and district.

Existing facilities in the town are already operating at full capacity, while significant growth is planned for Bexhill including 1300 new homes in north-east Bexhill, dramatically increasing demand for such facilities. The current Bexhill Leisure Centre site is well located to meet such demand and support the economic growth and vitality of Bexhill and the wider district.

Furthermore, the existing Leisure Centre site occupies a highly prominent gateway location in the town, and has the potential to provide for a high profile leisure destination with sporting facilities and supporting leisure amenities.

Meanwhile there are still opportunities for leisure facilities to benefit from the legacy of London 2012, not just in increased participation but also with funding opportunities. As part of this legacy, Sport England's Iconic Facilities Fund has been set up to invest £30m of National Lottery Funding into innovative, large-scale multi-sport facility projects.

The potential to capitalise on a range of current opportunities means that now is a highly opportune time to consider significant improvement to leisure facilities in Bexhill.

The Site

The relocation of Bexhill High School to Gunters Lane in 2010 has provided development opportunities at Bexhill Down on the north side of the A259. This site currently incorporates King Offa Primary School, Bexhill High School's Vocational Skills Centre, Bexhill Leisure Centre, Skate Park and the Ministry of Defence's Drill Hall.

The Down site is allocated in Rother Local Plan (2006) policy BX9 (inset map included at Appendix 1). Since allocation, part of the site has been developed with the Skills Centre and an extension of the primary school to include a nursery.

Ownerships

ESCC currently own most of the site with the exception of the Drill Hall which is owned by the Ministry of Defence, Bexhill Leisure Centre and car park which is owned by RDC.

Without prejudice to the outcomes of consideration of this study, RDC and ESCC agreed in April to a land-swap agreement whereby RDC would acquire the balance of the High School site in exchange for the land required by ESCC for the Link Road (RDC minute CB12/111 8.2 refers).

Discussions are on-going between Council officers and the Ministry of Defence and their agencies with regard to the future of the Drill Hall.

Context

With the imminent construction of the Link Road, the physical and visual context of the site will change dramatically. The housing on London Road has been demolished, to be replaced by the landscape strip adjacent to the Link Road.

Meanwhile the site is bordered to the north by residential development, and to the east by the open land and playing fields of the Bexhill Down.

Current site ownerships and broad context are indicated on figures 1 & 2 on the next page.

Opportunities & Constraints

In accordance with Local Plan policy, this site offers development potential for a mix of uses:

- Improved leisure facilities
- Residential development
- Commercial – hotel/leisure restaurant

An indicative potential site layout is provided at Appendix 2 to this study.

Site Master-planning

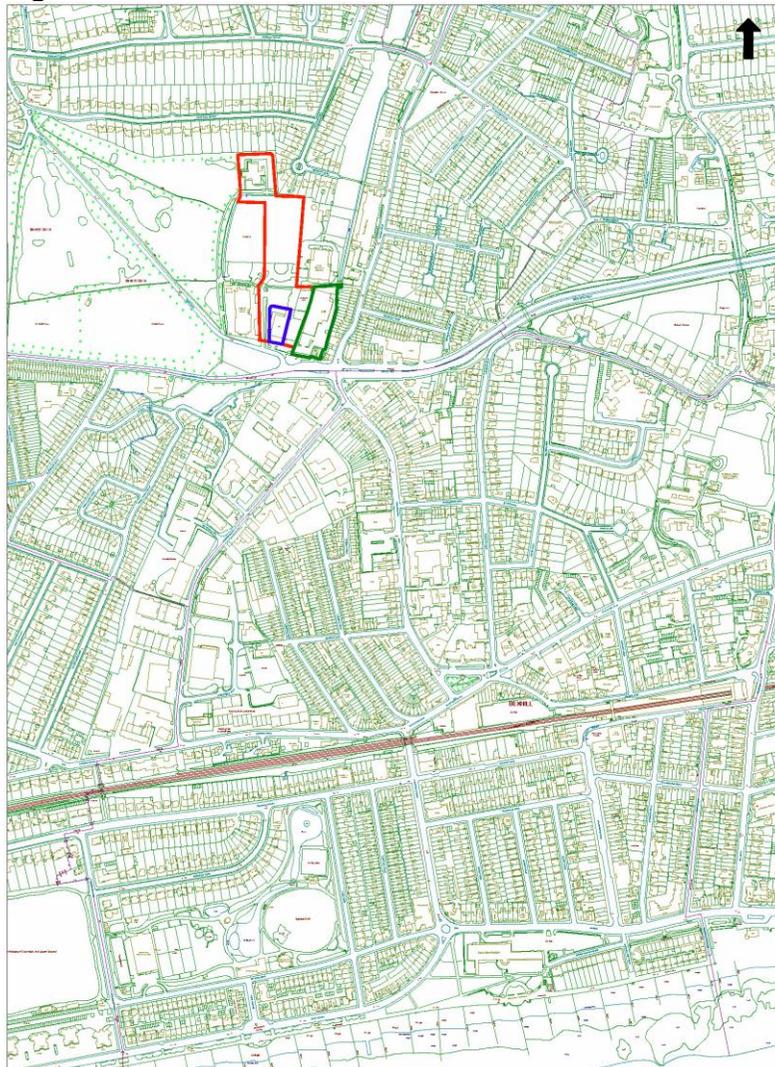
A key objective for new development here will also be to significantly improve the appearance of this prominent site. In order to consider the optimum uses of the site, in relation to leisure facilities provision, commercial opportunities and access circulation, a master-planning exercise will need to be carried out.

The master-plan will need to establish design principles for the site, highlighting the prominent public frontage to the site on its eastern, southern and western faces. It will also need to consider access and circulation principles for vehicles and pedestrians, public realm, relationship to surrounding built form, and will also need to assess development capacity and viability. In particular, the treatment of the site as a whole space with shared public realm is paramount, rather than the existing highly segregated, fenced arrangement.



Left: photos showing the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road being progressed and the vacant land between the leisure centre and Drill Hall.

