



# **Dulwich Leisure Centre**

## **Consultation Report**

October 31 2007

(Updated pages Dec 5 2007)

Jay Yeats  
Head of Leisure  
Environment and Housing  
London Borough of Southwark I  
Chatelaine House  
186 Walworth Road  
London SE17 1JJ

Office Tel: 020 7525 0891  
Office Fax: 020 7525 0773  
[www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)

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## 1. Introduction

Dulwich Public Baths opened on 25 June 1891. Since then, Dulwich Leisure Centre has become a Grade II listed building containing an 80-workstation gym in a converted pool hall together with studios and a 25m heritage pool (which is in absolute need of restoration).

In February 2007 the Council agreed to allocate £12.3 million for the refurbishment of its current leisure centres. This is the Council's largest capital investment in its leisure centres and one of the largest such investments by a local authority in the UK.

In the first phase of the refurbishment programme £5 million of the £12.3 million has been allocated to Dulwich Leisure Centre to upgrade the building and facilities completely, whilst preserving and enhancing its historical features.

Work will commence on this project in the late spring of 2008 and is scheduled to last approximately eighteen months. We will have a better idea of the building programme and actual timescales nearer the time but it is our aim is to work as quickly as possible and re-open as much of the building as we can, as soon as we can.

## 2. The Consultation Purpose

On August 17 2007 the Council began a six-week consultation period with residents of East Dulwich, Nunhead, Peckham Rye, South Camberwell and The Lane by posting **26,000** letters and business reply cards to them. At the same time, the Council posted **6,500** letters and cards to regular users of the Centre and invited all clubs that use the facilities to email their members in order to ensure that they were included in the consultation.

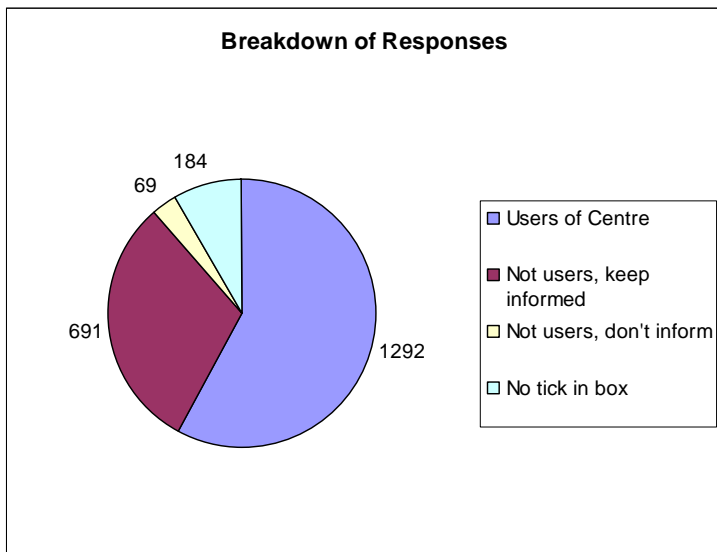
The purpose of involving the resident and users was to ask them what might encourage them to use the centre, either for the first time, or on a more regular basis. We wanted to know what type of additional services they would want in **their** leisure centre. We gave them these options and an 'other' box to make their own suggestions in the following format:

*As a matter of importance to you, please number from 1 to 5 from the selection of services and facilities below: (1 being not important and 5 being most important)*

