

## **Forest Hill Pools – latest news**

**The second meeting of the Forest Hill Pools Stakeholder Group chaired by Cllr Chris Best took place on May 15<sup>th</sup>. The following notes were taken by Penelope Jarrett of the Forest Hill Society.**

### **1 Hilary Renwick (lead officer) presentation**

The Council website has recently been remodelled to make it easier to follow the story. All relevant documents should be available at this link, which is continuously updated:

**<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/SportAndLeisure/NewDevelopments/ForestHillPools/>**

The stakeholder group will not be the only people consulted. There is also an email group of interested people, and public exhibitions are planned.

### **2 David Booth (senior project manager) presentation**

The Council has identified £7.5 million from its own internal budgets for the project. This does not rely on government nor any other grants for building. The project will include housing. They have asked HLM (architects) to look at 3 different scenarios: high, medium and low density housing, with the intention of raising about £2 million. Housing would not be built until the Pools building is finished - unless a high density option were agreed in which case it would be likely to intimately involve the leisure facility building, which would mean it would have to be built at the same time. Construction inflation is about 6% p.a., so the longer the delay in building the less will be got for the sum available. They intend that it be a Council-led project, and so it differs from other Private Finance Initiative projects (PFIs) where they have had commercial partners (e.g. FH school). It is planned that the leisure centre will contain a 25m x 6 lane pool, a learner pool, dry leisure activities, green space and other community facilities.

### **Initial Design and Feasibility**

- (i) Decommisioning – done
- (ii) The nursery in Louise House will probably vacate in August
- (iii) The historical surveyor has visited this week, and his report will be shown to stakeholders and other consultees. They are happy for him to meet with local historian Steve Grindlay, and agree that objects of no national importance may be of local importance. They have some idea of where they might store salvaged material. Report expected within 4 weeks of the visit.
- (iv) Plan to demolish in August. Apparently it is costing £100,000 p.a. in security and power to keep the building up. They are not happy to board up the building and to leave it unmanned.
- (v) Initial design activity: HLM has been appointed and have begun initial design work (see below for more on this). The plan is then to review outcomes, incorporate stakeholder feedback, produce an elemental cost plan, then consult

more widely on these in June, probably via an exhibition in FH Library. This will then go to Mayor and Cabinet in July, i.e. before the planned demolition.

(vi) Role of stakeholders: see below

(vii) OJEU [the EU-wide procurement procedure] competition for design and build, and architects to be appointed – notice was sent out at the end of April and they have already had 45 expressions of interest. The competition would then be run. They hope to reach RIBA stage D and appoint a CDM coordinator in July 2008. The rest of the timetable is:

Sept-Oct 2008: get planning permission

Nov 2008: RIBA stage E

March 2009: appoint principal contractor

July 2009: start construction

March 2011: open building

There was some discussion about this last date, as it is later than the timetable discussed previously. On looking at the overall timetable, David Booth could not see why it had been made later. The councillors were not happy about a possible change of completion date. An architect, representing the Laurel Bank residents, felt it was an optimistic timetable.

#### Role of stakeholder group:

- To represent the community

- To communicate community requirements – a “wishlist” (see below)

- To provide feedback during design and programme development

The group is not fixed, others may join at different times and current members were invited to think if there was anyone else we should be inviting. Suggestions were: representatives from the PCT (re possibility of hydrotherapy for example), and from the local schools who may swim there.

#### Questions

Initially these mainly concerned the timetable, it being felt important that there be no demolition until after consultation on designs. It was also not clear to most of those there why it had to cost so much to maintain an empty building. It was not clear how the promise to consider the design proposal retaining the current Victorian buildings (Louise House and the frontage block of the Pools), raised by a Sydenham Society member, would fit into the overall timetable.

#### HLM initial thoughts:

The design brief included consideration of the Urban Design Analysis (*as in the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Forest Hill*) and the concept of a “gateway” from Forest Hill, continuation of the building line of the library, allowing views of the library, the retention of trees and a green line of approach in front of Kingswear House to the Pools. Most of those present seemed to think these were important considerations. A drawing from HLM was shown to us in confidence, which sparked a lot of discussion. This concerned good and bad aspects of the draft design itself - there are some of each: it very basically fulfils

the considerations set out above, and includes the basic pools plus dry leisure and a multi-purpose room, but was only one storey and the frontage seemed untidy, using up a lot of space on a small site. One architect present did not like the frontage. We also discussed how housing might be fitted onto the site, and the possibility of utilising some of the space around Kingswear House, especially at the back of the building. The garages are apparently well used. Could parking be provided elsewhere? There was also discussion of parking around the Pools themselves. Underground car parking is apparently extremely expensive, and on a small site does not save much space because of the access ramps. Apart from disabled parking and coach drop-off for schools (there is already one such site in Thorpewood Avenue), there was some feeling that there should be no or minimal parking to discourage car use. Not everyone thought this feasible.

The officer's plan seemed to be to ask HLM to come up with 3 designs for high, medium and low density housing, but all based on the draft Pools building presented to us. I asked if it would not be possible to ask the architects to do some different draft drawings, and then ask us which we felt should be worked up in more detail, but the officers seemed to think this was not possible.

#### "Wishlist"

Hilary Renwick has the list sent to her by the Forest Hill Society. She said popular items were:

- Community room/meeting room/performing space
- Music room/recording facilities (*Platform 1 facility being lost?*)
- Creche/play area
- Adult teaching

Other thoughts included:

- Hydrotherapy
- Sustainability/green issues regarding energy use by the facility
- Climbing wall
- Disabled access over and above DDA compliance
- Café

She asked we contact her or Annette Stead with further ideas, or any requests for information.

Date of next meeting: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at 7 pm at Forest Hill School