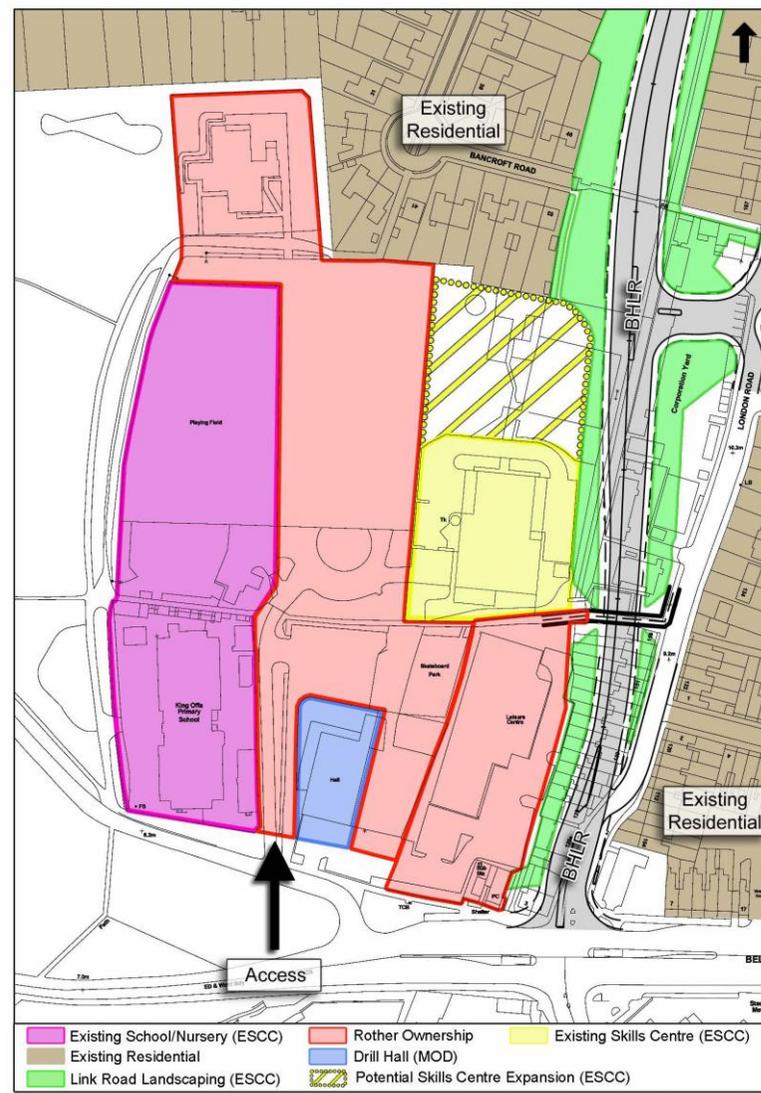
Fig 1: Location Plan of The Down Site, Bexhill



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Map Ref: TQ7307

Fig 2: Site Context Map



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The Case for a New Leisure Facility – Strategic & Policy Context

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

The DCMS states that sport can improve people's health as well as enriching their lives. Investing in facilities and encouraging participation in grassroots sport among adults as well as children will produce wide-ranging benefits.

The London 2012 bid was centered on a desire to use the power of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to inspire more young people into sport, and the DCMS Sports and Healthy Living Legacy presents that from grassroots to elite level, London 2012 has laid foundations that will inspire a generation and help transform people's relationship with sport, whatever their age, background or ability.

Sport England

Sport England, accountable to the DCMS, is the government agency tasked with helping communities across the country create a sporting habit for life, and overseeing central government and National Lottery investment into a range of strategic programmes and building initiatives.

Sport England is investing £30m over the next three years into innovative, large-scale, multi-sport facilities projects. They will deliver against local authority and National Governing Body facility priorities, whilst also demonstrating long-term financial viability. The 'Iconic Facilities' fund is part of the £155m "Places People Play" initiative which will deliver the 2012 legacy of increased sports participation by bringing the magic of a home Games into the heart of local communities by transforming the places where people play sport, in cities, towns and villages across the country. Bexhill could have an opportunity to benefit from this funding programme.

Corporate Plan 2011 to 2016

As previously highlighted, Bexhill Leisure Centre remains an executive priority on RDC's long term Corporate Plan 2011 to 2016 'Building Stronger and Safer Communities' improving Bexhill Leisure and Community Facilities.

Rother District Local Plan

The Rother District Local Plan (2006) contains a site specific policy (Policy BX9) relating to the High School and Drill Hall at the Down site. Inset map 1b at Appendix 1 details the area in which Policy BX9 relates. Anticipating the relocation of the High School, the main thrust of the policy seeks a mixed use development on the site comprising offices, community buildings and housing, with the layout to be the subject of a planning brief.

The supporting text recognises that the Link Road will place the site at a principal junction in the town and provide a gateway to the town centre and that there is also the opportunity to considerably improve the appearance of this prominent site. It also states that redevelopment provides the opportunity to improve the provision of leisure and other community facilities for Bexhill, focussed on the Leisure Centre, as well as a balance of employment and housing.

Rother Core Strategy (2011-2028) submission draft

The Rother Core Strategy contains a number of policies which relate specifically to the strategy for Bexhill and the provision of leisure facilities across the District.

Whilst these policies are yet to be formally adopted by the Council, they have been through Examination in Public (EiP) in November 2012. The Inspector's Report is likely to be received in autumn 2013, with formal adoption after this.

Of particular relevance are:

- Policy BX1 (ii) *Overall Strategy for Bexhill*, seeks to develop local amenities and improved sports and leisure facilities, including a new leisure/swimming centre:
- Policy BX2 *Bexhill Town Centre* which seeks to promote a co-ordinated town centre initiative to improve its use for shopping, services and leisure, and to provide for hotel accommodation, and facilitate leisure, office and residential development.
- Policy CO3: *Improving Sports and Recreation Provision*, which only permits loss of existing sports facilities where this results in improved provision as part of a redevelopment and which seeks to allocate land and permit proposals for the improvement of existing or provision of new facilities. This policy also states that localities where deficits in facilities are identified; and which looks to require, from development, financial contributions towards improvements to existing open space, sport and recreation provision to ensure adopted standards (quantity, access and quality) are maintained within the locality.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is a planning policy document which identifies the infrastructure needed to support development proposed by the Core Strategy. Within the IDP, Bexhill Sport Leisure Development is highlighted (in accordance with Policy CO3) as important to the Core Strategy for delivery of a 'centralised provision of a new sporting amenity for Bexhill.' The IDP states that the facility would address a shortfall in the town for additional swimming provision and a multi-sport centre on a single site, with reference to the future housing growth in Bexhill.

Bexhill Town Centre Strategy

The Council recently consulted on the draft Bexhill Town Centre Strategy, which sets out a comprehensive approach to planning the

future of Bexhill-on-Sea, and includes as a key area of development the potential opportunity for an enlarged leisure centre, expanding the existing facility.