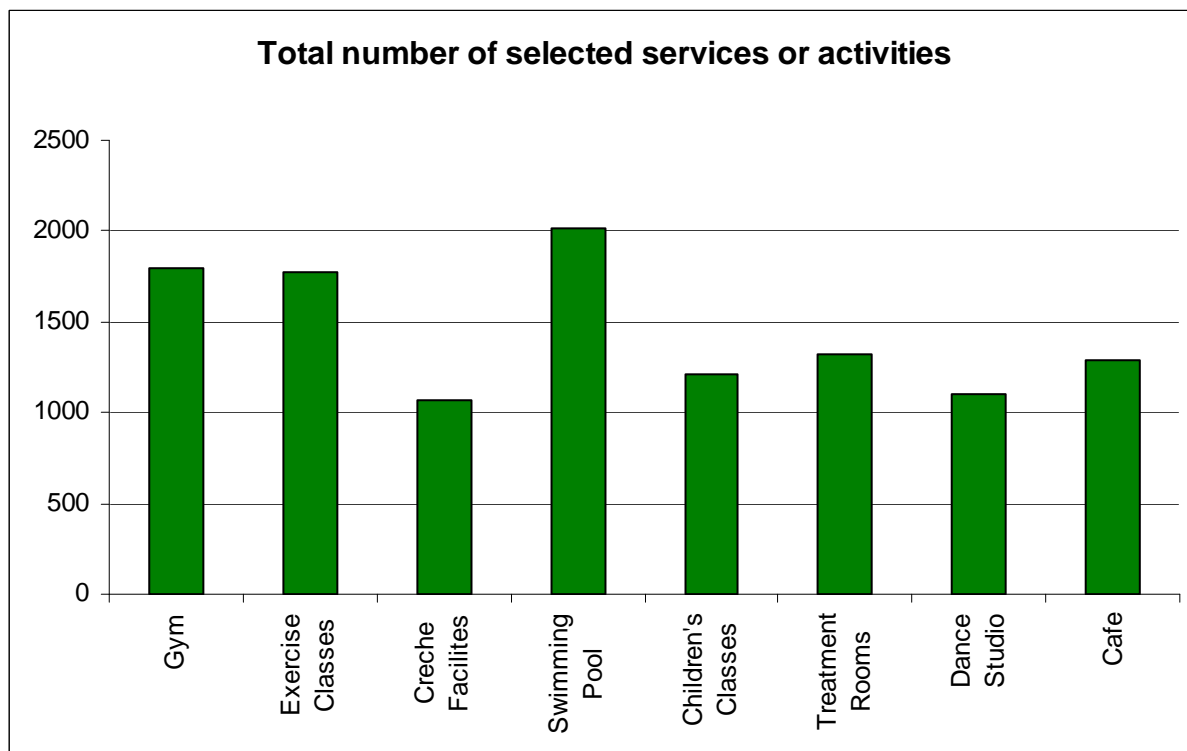
- **Gym**
- **Exercise classes**
- **Crèche facilities**
- **Swimming pool**
- **Children's classes**
- **Treatment rooms**
- **Dance studio**
- **Café**
- **Other**

### 3. The Consultation Results

The **32,500** letters and reply cards Southwark Council sent out resulted in **2,236** replies, a response rate of **6.8%**.

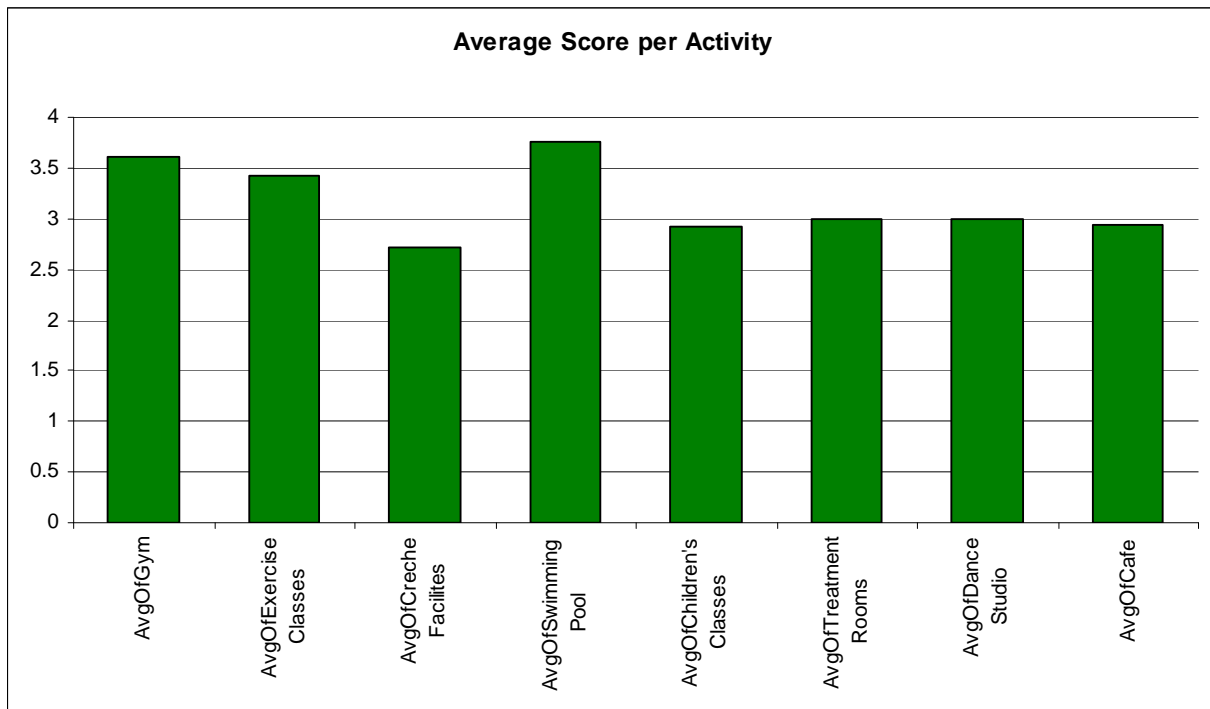


The table below shows the number of people who voted for each of the services and facilities.