RDC Economic Regeneration Strategy

Whilst not addressing leisure provision directly, the provision of high quality leisure facilities would undoubtedly contribute to the aims of the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy, in particular:

1.5 – Support the Visitor Economy

1.6 – Improve the Vitality of our Town Centres

2.4 – Help Improve the Vitality of our most Deprived Areas

3.1 – Promote a Positive Image for the Area

RDC Youth Strategy

An improved leisure facility would also help meet core targets within the RDC Youth Strategy, namely to 'continue to invest in sport and leisure development opportunities for young people, promoting an active lifestyle for all' and to 'review the arrangements with leisure providers to improve the facilities available to young people where possible'.

Culture & Leisure Strategy

The existing Local Strategic Partnership Culture & Leisure Strategy is in the process of being reviewed; an investigation into the feasibility of consolidating a range of improved sports facilities at Bexhill Leisure Centre was a key component of the Action Plan, and will remain a high priority within the new emerging Culture & Leisure Strategy 2013 – 2018.

Hastings & Rother Leisure Facilities Strategy (2009 – 2020)

The strategy highlights the uneconomical nature of having leisure facilities on two sites and how this leads to increased capital and revenue costs for the Council. There are clearly opportunities to consolidate provision and to seek to create a sustainable hub of activity with reduced revenue costs. The Strategy suggests that any replacement facilities could also provide an opportunity to

accommodate some of the additional facilities recommended for Bexhill within the strategy, including:

- increased swimming pool space
- increased health & fitness facilities
- a multi-use games area (although the town does now have 2 such areas, at Bexhill High School and Bexhill College)
- a skate park.

The Case for a New Leisure Facility – Local Evidence Base

Demographic Context

According to the recent Sport England Active People Survey 6, Rother currently has one of the lowest participation rates for sport and one of the lowest participation rates of residents doing three lots of 30 minutes of exercise per week in the UK¹.

Part of this is due to the demographic and geographical nature of the area as statistically over 70's are less likely to take part in sport three times a week. Working with Active Rother partners, measures have been put in place to promote physical activity and sport and RDC Leisure Centres are important to enable this to happen successfully. Six of the seven wards in the immediate vicinity of the Leisure Centre site have high or very high levels of household poverty in comparison to the national average. Sidley and Central wards are the most deprived in the Rother district.

Active and Healthy Communities

Rother District Council has successfully managed the development of the Active Rother programme since 2008, and has successfully further developed this work, in collaboration with partners on the

¹ http://www.sportengland.org/research/active_people_survey/active_people_survey_6.aspx
http://www.sportengland.org/research/active_people_survey/national_indicator_8.aspx

Local Strategic Partnership, in order to produce a clear strategic framework and action plan titled “Active Communities: More People, More Active, More Often”² to provide and promote opportunities for our residents to be physically active.

The framework sets out the ambition to focus on increasing participation in physical activity in order to contribute to improving health and well-being and reducing health inequalities within Rother. There is a clear link between low participation in low physical activity and issues such as low income, availability of and access to physical activity opportunities. The strategy identifies priority groups (older people, women, young girls, people with disabilities and people from black and ethnic minorities) and priority areas (including Bexhill and Sidley) as being key areas for action if the ambition is to be achieved.

A new (or re-developed) Leisure Centre can make a significant contribution towards achieving the aspirations of the Active Communities programme. Improving facilities, making them more user friendly, providing a different mix of activities and better targeting of participants are all ways of increasing resident's use of leisure centres. The Centre should aim to provide opportunities for residents that will enhance community capacity to engage in physical activity, as well as working in partnership with other organisations such as the NHS and the Voluntary Sector to put on joint initiatives such as Exercise Referral Schemes, hosting sports clubs activities and providing a space for community groups to meet and run non-sporting activities such as dance or becoming a starting point for walking and cycling programmes. In this way, the Centre can become an iconic and welcoming facility at the heart of the local community.

Regional Context

Active Sussex, the government funded County Sports Partnership, have compiled data to illustrate the top sports in which our Sussex communities participate in comparison to regional and national

² [Rother LSP Active Communities Strategy.pdf](#)

statistics (see table below). As of December 2012, within the Southeast and Sussex in particular, swimming and gym activities have the highest participation rate, with swimming highlighted as higher than the national average.

However, the figures for Rother are slightly lower, possibly reflecting the quality and availability of facilities in this respect. Cycling also has a very high participation rate within the southeast, with participation in Rother being higher than the regional and national averages.

Top Sports Sport	Rother	Sussex	South East	England
Swimming	11.4%	12.1%	12.2%	11.6%
Gym	7.6%	10.4%	10.3%	10.7%
Cycling	11.2%	8.3%	10.8%	9.3%
Athletics	6.2%	7.2%	6.9%	6.5%
Football	4.2%	5.3%	6.4%	7.4% ³

Within the region there are some high quality leisure centres, including the Xcel Leisure Centre in Surrey, K2 in Crawley, Pavilions in the Park at Horsham and The Triangle at Burgess Hill (see photos on page 1 & 13). These centres provide good examples of best practice in inspiring more people to participate in sport and leisure activities.

³ [Active Sussex - Sussex snapshot](#)

Bexhill Regeneration

Over the last 10 years this Council has been keen to lead, invest in, and work with a variety of funding partners to deliver a range of regeneration projects, not just in economic infrastructure but also in social and cultural infrastructure, in a drive to raise the bar for Bexhill to be valued as a highly desirable place in which to live, work and visit.

A landmark leisure facility would sit alongside the Town Centre Strategy, and would complement our recent successful cultural, leisure and business regeneration initiatives within Bexhill, including:

- **De La Warr Pavilion** - a £10m Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund funded refurbishment of the Grade I listed, modernist architectural icon and re-launch of this important arts venue, which has been hugely successful in placing Bexhill on the cultural map, with a gallery staging exhibitions of international reputation.
- **Next Wave** - a multi-million pound project for the regeneration of Bexhill's prime seafront to create a more attractive offer, including redeveloping the Colonnade building. The project's outstanding design quality has won a number of national accolades.
- **Elva Business Centre** – a former goods yard, redeveloped by the Council to provide flexible, affordable space for small and start-up businesses.
- **Egerton Park** – joint RDC and INTERREG funded project to greatly enhance the park's amenity offer for residents and visitors.
- **Bexhill Museum** - a £1.9m extension and upgrade.

Alongside this is the context of the planned growth of North-East Bexhill, with around 1300 new homes and 48,000 sqm of business floor space being brought forward in association with the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road.

Current Provision

A full breakdown of the main leisure provision within Rother is given in Appendix 4. Current public Leisure Centre Provision in Bexhill consists of two separate sites; the existing Bexhill Leisure Pool at Ravenside, and Bexhill Leisure Centre at Bexhill Down. However, both are restricted in the range and quality of facilities they provide to current users, while their capacity and ability to attract and cater for future users is limited.