- **Gym** **1796**
- **Exercise classes** **1768**
- **Crèche facilities** **1067**
- **Swimming pool** **2012**
- **Children's classes** **1210**
- **Treatment rooms** **1324**
- **Dance studio** **1105**
- **Café** **1286**

The table below shows the average importance rating for each of the services and facilities, e.g. the average importance rating for Swimming pool and Gym is 3.76 and 3.61 respectively. This indicates that a majority of respondents regard these as important on the scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is unimportant and 5 is most important.



**In order of most requested:**

- **Swimming pool**           **3.76**
- **Gym**                       **3.61**
- **Exercise classes**       **3.42**
- **Treatment rooms**       **3.00**
- **Dance studio**           **2.99**
- **Café**                      **2.93**
- **Children's classes**      **2.91**
- **Crèche facilities**       **2.72**

## 4. Other suggestions made

We also asked for any other ideas or suggestions that people had for the refurbishment of the centre and services that people might want included. We will try and include all those that are popular, feasible and affordable. The suggestions and the council's responses are set out below.

- **Access and Parking**

The refurbishment will result in a centre that is fully compliant with the Disabilities Discrimination Act 2005 ([DDA](#)). There will be cycle parking and car parking for people with disabilities. The new entrance will also make visiting the centre a great deal easier for people with pushchairs.

- **Café**

Serious consideration is now being given to providing a café at the heart of the building, which will allow users to relax and wind down after their sessions and other visitors to take a break while friends or family are participating in activities. A good-quality café will also encourage new users who may initially come in just for a coffee but be persuaded by the new facilities to become regular visitors for physical activities.

The focus of the café will be good healthy food although the occasional treat will also be available!

- **Changing rooms**

Respondents were vocal when it came to this subject. The changing rooms will have a major overhaul to bring them up to the standards one might expect from a quality 21st Century leisure centre. Cubicles will be added, secure larger lockers and hair dryers. These facilities will be regularly cleaned, serviced and maintained to ensure that they remain up to the required standard at all times. In addition to male/female changing rooms there will be larger cubicles for family changing.

- **Children and Crèche**

It is vital that children are encouraged to exercise from the earliest age and the Centre will provide dedicated classes and staff to work with children. We are considering how best to adapt the pool in order to provide a teaching area. Additionally, we would hope to provide soft play facilities and create a centre that is welcoming to children. We are also looking at the provision of a crèche with extended hours so that parents and carers of younger children can take part in activities, knowing that their children are safe and usefully engaged.

- **Classes**

In addition to the many classes Dulwich Leisure Centre already provides: Line dancing; Body Conditioning; Step; Body Balance; Body Combat; Classical, Hatha and Sivanda Yoga; Body Pump; Water Aerobics; Circuits; Pilates; Abs-and-Stretch; Akido; Tae Kwon Do; Hapkido; Yoshin Judo Kai; Thai Kick Boxing and a Fitness Club, we were not surprised that the respondents wanted still more!

The most requested additional class was 'Spin'. For those unfamiliar with the concept, 'spinning' on a stationary cycle in a class is both an alternative and a complement to cycling outdoors. Participants are sheltered from the traffic and the weather and can "go" much faster than would be safe on the streets of south London. What sets these classes apart from stationary cycling is the visual imagery provided by instructors. Participants are led on a "virtual"

outdoor road race complete with hills, valleys, straight-ways and finish lines. It's exciting, challenging and coming to the new Dulwich Leisure Centre!

- **Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (review [DDA guidelines](#))**

As previously stated, the refurbished Centre will comply with DDA regulations. The aim is to create a centre which is much better suited to people with disabilities and other special needs in terms not only of building design and equipment but also of services on offer and staff training.

- **Disruption**

The budget for the refurbishment of Dulwich Leisure Centre is £5 million and the aim is to transform the centre whilst preserving and enhancing its Grade II listed status. During the eighteen-months of works we will make arrangements to relocate as many services as possible to other centres and arrange for our customers to transfer as seamlessly as possible – we don't want to inconvenience you any more than is necessary in our bid to provide you with a greatly improved leisure centre. We will provide more information to all Fusion's customers or anyone who has joined our mailing list as part of this initial consultation, nearer the time.

We will also keep local residents informed and ensure that noise and other disruption is minimised.

- **Equipment / TVs / Music**

The existing gym equipment in the Centre is now six years old, and the wear and tear resulting from the thousands of people that use the equipment is sometimes noticeable on the most popular pieces. The new centre will have a strict maintenance programme to ensure every piece is checked, repaired and returned to service with the minimum disruption to members.

Plasma television screens have already been replaced and in the new Centre these will be encased in secure permanent positions for gym users to enjoy.

Music in a leisure centre is such a personal preference that we could never hope to please all of the people, all of the time. However the new centre will provide headphones for treadmill users, offering with a range of music, which, it is hoped, will appeal to most people. Appropriate sound proofing is also being considered so that sound does not intrude into areas of the building where it is not wanted - for example into a meditation class in one of the studios. This is clearly a challenge in a refurbished Victorian building but we are looking at solutions.

- **GP Referral**

There is a GP Referral programme at Dulwich Leisure Centre organised through the Fusion GP Referral team at Peckham Pulse. Once a GP letter is received patients are designated the most suitable Centre where a dedicated and specifically trained instructor is on hand to look after the group.

For example lung therapy sessions under the control of local hospitals take place in both the pool and the gym. This will not only continue but is being considered for expansion.

- **Green issues**

Energy efficiency and long-term sustainability are key issues in designing the Centre. We have a number of ideas which we are exploring including: Combined heat and power units, which will use heat that would otherwise be dissipated to heat the building and the pool; use of sustainable and recycled materials wherever possible; and a green roof on the newer sections of the

building. The building will be much better insulated than it currently is and energy-efficient appliances will be used wherever there is an opportunity.

- **Heritage**

Many respondents commented on how essential it is to respect and restore the Victorian features for which Dulwich Leisure Centre is much loved. We have been working with [English Heritage](#) from the outset of this project to ensure that we have the appropriate advice on how to best preserve the features and restore them to their former glory. The new centre will provide users with a state-of-the-art building, but retain all that is best of the Victorian public baths.

- **Membership / Types and costs**

We have been asked all sorts of questions about membership combinations, all of which are being considered in planning for new services to be delivered from the refurbished building. The aim is to keep prices affordable in the future so that as many people as possible are able to use the centre.

The Centre already provides a 'Pay-as-you-go' or 'Pay-and-play' service whereby users do not have to be members to swim and use the gym.

Members can book onto classes via the internet and on arrival swipe their membership card and go straight to the class. Members can also book a week in advance at reception to attend classes thereby speeding up the process when they arrive at the Centre.

A book of ten vouchers for swimming can be purchased at reception at a discounted rate and handed into the receptionist on arrival.

- **Opening / Closing times**

Although Dulwich Leisure Centre is one of the few centres in Southwark that opens at 6.30am, for some respondents that still isn't early enough! Extended opening hours are being considered so that the centre opens earlier and closes later.

- **Personal training**

Personal training has been available at Dulwich for many years already. We intend to increase the number of personal trainers for users who require additional focus and motivation to their exercise programmes.

- **Pool**

A subject close to the heart of all respondents was the pool. Over 90% of respondents had useful suggestions and ideas for the new pool.

Everything from – can the water be warmer/cooler; less chlorine; ozone filtering; pool/wave machine; a perfect rectangle shape; increase it to a 33 metre size; children's pool; provide signage to 'shower before swimming'; hydro pool; relocating the pool to the previous area to enjoy the use of the balcony again; showers for pre-swim.

As you can imagine some of these requests are easier and more cost effective to install and maintain than others. All we can say at this stage is that all of these suggestions are under consideration and whilst we would like to provide all of these facilities the new centre does have a budget of £5 million and the essentials have to be accounted for first. The new centre may also be under restrictions other than the merely budgetary, such as the preservation of historical features and the footprint of land, which available for expansion.

- **Sauna and Steam room**

As with all new leisure centres being built, a sauna and steam room is high on people's priority list. This is being considered as an option in the redesign of the centre.

- **Security**

Security of equipment and personal belongings is also a priority for respondents. The redesign of the centre will take these issues fully into account – our aim will be to design-out crime and make the centre much easier to staff and monitor.