Management Fees and Service Charges

To review any cost savings RDC could make, the current full costs to RDC including management fees and service charges for both Bexhill Leisure pool and Bexhill Leisure Centre are presented below, as well as Rye Sports Centre.

Rother District Council owns the freehold to the Leisure Centre site, while Land Securities own the freehold to Ravenside Retail and Leisure Park, which houses the Leisure Pool. This Council's lease for the pool contains a mutual option to break at the 35th and 70th year of the lease and the next scheduled break being in June 2024 subject to 12 months' notice.

Management Fee

Freedom Leisure currently bill RDC monthly for all 3 centres on one bill. The annual management fees (exc. VAT) for 2013/14 are:

- Bexhill Leisure Pool £117,747.36
- Bexhill Leisure Centre £ 60,657.72
- Rye Sports Centre £178,404.84

The annual figure is adjusted by the RPIx each year.

Current Service Charge Details – Ravenside

Land Securities operate Ravenside, and invoice RDC a quarterly service charge for Unit 9 (Bexhill Leisure Pool) as a proportion of the annual cost of maintaining the common areas of the retail park. RDC then recharge this sum to Freedom Leisure once a year, in arrears. The annual sum for the 2012/13 financial year was £21,030.24 (exc. VAT).

Bexhill Leisure Pool (BLP)

Built in 1991 on Ravenside Retail Park, the facility provides for lane swimming, wave and leisure (including a flume) recreation together with a gym. This is a popular and busy pool, attracting on average 10,000 participants monthly, offering a varied programme. Current membership is predominantly from Bexhill but also Hastings & St Leonards, Guestling, Three Oaks, Battle, Robertsbridge, Frant and Hailsham.



Photo above: building and frontage – uninspiring and in need of improvement



BLP showing popular pool use (Freedom Leisure copyright)

The Leisure Pool is well used but the operators point to a lack of spare capacity to add additional sessions or classes. It is also starting to show its age, whereas with newer up to date facilities it would become more user friendly to groups such as mothers or the disabled. If the pool were to remain careful consideration would need to be given to the retention of “fun” elements such as the flume and wave machine. Whilst these do add to the pool’s popularity these elements do limit its sports development potential. In particular:-

- **Limited times for fitness & lane swimming** - especially at peak times, weekends and evenings. Not possible to have a lane out at all times.
- **The main pool is limited** - in terms of having to be used for all activities from parent and toddler to water aerobics and children’s lessons. There is no learner pool or separate pool for sessions.
- **Pool design** - whilst it can be used for competitive swimming and is used by Bexhill Swimming Club it is not the preferred design being in an “L” shape and very difficult to officiate at or for spectators.

On the dry sports side the gym has been improved but remains underutilised and is not accessible for disabled members, which would need to be addressed if the pool is to be retained in the longer term. Meanwhile the health suite is limited, especially with the sunbeds now removed. Currently the changing facilities in the health suite are basic compared to other sites.

The leisure pool does run at capacity at weekends and during school holidays.



Bexhill Leisure Pool: Photos above showing changing area in need of improvement; Main desk and small shop and small gym not accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Bexhill Leisure Centre

Built in 1990, the facility is centrally located for access by Bexhill residents, in a prominent position off the A259 and will be from the new link road. From data received this is a popular leisure centre, attracting on average 15,000 participants monthly, offering a varied programme of activities catering for all sectors of our communities.

The centre currently houses a multi-use sports hall, a gym, gym extra (weights room) a dance studio, a spin studio, 3 squash courts, and various ancillary facilities including health suite, soft play area and crèche.

Bexhill Leisure Centre:

uninspiring front of the building as seen off the A259



Photos below; Sports hall in use; part of the popular gym area which would benefit from a larger facility in response to demand; sprung dance hall provision and spin cycle equipment located in former bar area.



Though it serves a useful purpose, and is utilised for many sports, the Leisure Centre is limited in terms of the facilities provided and the range of activities and sports that can take place concurrently.

The centre has been adapted to meet trends over time, especially with upgrades to the fitness areas and studios. The gym is currently the busiest part of the centre throughout the day and at peak times. The increased revenue flow generated by offering different activities is important whilst balancing this against providing a balanced sports development programme. The new spin bike area is an example where the former bar area has been converted to a studio.

The operators, Freedom Leisure, have developed a varied and popular programme of activities in response to specific local demand. The centre has additionally played host to disability events and health related sessions, be they GP referral or specialist sessions, for example for stroke patients.

Freedom Leisure advise that at the leisure centre the gym is at capacity always between 6pm - 8pm, Monday to Thursday and can also reach capacity on a Friday between 5-7pm. The situation is more difficult from January to March where they can peak at up to 100 people in the gym (including gym xtra) and this is currently a 70 station gym (including stretch areas). Squash is also increasing during peak times, 6.15-8.30pm and is at capacity Monday to Thursdays, as is the Main Hall, Monday to Thursdays, 5-10pm. Jumbos soft play party hire is always fully booked every weekend.



However, a number of areas do now appear tired and out-dated. The health suite is not comparable in quality to those in commercial venues, and the ancillary facilities and changing facilities are basic.



Photos above: changing rooms, health suite

The entrance lobby and reception (as seen below) are under-utilised spaces and unable to capitalise on revenue-generating opportunities, such as a cafe or a sports accessories shop for example.



Furthermore the building and its immediate site and car-park are not of inspiring design, and do not add to the attractiveness of the centre. The main entrance is largely hidden on approach.

The Centre's outdated design will become more apparent on completion of the link road, which will raise the visual prominence of the existing building significantly.



Entrance to Bexhill Leisure Centre



Car Park area



Rear of the building



Skate park adjacent to the leisure centre

Left, Bexhill Leisure Centre: Entrance Lobby in need of improvement,

New Facility Options

In order to best meet Corporate Plan priorities, Core Strategy planning objectives, and other regenerative and cultural strategies referred to earlier in this study, and to ensure an adequate response to the prominence and profile of the site, officers consider that a single site facility is the strongest option to pursue.

There are two primary options for creating a one-site leisure facility on the Down site:

- A wholly new build, landmark iconic building with excellent facilities, to replace the existing Bexhill Leisure Centre and Bexhill Leisure Pool.
- An extension to the existing Bexhill Leisure Centre to accommodate lane and leisure pools and remodelled frontage, reception area and main gym.

Detailed feasibility work will be required to ascertain the costs, level of commercial interest, planning implications, and facility offer achievable within the site constraints for each of these options, before they can be considered and assessed.

Ultimately such a facility could provide a unique sport and leisure offer to the region, in the spirit of the legacy of the 2012 Games, inspiring and benefiting our communities and clubs locally but also offering a wider regional draw.

Leisure Destination

A one site facility has the potential to develop a real leisure destination, including a core sports centre with indoor games courts, swimming and leisure pools, and young play areas, outdoor sports facilities including climbing walls, skate and bmx parks, and MUGA, and other commercial leisure offers such as ten-pin bowling, restaurants, and a hotel.

Such increased facilities would create opportunities to reach more of the Rother Active Community target groups, and get a wider range of participants into the leisure centre.

Leisure Centre

An alternative model would focus on simply the one-centre sports facility, without other commercial leisure infrastructure. In this scenario, it is envisaged residential development would share the site and provide some of the necessary cross funding.

This option would nevertheless provide for the similarly increased sporting facilities, including the swimming and leisure pools, to increase participation in a range of activities, potentially for example including space for indoor skateboarding, dance studio, dojo martial arts area, 5-a-side football, indoor tennis and roller hockey.

An important draw in either option will be the need to design venues and spaces to sports competition standards, including spectator areas and facilities.



Design & Facilities

Leisure facilities that could potentially be provided in a new facility, subject to further feasibility work regarding demand, site capacity and cost, could be a mix of:

- 25m 6 lane swimming pool with viewing area
- Learner pool
- Leisure waters
- Multi-use Sports/Activity Hall to include 4 courts and associated dry change
- Storage within Multi-Use Hall for seating/stage/screen as well as sports equipment
- Additional 2 court sports hall (to provide area for the youth groups who currently use the drill hall)
- Squash courts with viewing area
- Fitness Gym
- Studio rooms (sprung dance/martial arts flooring)
- Treatment/sports analysis rooms (incorporating fitness testing, performance analysis equipment)
- Climbing wall (feature location)
- Health suite (sauna, steam room, spa pool, shower area and relaxation area)
- Ten Pin Bowling alley
- Outdoor skate/bmx park
- Ancillary facilities:
 - Feature Reception space
 - Soft Play area and Crèche
 - Area to cater for children's parties
 - Meeting rooms
 - Sports retail offer
 - Café and social area (feature foyer location, bar option as part of café, club area)

Inclusive Design

Prior to and during the design stage for any new or refurbished facility, reference should be made to Sport England Design Guides,⁴ including *Accessible Sports Facility Design Guide 2010* and *Accessible Sports Facilities Audit Checklist 2012*.

Inclusive design should be seen as a continuous process including:

- The initial concept, the design brief or master-plan, through to the detailed design
- The Planning and Building Control approval processes
- The construction
- The operation, programming and management of the facility.

Brief Development

Key to the success of a new facility will be robust community engagement, including with local sports groups and the existing operators, to ascertain the range of activities and facilities they wish to see and to target service provision and promotion. Similarly the Council would need to consider whether or not to specialise in any areas which could bring in a National Governing Body partner.

Specialist leisure centre architects and consultants should be best placed to carry out not only the spatial site master-planning work but also a detailed consultation programme informing a detailed design brief, and initial sketch proposals as part of a feasibility study.

Gateway Site

The design strategy will be expected to capitalise on the site's 'gateway' location, paying particular regard to the highly visible 'frontages' to the site, from the A259 and from the Link Road.

⁴ [Sport England - Design and cost guidance](#)



Leisure Centre Options Summary

Option	Description	Benefits	Drawbacks
Maintain status quo	Continue as existing, and retender contracts in 2016.	<p>Could potentially retender at zero operating cost, which would remove future revenue costs for the running and operation of the centres.</p> <p>Revenue savings up to £350,000 (based on current management fee payable to Freedom Leisure).</p> <p>(Money saved could be invested into a new Leisure Centre for Bexhill, should that option also be pursued).</p>	<p>Would not achieve the aspiration of a single site leisure provision and the benefits listed to the left.</p> <p>Without significant capital investment, there is a long term consequence that the leisure centre will eventually fall into disrepair and become unusable. Also elements of the Leisure Pool do not meet DDA requirements for disabled access.</p> <p>The prominence of the existing Leisure Centre in relation to the newly created southern Link-Road junction is not recognised in this option, and this prime site on entrance to Bexhill is left as an eyesore.</p>
Refurbish Leisure Centre	<p>An enhancement through modernisation of the existing Bexhill Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Bexhill Leisure Pool would be left alone until 2024, when the lease offers a mutual option to break, subject to certain conditions. However there is no automatic requirement for Land Securities to rebuild, this only applies if they choose to exercise the option to break themselves. Even then, they are only required to rebuild somewhere at Ravenside, otherwise it's an equivalent cash contribution. If RDC exercises the break option Land Securities are not required to pay RDC anything.</p>	<p>Lower capital cost – could be funded in part by leisure centre operators under a new contract.</p>	<p>Would not achieve the aspiration of a single site leisure provision and the benefits listed above.</p> <p>Development would need to be phased so as to minimise disruption to, and loss of, existing leisure centre facilities.</p> <p>Limited external funding opportunities for an unambitious scheme.</p> <p>Would not address issues of existing capacity or meet additional demand from planned Bexhill housing growth, and would not serve regeneration objectives.</p> <p>Would enable limited improvements to facilities.</p>

Create a new single site facility on this landmark location	New Build <p>A new building could offer an iconic destination with excellent facilities, to replace the existing Bexhill Leisure Centre and Bexhill Leisure Pool.</p> <p>The minimum offer would aim to house all leisure provision under one roof with a new wet and dry sports facility. This study also presents options for a larger leisure complex, a central hub of quality provision, to include swimming pools (lane and leisure) and Leisure Centre with broader cultural provision to offer an attractive family leisure complex.</p> <p>The leisure provision should maximise the benefit of being located in a prominent position off the A259 and new link road.</p>	<p>Either of these two options, subject to further feasibility work, would offer quality leisure provision to meet both regenerative and capacity objectives, catering for the town's existing and future residents, including the substantial Bexhill housing growth as well as attracting additional visitors from Bexhill and further afield.</p> <p>It could help maximise the development opportunity of the Down Site, in conjunction with other commercial or residential development, with the potential to create a new leisure destination.</p> <p>It could release the existing Ravenside site for alternative development.</p> <p>There are likely operational efficiencies in operating a one-site facility.</p> <p>Lower capital cost likely.</p>	<p>High capital cost.</p> <p>Part of the site is in third party ownership.</p> <p>Dependent on feasibility study to assess site capacity.</p> <p>Longer timescale.</p> <p>Depending on site location, may involve temporary loss of leisure facility during construction phase.</p> <p>Development risks, e.g. cost overrun due to unforeseen circumstances (land contamination, infrastructure costs etc.)</p>
	Extension to existing leisure centre <p>This option could still house all leisure provision under one roof with a new wet and dry sports facility.</p> <p>The facility could still maximise the benefit of being located in a prominent position off the A259 and new link road.</p>	<p>Development risks, e.g. cost overrun due to unforeseen circumstances (land contamination, infrastructure costs etc.)</p>	
Close both the Leisure Centre & Leisure Pool	<p>Do not retender in 2016.</p>	<p>Makes both existing sites available for a private leisure developer/operator.</p> <p>Revenue saving.</p> <p>Capital receipts from selling leisure centre site.</p>	<p>Both sites are popular, with Freedom Leisure designing programmes in response to local need. A commercial operator may not meet the health and sport needs of our communities.</p> <p>The consequence of closing both sites could impact significantly on the health and wellbeing of our communities and customers could be lost to outside the district.</p> <p>The lack of quality public leisure provision would have a negative effect on Bexhill's appeal as a place to live and work.</p>