- **Senior Citizens**

So far we have addressed the requests of classes for children, disabled and special needs users, and this is now the opportunity to tell you of some of the ideas put forward from senior citizen uses too; daytime swimming lessons; classes to assist with arthritis; art classes and ballroom dancing.

Providing more studios in the new centre will enable these ideas to be considered and for us to explore the more popular options in order to encourage regular visits.

- **Services**

This section was designed to capture miscellaneous ideas that could not easily be accommodated under a specific category both for services as they currently are and for the future. Lots of good ideas were put forward for the centre; a more efficient booking and ticketing system; qualified trainers; air-conditioning; a monitored telephone answering service; better signage; more staff in the gym to help and advise; cycle parking; wall mirrors for weight training; lockers with key pins and locker numbers; energy efficient environment; solar panels to heat water; drinking water in coolers; more staff generally; family lockers and a secure area for prams.

We aim to address most of the current issues you have raised immediately, especially where they are service-related. The rest will be given proper consideration in the design of the new service.

While the centre is being refurbished members will have to use other local centres. We will keep you informed of the progress of the refurbishment programme so that you remain an essential element of the process throughout the rebuild. When the new centre opens we will invite you to celebrate with us the new era of leisure centres provided by the London Borough of Southwark.

- **Studios and Room Hire**

Noise travelling from the studio into the gym and vice versa was a point that a number of respondents raised in the consultation. The new centre's studios will have a soundproofing system installed to ensure that essential five minutes at the end of a yoga or Pilates class is not interrupted.

We will also look at the possibility of hiring out the larger studios for functions such as ballroom dancing or children's birthday parties when they are not otherwise programmed for use.

- **Treatments**

Several respondents asked for a Health Suite to be included in the new building to allow for treatments and therapies this is being considered, seriously in our plans for refurbishment.

- **Youth Opportunities**

At the request of the respondents, activities for people between the ages of 14 to 18 years are being considered.

For an idea of the excellent facilities coming to the new Centre please visit Peckham Pulse and see the huge variety of treatments and services available. If you hold a Fusion 'Lifestyle' membership you can use any of the Fusion centres in Southwark.

For the duration of the refurbishment programme you will be able to use your existing membership at the following Fusion Centres:

- [Camberwell Leisure Centre](#)  
Artichoke Place, SE5 8TS – Tel: 020 7703 3024
- [Elephant & Castle Leisure Centre](#)  
22 Elephant & Castle, SE1 6SQ – Tel: 020 7582 5505
- [Peckham Pulse Healthy Living Centre](#)  
10 Melon Road, SE15 5QN – Tel: 020 7525 4999
- [Seven Islands Leisure Centre](#)  
Lower Road, Rotherhithe, SE16 2TU – Tel: 020 7237 3296

## 5. Do you want to become an 'Interested Party'?

Of the 2236 respondents, 691 people indicated that they wanted to be kept informed via email and a further 1083 that updates be posted to them when they become available.

Even though the initial consultation has passed, the Council still wants to hear from all residents and users if they have an opinion to voice or even if they just want to be kept informed.

To register your interest in this project please visit the Southwark Council web site at [www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk) – and click on '**Sports and Leisure**' on the left hand side, then '**Investing in Leisure**', and select '**Dulwich Leisure Centre**' – you will see an [online form](#) to complete (or use the link provided here) – it takes just one minute.

On the web site you will also learn more about all three of the on-going Leisure Centre projects with responses to [frequently asked questions](#) for Surrey Docks Watersports Centre, Camberwell Leisure Centre and of course [Dulwich Leisure Centre](#).

Details will be posted on the web site as more information becomes available on further consultation, notice of key dates and special events or offers as part of the refurbishment programme, however if you register your interest then we will notify you directly via your chosen method of communication – post or email.

## 6. What happens next?

As a result of this consultation report and meetings the council hosted an exhibition at Dulwich Leisure Centre on Saturday November 24 from 2 to 4pm.

From **November 2007** you will see conceptual designs of the new refurbishment along with specifications of equipment to be installed. The exhibition is situated just after reception – turn right and before you enter the gym you will see the graphic panels.

Southwark Council is committed to providing top class swimming and leisure facilities to all residents and users in the borough, and is making this investment for the wellbeing of its users now and for years to come.

End of document.

[Dulwich Leisure Centre](#): 45 East Dulwich Road, London, SE22 9AN

Telephone: 020 8693 1833

Author: Julie Vindis, Project Manager, Investing in Leisure Programme