Funding

The funding requirements will clearly depend on the Council's preferred option for leisure provision in the future. Initial comparisons with other recent leisure centre developments suggest that an innovative and inclusive complex could potentially be delivered for between £8 to £15m. The capital costs need to be considered against the potential for revenue gain.

The funding for a new one-site sports facility is anticipated to be delivered from a variety of sources, depending on the redevelopment option pursued, including:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) / Section 106 contributions
- Section 106 contribution from Ravenside
- Cross-subsidy from development on the remainder of the High School site (subject to viability)
- Sport England Grant Funding

Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Contribution

The Community Infrastructure Levy is intended to complement Section 106 Contributions from 2015. This scheme raises cash per dwelling; the RDC Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) identifies allocation by priority, and classes the new Bexhill Leisure Centre as a corporate high priority. It is anticipated that the North East Bexhill Development could provide a contribution in this respect. Further work will be undertaken to define exact contributions for which the Leisure Centre project could essentially bid.

In the meantime, there may be potential to allocate Section 106 contributions from other Bexhill developments towards the new leisure facility.

CIL and Section 106 monies that could be allocated to a new leisure centre could be in the region of £750,000 over the next 5 years.

Section 106 contribution - Ravenside

The release of the ten pin bowling facility at Ravenside for retail development has secured financial contributions now at the Council's disposal for improvements to leisure facilities in Bexhill, which may include Bexhill Leisure Centre.

Additionally, if there was a further value attached to an early surrender of the lease at the Leisure Pool site at Ravenside, along with value to be released through alternative development of the plot, subject to planning, there may be an additional financial case to vacate this site to deliver the one-site facility.

Cross-subsidy from development on the remainder of the High School site

As previously described, a site master-planning exercise would need to determine the optimum uses of the High School site in both planning and commercial terms and to investigate further commercial development suited to this visually prominent and key site on the entrance to Bexhill, potentially including hotel provision, and residential accommodation. This will establish the likely level of any cross-subsidy that could be released to support a leisure centre scheme. There will be a value attached to additional uses on the site and the feasibility study will help determine what these values are.

Any assessment of viability will of course need to take into account the overage terms agreed with ESCC as part of the land-swap agreement.

Sport England Grant Funding

Sport England provides a range of facilities and planning services that are designed to develop strategic planning for sports facilities across England.

In particular, their Iconic Facilities Fund has been set up to invest £30m of National Lottery Funding into innovative, large-scale multi-sport facility projects.

It will be key to liaise with these funders as early as possible to support the design and application stages if we are to take advantage of their next Iconic Facilities Grant Round, anticipated to be announced later in 2013.

In the current grants round, applicants can apply for grants of between **£500,000 to £3,000,000**. Iconic Facilities will prioritise funding to projects that provide:

- *Strategic facilities in England for at least two National Governing Bodies of Sport*
- *Large scale capital developments delivering key priorities identified in local authority sports facility plans*
- *A regionally significant facility for two sports or more supported by the National Governing Bodies of Sport (at least one facility of regional significance for two sports will be supported in this round of funding)*
- *Multi-sport facilities, but with a focus on sporting activities that will drive high participant numbers*
- *A mix of facility provision to encourage regular & sustained use by a large number of people*
- *Indoor and/or outdoor facilities*
- *An enhancement, through modernisation, to existing provision and/or new build*
- *Confidence in their ability to deliver with detailed designs and planning permission secured*

- *A strong project team, led ideally by a local authority (providing capital funding)*
- *A long-term sustainable business plan attracting public and private investment*
- *Quality in design, but are fit for purpose to serve the community need*
- *Operating models, which may include an emphasis on community ownership (e.g. social enterprises, trusts).*

However, it should be noted that in round 2 of the Iconic Facilities Fund 28 applications were received requesting £40m in grants from Sport England - only 6 projects received support.

Priority will be given to applications that support delivery of local commitments/priorities and will provide a good return on Sport England's investment and ultimately that will lead to a best practice facility model that can be replicated elsewhere in England.

Further funding options will be investigated following the outcome of Scrutiny in June 2013

Reducing RDC costs at the Leisure sites

As presented, dependant on agreement from operators, there could be an option to reduce RDC's leisure centre management costs to zero at Rye Leisure Centre, Bexhill Leisure Centre and Bexhill Leisure Pool, releasing just under £350,000 of funds that could be reinvested into a new leisure facility.

Conclusion

This Scoping Study presents an overview of the potential to create a new Leisure Centre Complex as a landmark iconic building within Bexhill, to fulfil community, regeneration and planning objectives, responding to community need and adding vitality to the town and wider district, attracting further visitors, business, employment and investment.

The project is a priority within our Corporate Plan, and the study has expanded the policy and strategic context within which such a project sits, along with the local evidence base, and an overview of current facilities.

Current development in the area with regard to the construction of the Link Road, along with the Council's recent acquisition of much of the site, have set the context for a holistic consideration of the potential for the site, and has highlighted the opportunity to create a high quality leisure offer for Bexhill.

The anticipated next steps in the development of this project are listed to the right.

Next Steps

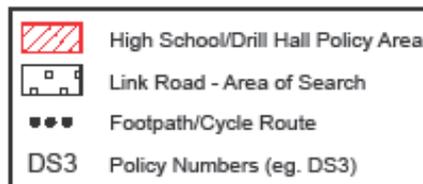
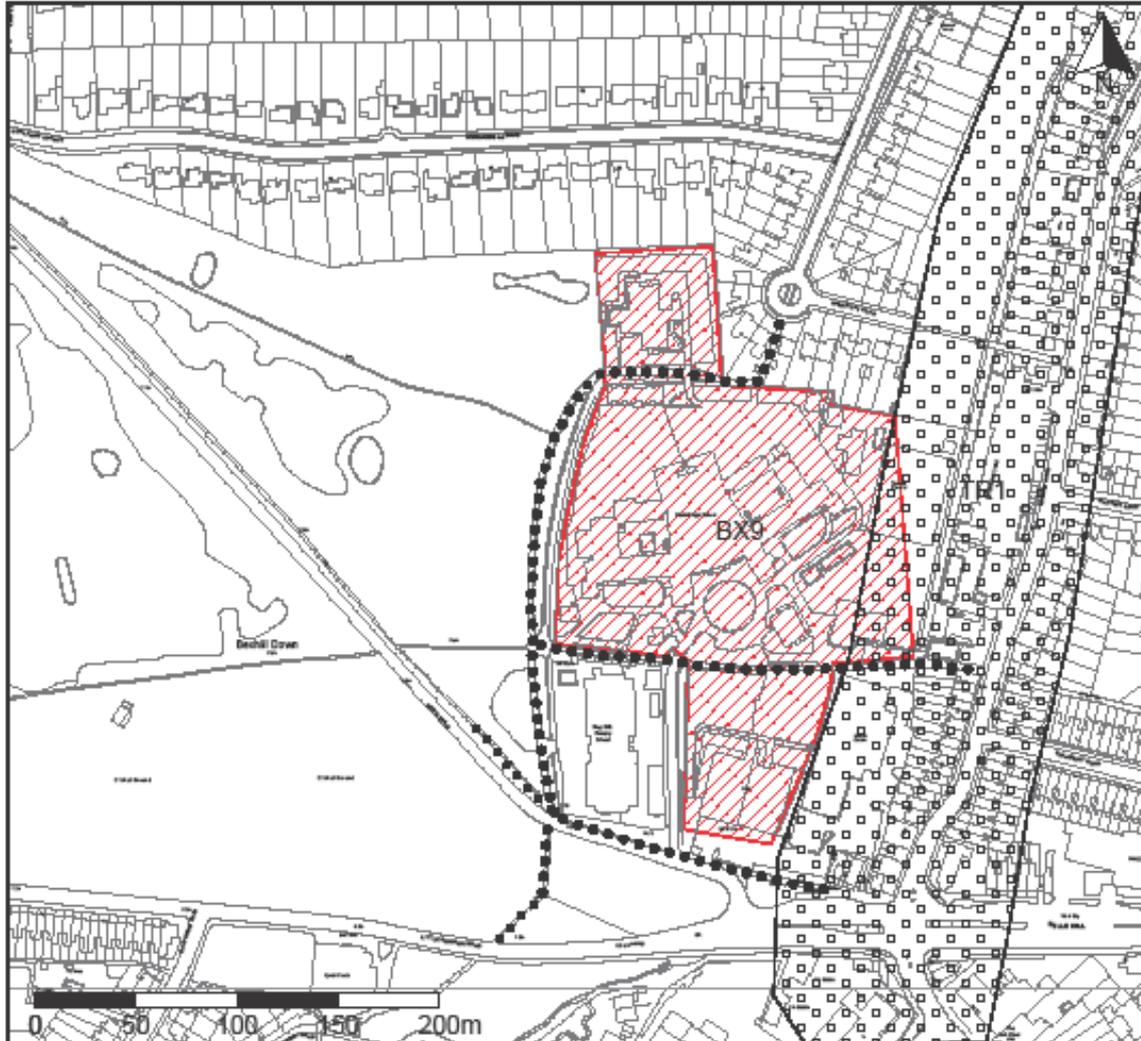
Subject to Members' decision on this project, the next steps are envisaged as follows:

- Development of a Project Plan.
- Investigation and advice into commercial opportunities including vacation of Ravenside, potential hotel/restaurant operators and residential developers.
- Commissioning of a Leisure Centre Feasibility Study, including for example:
 - Site master-planning work to establish development options and layout principles
 - Options evaluation on the type and extent of facilities to be provided (potentially including Community Consultation to include further research into unmet demand – who might use the centre if there were different facilities – and detailed consultation with Sport England and Freedom Leisure)
 - Sketch scheme preparation (need specialist and experienced leisure centre architects)
 - Budget costings for new build/extension options
 - Evaluation of Funding options and potential income projections
 - Outline timescale for project development, detailed design, consultations, planning permission, procurement and construction.
- Further Cabinet consideration of the Feasibility Study.
- Bid preparation and submission to Sport England Iconic Facilities grant (stages and dates will be presented once the new round has been confirmed later in 2013).

Appendix 1

ROTHER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN - Adopted July 2006

HIGH SCHOOL & DRILL HALLS, BEXHILL, Inset Map No.1b

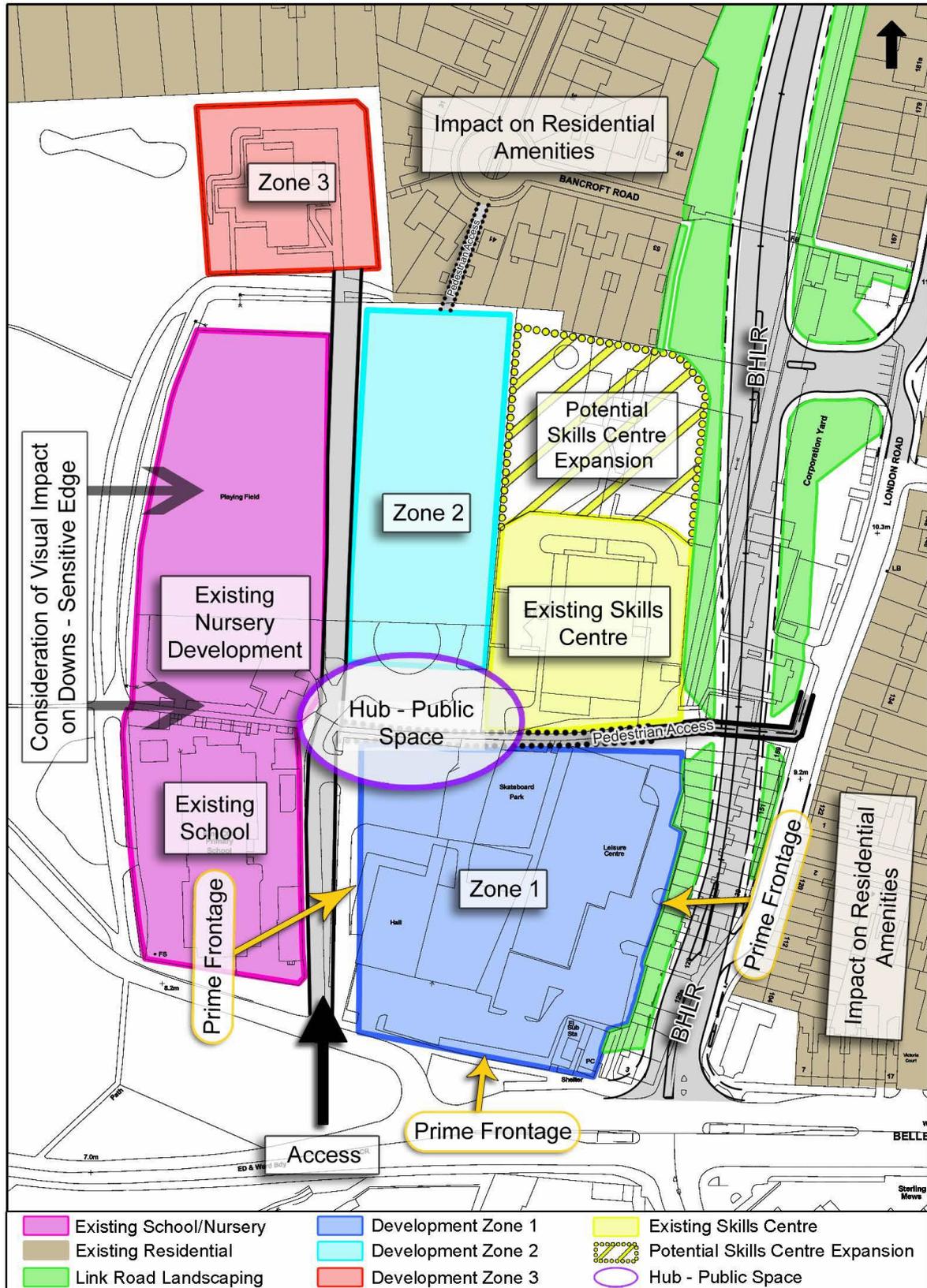


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Map Reference TQ7308SE

Scale 1:3,000

Appendix 2 - Option site layout diagram



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Appendix 3 - Snapshot wet & dry usage from April 2012 – March 2013 for Bexhill Leisure Pool and Bexhill Leisure Centre

Description	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Adult Pool	4,357	4,452	4,627	4,741	6,040	4392	4173	3420	1643	3282	3925	3740
Child Pool	4,622	2,970	3,924	4,123	6,414	3178	2944	2405	1083	2181	3311	2581
Courses Wet	162	302	220	213	80	251	325	221	78	208	165	180
Pool Exercise Class	154	246	211	224	261	195	180	150	56	147	173	131
Block Bookings – Pool	250	110	125	200	155	365	350	370	160	290	360	368
Over 60's	570	655	638	728	672	657	753	634	266	606	582	576
<i>Sub Total Wet</i>	<i>10,115</i>	<i>8,735</i>	<i>9,745</i>	<i>10,229</i>	<i>13,622</i>	<i>9038</i>	<i>8726</i>	<i>7200</i>	<i>3286</i>	<i>6708</i>	<i>8516</i>	<i>7576</i>
Gym	9,577	9,642	10,008	9,637	9,523	9520	8808	9169	9796	9981	9384	10101
GP Referral	162	171	157	147	175	142	228	149	69	84	251	86
PT	11	38	26	8	16	22	7	6	16	8	14	36
Studio	1,530	1,835	1,452	1,611	1,527	2020	2296	2275	1057	2306	2128	2244
Squash	497	498	409	439	415	327	447	470	371	514	517	475
Main Hall	1,492	1,526	1,171	1,205	1,353	1484	1933	1805	1339	1927	2164	1758
Children's Activities	262	150	186	299	329	151	188	215	155	344	215	264
Soft Play	1,103	972	688	1,203	1,060	1014	1263	838	660	1718	1034	1179
Function Room	509	246	617	371	273	218	463	185	218	441	458	238
<i>Sub Total Dry</i>	<i>15,143</i>	<i>15,077</i>	<i>14,714</i>	<i>14,920</i>	<i>14,671</i>	<i>14,898</i>	<i>15,633</i>	<i>15,112</i>	<i>13,681</i>	<i>17,323</i>	<i>16,165</i>	<i>16,387</i>
Total all usage	25,258	23,812	24,459	25,149	28,293	23,936	24,359	22,312	16,967	24,031	24,681	23,963

denotes member usage

Appendix 4 – Schedule of Sports Facilities in Rother

Facility Sports Centres	Address	Provision
Battle Area Sports Centre	North Trade Road, Battle. TN33 0HT	Fitness Gym, Sports Hall, Climbing Wall, 3G Artificial Pitch, Dance Studio, Grass Pitches, Netball Courts, Orienteering Course and Tennis Courts
Bexhill Leisure Centre	Downs Road, Bexhill. TN39 4HS	Large gym with cardio vascular and resistance equipment, exercise studio, sports hall for badminton, 5-a-side football, 3 squash courts, café, health suite, soft play centre, stretch area, conference / function facilities, licensed bar, crèche
Bexhill Leisure Pool	Ravenside Retail Park, Bexhill. TN40 2JS	Pool with flume and wave machine, small gym, sauna, café and shop.
Rye Sports Centre	The Grove, Rye. TN31 7ND	25m pool, Gym with cardio vascular and resistance equipment, exercise studio offering a small programme of classes, sports hall for badminton, five aside football, squash court

Facility School/Colleges	Address	Provision
Pretious Northiam Sports Hall	Main Street, Northiam. TN31 6NB	Sports Hall uses: Badminton, Short tennis, Football, Netball, Basketball, Table tennis, Gymnastics, Volleyball, Street and Zumba Dance, Keep fit and aerobics, Excel fitness class
Bexhill College Sports Hall	Penland Road, Bexhill. TN40 2JG	Astro Turf Pitch, Sports Hall, Dance Studio, Climbing Wall
Bexhill High School	Gunters Lane, Bexhill. TN39 4HT	Sports Hall, floodlit all weather pitches, grass pitches, full changing room facilities
Robertsbridge Community College	Knelle Road, Robertsbridge. TN32 5EA	At planning stage: new Sports Hall

Facility Main Gyms – Private provision	Address	Provision
Curves	Sackville Road, Bexhill. TN39 3JD	A Gym offering a complete cardio and strength training programme for women
Physiques Gym	Little Common Road, Bexhill. TN39 4HU	Hard-core gym that specialises in body builders.